

Odyssey Oracle

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Editors/Contributing Writers:

Kegan Carter

Odyssey 2004 Graduate, Designer
uwodyssey@gmail.com
608-442-8893

Marshall Cook

Writing Coach
mcook@dcs.wisc.edu
608-262-4911

Emily Auerbach

Project Director
eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu
608-262-3733/ 712-6321
odyssey.wisc.edu

These Tears of Change

By James Horton

Reflections after the Election

And I cried
But not tears
of Pain
I cleanse
My Soul
With these
Tears of change
Did you ever think
In this endless night
The day would come
From the east
And we would
Bathe in light?
Makes all that
Bloodshed
All that
Marching in the street
Boycotting Buses
Walking blisters
On our feet
It makes it all
Seem necessary
To escape
Past fears and pain
As I sit in disbelief
Crying
These tears of change!



Profiles 2008

A Dad Figure

By Samuel Bester

James Bester is a leader, always trying to improve the quality of life for everyone in his community. He is a husband, father of six children, and a licensed social worker living in the South Madison Community. James Bester, my dad, is 46 years old. He has two jobs and volunteers his services whenever possible; that's why I look up to him and consider him a role model. He works at Integrated Community Works (ICW) and Regent Mental Health. He received a life saving award from the Madison police department for saving someone's life on May 9, 2007.

At ICW he works with the disabled population. He takes them out in the community to places like the mall, bowling, the YMCA, their jobs, and other activities. Making them feel good about themselves gives my dad joy. He also works

at Regent Mental Health. He helps counsel people with anger management problems. He finds time to volunteer after all this. Volunteering is a requirement of our family. Dad always says that you'll get back what you put into your community.

James Bester is a great role model, plus he's my dad.

He tries to follow a Christian lifestyle. His religion helps him stay focused and grounded. Having faith in God is much more than a religion; it's having



a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He wants his family to have a good foundation, so we attend church on a regular basis.

My dad is a working man who has shown me lots of things, trying to make me the man that he is. This is a dad figure I'm looking forward to becoming some day.

Aaron Perry is a true Ironman

By Rhonda Nicoele Johnson

Having diabetes hasn't stopped Aaron Perry from competing in one of the most nationally known triathlons in the country. In 2005 he competed in and finished the Ford Ironman Wisconsin. He made world history as the first African American diabetic to complete this race. He had to face many hurdles to win such a title.

Seventeen years ago, at the age of 29, he was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Initially, he was surprised that a healthy, physically fit man could have this disease. "After my diagnosis, I knew that I had to regulate this disease through healthy intake and exercise," he says.

One of the most obvious challenges for Aaron as a runner is to maintain blood sugar balance. In the weeks prior to any competition, he has to consume water and other fluids based on a formula. If he doesn't monitor his water consumption, his blood sugars will fall dangerously low. He also has to eat a balanced amount of carbohydrates and protein. Even during a race, he has to check his blood sugars while consuming protein bars

and drinking water. This sets him apart from the other runners.

In addition, Aaron has to be very dedicated to his training. Every week he swims 210 laps, runs 20-30 miles, and rides 15 hours on a bicycle trainer. Although these workouts can be strenuous, he says consistency is important. "It's not always easy to work out when you have things going awry in your body," he says. "Maintaining a healthy diet and exercise is the only sure way that we have to control this disease."

On September 7, 2008, Aaron competed in the 2008 Ford Ironman Wisconsin. This marked the second time he competed in this race. Unfortunately, 75 miles into the bike course, he started to experience severe cramping in his legs. He thought he would be able to finish the bike race so he could compete in the marathon run. "I figured if I could finish the bike race," he says, "I could massage my legs enough to continue.

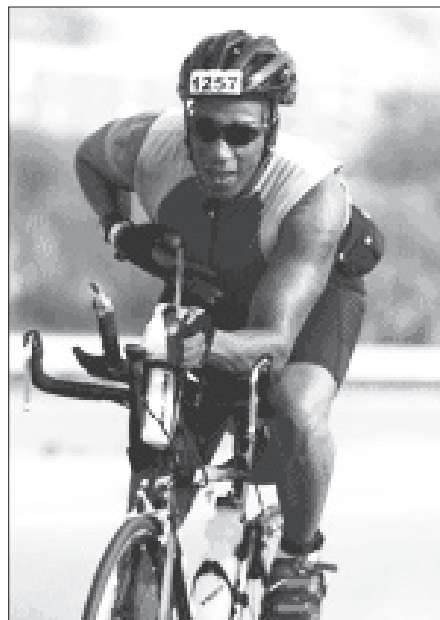


Running is my strongest area, so I was determined to get to that portion of the race. However, I realized that due to a lack of water prior to the race, I wasn't able to do it."

In 2006 Aaron wrote a book entitled *Through the Storm* though Author House Publishing. The book describes the journey of overcoming diabetes and competing in the Ironman race. The book is heartfelt as Aaron talks of his experiences with racism and childhood issues that surrounded the abuse and death of his mother. He says he wrote the book because he wanted other African Americans with diabetes to know that they weren't alone.

Aaron was born and raised in Milwaukee. He and his five siblings were raised by a single mother. When Aaron was 16, a tragedy hit close to home. His mother was murdered in a jealous rage by an ex-boyfriend. Due to this unforeseen calamity, Aaron decided to pursue social work as a means of understanding his own family crisis and dysfunctionality.

Now working as a Gang Squad



Specialist at the Neighborhood Intervention Program in Madison, Aaron talks to the family members of gangs to help them with a strategic family plan. "Many times there are dysfunctional factors in the family that has caused these young men and women to stray," he says. "When I go into homes, I am able to talk to mothers about domestic abuse. In many of the homes I visit, the mothers are victims of violence. I explain to them the reasons they need to remove themselves and their children from this type of home. One obvious reason is their sons and daughters can become potential batterers. I always give women my story. I give them the facts of what could happen to their families."

Because of his own obstacles in life, he has a rare compassion for others. Aaron inspires me to be strong and courageous. I consider him to be a friend and hero because he has a determination to help others succeed in spite of his illness. He says the love and memory of his mother has inspired him to become the man he is today, an Ironman.

My Inspiration **By Felicia Jones**

A welcoming smile, a warm hug, encouraging words of hope given to the hopeless, with unconditional love displayed to all.

Have you ever met someone who has meant so much to so many women and has aided in their lives being forever changed?

Mrs. Celesta Miller was born

in the late 1950s in Columbus, Ohio. Mrs. Miller moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where she began working for ARC Community Services (ACS), an inpatient treatment facility for women offenders. She started working there in May, 1994 as a case manager, and now she is the program manager and clinical supervisor.

I met Mrs. Miller in 2006 and was under her care from September 21, 2007 until January, 2008. While a resident there, myself and others were encouraged, taught, guided, and inspired by Mrs. Miller to look deeply at and within ourselves to find out and see how and why we became dependent on drugs, alcohol, people, and food.

Mrs. Miller's goal is to help women learn life skills that will improve their quality of life while offering hope to their present situation by helping them to see that things can and will change. She has also aided in pinpointing

key elements of emotional, physical, and psychological factors that keep women blind to the fact of who they are and would like to be; if they are willing to change their old behaviors and the way they think about themselves and others, then they can begin to experience a more positive lifestyle.

I truly love Mrs. Miller. She is like the mother many of us dream of, fun, loving, inspiring, yet stern. If it hadn't been for her gentle smile, a physical hug, genuine concern for me as a person, a woman, and a mother, and not just a name and number of another addict, I would not have a year of complete sobriety, my children wouldn't be back living in my home, and I wouldn't have this opportunity to be a part of the Odyssey Program, furthering my education.

A Motherless Child

By Lavern Brown

There is a famous Negro Spiritual written by J.W. and J.R. Johnson called "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child." This song was written in 1926 and since then has been remixed by artists like Harry Burleigh, Sinead O'Connor, and even Van Morrison. There's a particular verse that touches my soul: "Motherless children/have a real hard time/Motherless children/have a real hard time/So long so long so long..."

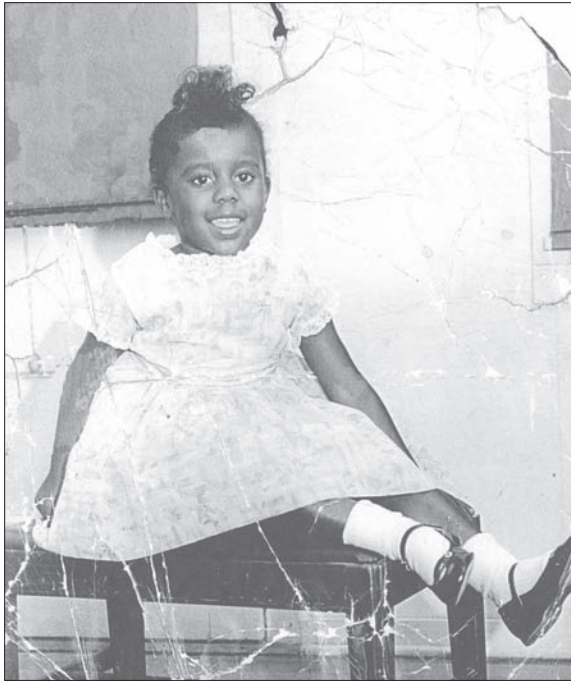
My mother, Veida Brown, was a loving mother. She was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1952. She passed away in 2004 of AIDS. At the age of 52, she left behind five wonderful children to carry on her legacy. She left us behind, but

our memories of her will always be with us.

There are times when reminiscing about my childhood, I can barely remember my mother being around. The times I can consistently remember are going from one foster home to the next until I was 11 years old. Sometimes I catch myself daydreaming and asking why my mother left her children for drugs, prostitution, and the streets. She was in and out of jail and prison for so many years, I often had a feeling of emptiness inside. I was upset when I saw other children with their mothers or fathers at the parks, movies, school functions, etc. I always wondered why that couldn't have been me.

The most exciting thing I can remember is when my mother came home from Taycheedah Correctional Institution in 1996. She left prison and went to the ARC house, a halfway house, and lived there for six months. I was excited to have her here with me, even though we couldn't live together. It was at that moment I





decided to give up my resentment and disappointment in and for her. It was time I began to invest more love into our mother/daughter relationship. And even at the age of 15 years old, I believed that all the things that happened in the past shouldn't mess up what could be in the future.

When I was 18, I had my first baby girl. My mother was right there holding my hand. When I graduated from high school shortly after, my mother was there again, loving me, supporting me, shouting for joy at the top of her lungs, saying, "That's my baby." Those will always be great memories. During the last couple of years of her life, she was so wonderful. I was able to bury what she did in the past and was able to love her more than I ever thought I could.

Unfortunately, in 2002 my mother became ill. She was in and out of the hospital and in and out of comas for about a year. The last time she came through,

the doctors diagnosed her with bone cancer. It was so bad that they had to amputate her right leg. At that time she left me again to go to a nursing home. She remained there until she passed away.

I'm so grateful for mother. Despite the drugs, foster homes, and prison, she did make everybody laugh when they were down. And she always had some good advice to give because she lived through them to tell

her story. I don't want sympathy from my readers. I just want to tell those who still have a mother in their physical life that you never know what you have until it's gone. So the next time you see your mother or father, give them a hug and tell them how much you love them.

Pressure creates a diamond: Dwayne Anthony Bland II By Betsy Peltó

"I have to tell you something," a little voice whispered. Bright-eyed, arms wide open, my four-year-old, Remy, directs herself to Dwayne and proudly states, "I'm going to be yours." Lost for words, we smile as he gently picks up my child and secures her innocence with his warm embrace. Although not yet a father, his

natural ability to love, provide for, and protect my children is incredible. His name is Dwayne Anthony Bland II, my teacher, my best friend, and the love of my life.

Dwayne was born on May 25, 1980 to Annette Bland at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison, WI. Dwayne had a tough but loving childhood. His parents had fallen victim to drug addiction in the late 1980s. Although his mother loved him very much, the wickedness of drugs was far too overpowering. When he was about eight years old, he and his sister Teniesha went to live with their grandmother on the south side of Madison. If being raised by a single parent wasn't already difficult enough, now his grandmother was going for round two.

Dwayne was fortunate enough not to be a father at a young age like many black men he knew, but unfortunately he was unable to escape the life of crime. At 17 he wanted to have things in life just like everybody else. The surrounding environment that he



lived in taught him how to get this quickly by selling drugs. In 1997, during his senior year of high school, he was incarcerated on drug charges. Jail stripped him of his freedom, teaching him that jail is no place for him. His ideas surpassed the containment of cold cement walls and bars.

If there was any disadvantage placed in his path, he managed to turn it around and learn from it. This experience of being jailed was life-changing for him. He knew from that point on the importance of education and loving yourself. He decided it was time to build a work ethic and work towards something long term instead of the quick buck.

Years later his mother was introduced to the Odyssey Project after battling addiction and serving time in jail herself. She was able to leave drugs behind and start a new life, one where she controls her destiny with an education. She then reached out to her son and inspired him to join as well. They are both now graduates of Odyssey, in college and successfully pursuing their educations.

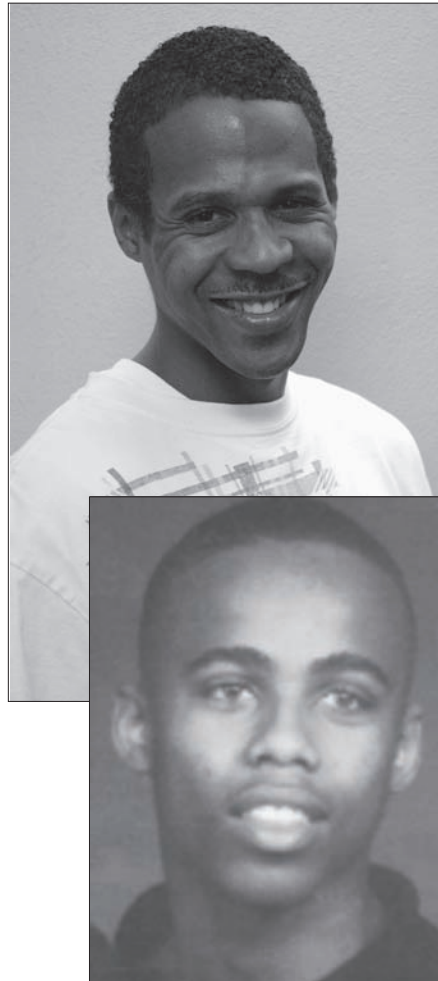
Like diamonds created from millions of years of pressure, Dwayne has become a righteous, respectable man from the struggles of life—priceless.

Douglas Wells: Unsigned Hype By Shannon Lawrence

In some ways a poet and a rapper are similar. They're both writers, and they use words to tell a story. Some rappers are not writers but free-style on the spot, rapping off the top of their heads. That's what is so amazing about my

cousin Douglas Wells! He was a rapper with a lot of talent. But if you heard him speak, you would think it was impossible for him to be a rapper. He was born with an extra brain coming out of the back of his head. So the doctors had to do surgery and remove the extra brain. I don't know if that was the cause of his stutter, but as long as I could remember he has always had it. And I really mean bad. So that's why I said it would be impossible.

He not only became one, he was a great one. If you ever asked him to rap for you, he would do it with no hesitation. From something he wrote or a freestyle, his delivery was so smooth and his lyrics so tight, and most of all no stuttering. He and his two



brothers, Fredrick and Ricky, had their own group and did shows at local events around Madison.

He and a few of his friends made some demos and home videos of them rapping. Douglas had big dreams of being a rap star. He was making strides to better himself, like going back to school at M.A.T.C. Every once in a while I would stop by his house. We would kick some rhymes to some instrumentals off the top of our heads.

He was 24 years old before his dreams of being a rapper came to an end by a car accident at the end of 2002. He is what I call an "unsigned hype"; that's what they call a rapper with a lot of talent as an artist that has not been signed to a record deal. Douglas had a lot of skills. I wish I had the skills he had. I used to tell him all the time how good I thought he was, but I don't think he knew how much I looked up to him because he was too busy looking up to me. He was "The Unsigned Hype," Douglas Wells.

Mary Laura Jackson bore heavy burdens with grace By Cameron V. Travis

The morning sun illuminated between the towering buildings as she walked across the school playground on her way home. Although Mary Laura Jackson, a single mother of four, smiled and sent greetings to every passerby, her heart bore heavy burdens. In the mid '70s, the Ida B. Wells Housing Projects on the south side of Chicago began their transformation into a menacing and threatening behemoth that swallowed its youth relentlessly.

Ms. Jackson rejected the very thought of her offspring being sacrificed to this new “King Savage of the Streets,” the crime and extreme violence within the urban city.

As nighttime crept behind the projects like death incarnate, the dark shadows became a safe haven for the ladies of the night, the pusher man, and the regulars in search and in need. Ms. Jackson served as a beacon of light within the belly of an extremely hungry beast, not only by how her white uniform contrasted with the darkness, but also how her determination, enthusiasm, and stride contrasted with her unforgiving surroundings. Ms. Jackson would often hear deterring remarks, like “You’re wasting your damn time, Mary Laura,” but they never stopped her. Ms. Jackson worked, saved, struggled, and fought against the odds of a community that prided itself on absorbing its failures and pains, recognizing it as what it means to be black.

In 1979, Ms. Jackson moved from her three bedroom

apartment with cement cellblock walls dividing the rooms into her own home in a nicer, safer neighborhood with a backyard for her children. Since that time, there have been thousands of unsolved crimes committed on the residents of Ida B. Wells by the Chicago Police, non-residents of the housing development, even by their own neighbors. Ms. Jackson foresaw these troubles and knew that if she didn’t make changes and soon, the safety and lives of her children would be in jeopardy.

For this reason, I am able to tell you this story today. Ms. Jackson, known today as Mary Boggan, believed in herself and succeeded when her efforts were considered futile and her actions shunned by the very people who should have been a part of her support system. I have learned to appreciate all of the pains and pleasures of being a single parent because I have a role model that’s irreplaceable, my mother, Mary Laura Boggan.

12 Steps Was a Downfall; 1 Step Was Her Healing By Dominique Christian

She was living a life that made her happy. A life of sin, uncertainty, and danger having evidence of drugs, alcohol, and money, her life was not hard to distinguish. Change was never necessary as long as no one was getting hurt. Although danger was her reflection and her shadow walked the opposite direction, she felt her life was satisfying.

Debra Hamlin, a mother of two, born in Madison, Arkansas, migrated to Madison, Wisconsin

in 1991. Debra was introduced to drugs by a family member in the early 90s. Raising two girls on her own, Debra began to realize that her sickness paralyzed her ability to be a mother to her children. Debra decided that her life and the safety of her children were more important than her craving for drugs. Attending several drug treatment programs, “I was asked to remove myself from the people I loved and the surrounding that I was familiar and comfortable with. I relapsed several times,” she notes. Debra soon learned that 12 steps was not the answer. “My turning point was when I was delivered by God from the taste of drugs,” she states.

With her new craving for healthy happiness, Debra has helped to lift many spirits in hope of assisting with the positive change in their lives, a walking blessing that displays that change is possible and worth it. Some may still remember the life Debra once led, but they acknowledge the courage that soared above the fear.



I look up to Debra; she is my Godmother, whom I am delighted to speak about. Some may know her as Ms. Deb, the lady who sells oils. I know her as my mother who delivers the word of God and turns tears of fear into tears of strength. I am a better person for meeting her.

Granny Knows Best **By James Horton**

Strong, courageous, loved and feared—these words best describe her, Ernestine Maylee Horton or, as I called her, Granny. Since I could remember she was always there for me. Even if I did look like I just stepped out of a 1950s sitcom, I always had clean clothes on my back.

Granny Horton was beloved by the entire community. It would take us four hours to stroll to the grocery store only two blocks from home, stopping at every house along the way there and back.

She taught me so much, how to cook, iron, the basics, but also life responsibility, because while my mother was out partying, she raised me, sent me off to school



every day, and made sure I did my homework before going outside.

I remember once after hanging with my cousin Shaun on the block I came home with a little bit of pimp in my step. Granny said to me, “Boy, is there something wrong with that leg? If not, I’ll break it for you!” So ended my gangsta life. Sadly, my cousin Shaun was gunned down just months later.

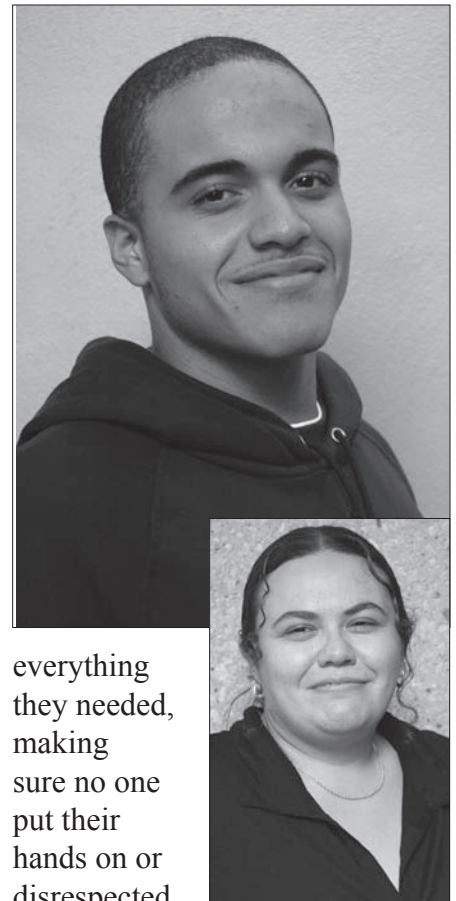
I remember Granny told me a story about when my grandfather left her with their nine kids and how times were so hard, she was tempted to put poison in the oatmeal. She had her hand on the can, ready to pour it in, and she thought “just one more day.” That story alone keeps me going as I struggle with my family, working a thankless job in a less than perfect situation, but at the end of the day, it’s all worth it, because I know my Granny would be proud of me.

A mother who never gave up on her son

By Stephen Taylor

My mother isn’t famous, she isn’t rich, and doesn’t have an incredibly high-paying or cool job, but she’s a great role-model. When I was growing up, my mom had two jobs most of the time. She’d get off one job, get home, feed me and my two sisters, get us ready for whatever we’d have to do, then go to her other job.

My mom had me at 17, and she’s been a single mother her entire time as a parent. Yet she’s never acted like a kid raising kids. She’s been a responsible parent, making sure her kids had



everything they needed, making sure no one put their hands on or disrespected her kids.

Once I got whooped by my grandma, and Ma told my grandma off.

I remember seeing her so tired and depressed because I was just bad and was doing dumb things. Most people would have given up on me. Her name is Socorro “Candy” Gonzalez [Odyssey ‘08], she is 36 years old, and she is my mom.

A wonderful friend

By Wynetta Taylor

Where had he been all my life? Had he been longing for me as I had been for him? We are perfect for each other. God made him especially for me. This amazing little person was specifically placed to become the core of my life. For God chose me to bring him into life—to be. I’m

so thankful that I have him, and I say so everyday. I tell him that the day he walked into my life is the day I was born.

On August 4, 2000, God gave me a son. He was 7 lbs 8 oz, with brown eyes, curly hair, ten fingers, ten toes, and perfect in every way. When I looked at him, I knew I'd never be able to take my eyes off of him ever again. My life would never be the same. This was my son, and he was coming home with me.

Keysean Wonderful Rodgers.

The beginning of his name, Key, refers to the key he holds to my heart. His middle name, Wonderful, is an adjective used to describe the overwhelming feeling of appreciation for such a magnificent gift. It is my father's first name, Wonderful Cleo Taylor, and he was given the name by my grandfather, Wonderful Taylor.

When I met Keysean, I cried out to God with much gratitude, and I vowed not to take one moment for granted. His dad captured him on video, singing



The Temptations at the age of two. I cherish his daily renditions of Chris Brown, his honest, heartfelt poetry, the way he laughs at Sponge Bob, and his personal letters to God; he never ceases to amaze me. Keysean's always had and always will have my undivided attention. Keysean is 8 years old now, he's in the 3rd grade, and he has a heart made of gold. His love for God, self, and life is why I call him an educator. Kids are amazing little people, and their intuitiveness should come as no surprise to us, because this has already been written: "out of the mouths of babes" and "a little child shall lead them." We should all be able to rest well at night knowing the future is in their hands.

My son is my best friend and the love of my life, and a little birdie told me he thinks the world of me, too, and that is wonderful!

A phenomenal woman teaches the children well

By Robert Garel

The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about this woman is the poem by Maya Angelou, "Phenomenal Woman": "when you see me passing it ought to make you proud. I say it's in the click of my heels, the bend of my hair, the palm of my hand, the need of my care, 'cause I'm a woman, phenomenally phenomenal woman. That's me."

That's her. She was born in Tunica, Mississippi on July 20, 1957, the oldest of eight siblings; she has never been a stranger to hard work. For 20 years she ran two homes for disabled veterans and was a registered nurse for



the same. I didn't meet her until she was done with college; she was 21 at that time. I loved her before I even saw her, and it's not enough description in the word love to describe how I feel about this remarkable woman. My being the oldest, the only boy, we share a close bond.

When I was growing up in my neighborhood, she was everybody's mother. Most of the kids called her 'ma.' She has been a teacher for 15 years at Dane County Head Start, and everybody loves her. People ask how she's doing before they even ask how I am. Without her I wouldn't be me. She taught me my work ethic, to fear God and respect everybody. She also showed me what love is and how I should love my kids. I think the greatest thing for me was last year when she finally admitted that she raised me herself.

What love is

By Alice McDaniel

Alice Thrower was born in Malvern, Arkansas, delivered by a mid-wife (with nine other

siblings, five girls and five boys). Her mother was a self-taught seamstress, and her father was a lumberjack. The family owned several acres of land and was well known and respected in and around their neighborhood and surrounding towns. Life was good.

Although mature looking and very pretty, Alice was a very shy young girl. People ranging in age from five to 95 would come to know and love this wise and unassuming girl. Alice would walk daily around her neighborhood, stopping to talk or just listen to them tell stories of their youth. She always thought of others' needs before her own.

At the age of 13, Alice made a decision to accept the proposal of marriage. His name was Harvey, seven years her senior. One of the reasons Alice got married was to make life a little easier on her parents, who had eight other children, some of whom needed a little more care than she did.

After a move to Milwaukee, WI five years later, I was born. My seven siblings and I call her mom.



Oracle Call and Response



After reading the Oracle from October 29, 2008, I gained an intimacy with each classmate. I swear the majority of my fellow classmates have—how can I say it?—been down the same path which has connected us, as if we were meant to gather as one and take this journey together.

Sherice Lewis

Man, everyone has these interesting lives. I feel like the oddball in the class. I wish I had something of importance to contribute to the class. I'm so honored and happy to be in this year's class with these great people. They have all come really far, from what I see.

Jaunté Willis

I understand and appreciate the lives of each and every one of these people (my classmates, hopefully life friends . . . I MEAN THIS). The old saying "Everyone has a story to tell" is to me B.S. It's more than "stories": these are

living, breathing people. I really wish that I can stay in constant contact with every one of them. These all are wonderful people (AND I DON'T EVEN TALK LIKE THIS). **Cameron Travis**

I feel not just from reading the Oracle but from reading their eyes that in this class I am surrounded by smart, ambitious people. All of us are determined to succeed. I feel grateful to be a part of such a fine group.

Wynetta Taylor

I just love reading the Oracle because I'm growing more familiar with the whole group. It also helps me to have more confidence with myself when speaking or reading in front of them. I feel like I'm in my own family group.

Erika Rosales Serate

I believe every year brings about a more excellent greatness. This group is "in the zone." We now

are the gadflies. We must awaken the sleeping, tired people, the hopeless. We must bite them with the contagious desire to learn.

Otis Harris

I have learned that the Odyssey class of 2008-2009 is comprised of heroes. Each student has overcome hurdles in life, looked beyond their circumstances, and strived to succeed in life.

Although doors were once closed to us, we didn't allow those closed doors to deter us from finding out what was on the other side of them. We found a way to kick them in, take an alternate route, or continue knocking until it opened for good. Each one of us is hungry for education and the world of opportunities it will bring us. We desire to grow, succeed, and make our families proud. Many of us who are parents want to pass our legacy on to our children as well. We have learned from one another's stories and personal testimonies. We now understand that we are not alone in our struggles. We have the will to persevere and remain grounded in our faith. The Odyssey class of 2008-2009 has been liberated through this educational journey.

Rhonda Johnson

There is a lot going on in every classmate. We are showing our intelligence. We have to show the world we count.

Samuel Bester

Even though we, or some of us, made bad choices

in life back then, we all still alive emotionally, physically, and mentally today to laugh at those mistakes. All of us seem to be fighting battles still, whether it's drugs, abuse, poverty, health conditions, etc., but none of us are allowing those things to hinder our walk towards a brighter future. To me, our lives are like running a relay. If you start off strong and keep passing the baton, no matter who's running beside you, no matter how fast your opponents are, you'll finish strong. If the stop clock isn't at the numbers you want it to be at, you just have to keep building your strength and skills until you accomplish your goal. . . . I love my class of 2008-2009, and when we all—shall I say it again?—and when we all walk across that stage, we will have made a difference. . . . Drive on, 2008. **Dominique Christian**

You never judge a book by its cover. Since reading everyone's personal profile, I've realized I need to stop complaining and

learn from others. Everyone has a story to tell (testimony), and God is using each and every individual in his or her own way. I am overall honored to be a part of such a diverse and warm-spirited crowd. I thank everyone for opening up and sharing with one another about their personal lives. I have learned so much. Thank you, classmates!

Nicole Barnett

I see a sea of promise when I look out into this Odyssey class. . . . Through it all, we survived, not only because someone else believed in us but because we believed in ourselves. Being chosen out of 100+ applicants makes us special, not only to the choosers but to the choices. I am sure that all of my new acquaintances will prosper.

Lea White

My class is striving for success. My class will be the best. We all come from different backgrounds. We all wear a different crown.

Felicia Anderson



A Sense of Place

I once lived in a homeless shelter. It was a nightmare; everyone stood outside for about an hour, no matter what the weather—rain, cold, snow. It was on a main street where everyone walking by could see you standing in line, which was the most degrading experience for me. People wouldn't walk on the side of the street we were on because of fear, and we got looks as if we were not human. I would never run a shelter that way, where people feel that no one really cares about them.

Ricky Barners

This is a place I like to go in the summer. First you descend a dark set of stairs; all you hear is the rustling of the trees and crickets if they're out. You smell seaweed

as you go farther down into the darkness. You hear the waves splashing on the rocks. As you finally get down the stairs, you see the moonlight on the water.

This is a place I call serenity because nothing matters. I go there to reflect, think, and plan.

Robert Garel

My mother's bedroom has had a very positive significance to me because it is a place where she shared her life stories. We lay on the end of her bed and watch the stars, making me feel that there is more to life than just struggles. We used to point out the Little Dipper, Big Dipper, and the North Star. To dream you are a star and can see everything going on in the world is the best feeling in the world. I am beautiful, we

are all beautiful, and we can be anything we want to be, even a star in the sky. Mom taught me the solar system.

Tiffany Harston

Five days a week I ventured through enemy territory, gang ways and alleys, and dragged myself to William Rainey Harper High School. On the first day of school there were 20 people from the neighborhood—by that Friday, five. Harper was four floors of brownish beige hypocrisy, where teachers were crackheads and Chicago police littered the halls. We even had a police station in an office in the lunch room. The first thing to greet me was the beep of the metal detector and frisking by an officer of the law groping my crotch (where I hid my cigarettes) almost daily. "Good morning to you, too, officer!"

James Horton

This past weekend I attended a Black Business Boot Camp held in a Catholic Diocese Seminary. The seminary was built years ago as a priest, monk, and nun training facility. The building is large and resembles an ancient building. There are chandeliers and huge stairways. The bedrooms are dorm style, complete with bunk beds and plain white sheets. The cafeteria is buffet style. As you walk through the halls, there are smells of new paint mixed with bleach. Every 15 minutes, you hear Catholic bells ringing in the halls and main areas of the seminary. It



was very comforting to be there because it was so serene. It was a combination of being in church and college.

Rhonda Johnson

Every morning when I get out of bed, I go on my balcony to look up at the sky. The sky is still dark at 4:30 a.m., but it has a glow to it, especially on clear mornings when no clouds are present. The sky is dark blue yet you can clearly see the yellowish stars twinkling at you and pink and light blue stars also. The moon lights the sky with such radiance. It is as if the glow from the moon illuminates the yellow and red leaves upon the tree that's a few feet away from where I am standing. I have and feel such a sense of awe and wonder at the beauty that I see that all I can do is say, "Thank you, is this just for me?"

Felicia Jones

I'm only there two or maybe three hours a week. At first, I used to ride the bus with my two daughters. But since visiting this place full of variety, I've met a new friend who I can talk, laugh, and cry with. I've also met a lot of strong and interesting people full of different goals, dreams, and ideas.

I rush the week and the weekends just to see this place and these people. It's like when I was in sixth grade rushing to get to high school. I feel comfortable in the clothes I wear, the way I speak. I like to see all of the smiling faces and kids running around having fun. Oh, I cannot forget about the food. The food

is the best—one of my top motivations.

The Harambee Center, The Odyssey Program
Sherice Lewis

As a six-year-old child, I feared going over to my grandmother's house. It was a big dark house. It took my 10 long minutes to make it through the halls leading to her living room. She also had a very large cat, which to me looked like a tiger. The cat was always chained to the back porch. Every time I would go over to her house, which was a couple of houses away from ours, it seemed as if I was walking my last mile. Daylight never seemed to come to the big dark house.

Alice McDaniel

On the west side of Chicago at 1019 N. Central was my favorite address that we've ever lived at as a family. That's when we were all still alive and happy. At night I would go out on our balcony and watch the moon and stars, listen to all the goings on in our neighborhood, and listen to all the music (The Isley Brothers) being played in the cars that went by. I heard some of the best music of my lifetime from that balcony. I'll never forget my special place where nobody knew where I was or what I was thinking but me. ...[W]hen everybody else slept, this world was mine.

Mary Moore

This place is a room on the sixth floor of a hospital. I was doing nursing practice with another three classmates in this room with a boy 17 years old who had heart

and breathing troubles. After an hour, he was stabilized, and we were talking with him and his mom. He was so happy to be alive because it took two hours to get into the hospital because of the bus. Before we finished with practices this day, I saw his smile and happiness with us.

The next day at 6:00 in the morning, I was on my way to say 'hi,' and I found out that he died just an hour before. I went inside the room to find his mother crying. She saw me and ran toward me. I was just paralyzed. He was my first patient, and he died. I remember I started to cry with her, without saying anything, sharing our loss, a son for her, a patient and a human being for me.

Erika Rosales Serate

My aunt's house was my place of peace. No matter what I did or said, she was always there to protect and comfort me. When I walked in her door, I was at home. Her home was like outside in the garden of beautiful flowers of all different kinds, like throwing pebbles in the water and watching them skip a beat. Nobody knows or even understands in depth how her house reminds me of a sanctuary. A piece of my heart is still in that house.

Emily Robinson

Cold and shivering, I tried to hold still because I wouldn't freeze. I heard the bugs crawling within the bark of the tree I lodged myself in. My eyes couldn't focus because it was so dark, but I knew exactly where I was, and

I didn't want to be found. In fact, there were thousands of trees in the forest just like this one. My fear left me and loneliness came in. I never saw myself running away. I don't remember my feet hitting the ground or even being tired. All I could think of were the bugs that crawled beside me, and I was too afraid to move. For the night, this was my bed, cold, but I felt safe. I didn't want to get hit anymore. I didn't want to hurt anymore. Fear became a living organism.

Cameron Travis

My house in Chicago was roach infested, with a lot of mice.... For some reason it was very comfortable to me. It was nasty but clean. With no heat on it was cold yet hot. ...We lived in a neighborhood that was chaotic and dangerous, but it was my calm sanctuary.

Stephen Taylor

I arrive by limousine. As I approach Caesar's Palace, I can see the over lit driveway. When the driver opens the car door, my eyes grow huge! Huge white columns stand beside each door. Everything is white and gold. There are huge statues and sculptures reminiscent of ancient Rome. Inside the lobby begins a deep red carpet with a black print throughout the casino. There are lights flashing everywhere, from the games, stages, and cameras. The waitresses are dressed in togas, and for a moment, you believe you are in Rome. Off to the right is a vast bright hallway that is paved with white floors. There are so many shops and restaurants. Each vision was as beautiful and exciting as the next. The ceilings are painted the prettiest sky blue, with birds and clouds. You are inside, but it feels as if you are outside.

Lea White

Photos of my family cover the walls as you walk up the stairs of my home. The smell of country berries fills the air—my favorite plug-in air freshener. Generations of the family I love welcome you into my home. Coming home makes every day of work, school, whatever all worth it. I'm grateful to God.

Wynetta Taylor

I can recall my grandmother's bedroom. She had this bed. It was very big, and it set up off the floor. I can remember trying to climb up on it. It seems as though then it was the highest and hardest exploration for me. My grandparents' home was always an adventure for me. There were always places to look and treasures to find. Oh, how sometimes I wish that I were a child again—to bring back some of those days, and the memories again would become realities.

Dennis Cotton



Meet the Gadfly: Socrates



A gadfly is just a common horsefly. Anyone familiar with gadflies (or horseflies) could attest to its irritating buzzing and nasty, sharp bites.

Just like the horsefly, Socrates irritates by “buzzing about” the people of his time, “biting” at the complacent ways so many of them have. Socrates’ “pesty persistence” compelled people to consider matters of virtue.

Charles Sallay

A gadfly is a person who consistently annoys or provokes others with criticism, schemes, ideas, demands, and requests.

I believe Socrates used gadfly as his analogy because he feels he is doing the work of God. He wants to push, annoy, and purposely bug those who are doing wrong. He wants to criticize their way of living, showing them the correct path in life. He considered himself a gadfly because the people were irritated by him and wanted nothing to do with him.

Felicia Anderson

I think Socrates wants to be a gadfly because of the relentless aspect of it all. You’ve seen a cow repeatedly swishing away the gadfly with its tail. No matter how many times cows fan them

away, they always come back. Socrates, like the gadfly, had no earthly intention of giving up on his views, nor would he let up on the level of intensity he used when expressing them to the public. . . . I saw him as a great educator, caretaker, and example.

Mary Moore

“And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God by condemning me, who am his gift to you. I am the gadfly of the Athenian people, given to them by God, and they will never have another, if they kill me. For if you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God; and the state is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very

size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you.”

-Socrates in Plato’s

Trial and Death of Socrates

“Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.”

**--Martin Luther King, Jr.,
“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”**



The Death of Socrates by Jacques-Louis David



Desirous of Seeing the Sound: A Review of the Madison Symphony Orchestra By Cameron Vashon Travis

I have always held a strong appreciation for many different genres of music, from DMX, a hip-hop/rap recording artist, to Kurt Cobain of Nirvana, an alternative/rock group, but to the surprise of many, I am favorable to classical music. On October 19, 2008, guest conductor Chosei Komatsu directed the Madison Symphony Orchestra (MSO) with the energy and ease that only a master of this craft could accomplish. Every string, wind, and percussion birthed sound and filled the Overture Hall with colors and visions far beyond the musicians below. Each commanding movement of Mr. Komatsu's direction brought about beauty, strength, and imagery.

It was not possible to close your eyes to imagine, fantasize, or even to meditate when cellist Alban Gerhardt took stage. It seemed as if each piece Mr. Gerhardt played acted as a magnet, pulling us [the

listeners] all the way into each glide of his bow and strum of his cello. "Adagio," which means in slow time, was my favorite piece Mr. Gerhardt played; in fact, at moments the music did just as the title proclaims. I became a bit mesmerized by the hypnotic sounds and had to force myself out of the trance I was falling under.

After intermission, the MSO entertained us with renditions of "The Planets" by Gustav Holst (1874-1934). The program notes include a quote from Mr. Holst: "*There is nothing in the planets (my planets, I mean)*

that can be expressed in words." *Mars, the Bringer of War* was my all-time favorite out of the entire concert. This piece possessed the power of a gladiator, bringing passion to war. Even without a concentrated ear, one would hear the rise and fall of battle, the sight of fire, of smoke, blood, metal crushing against metal, indistinct battle cries and woes. For a moment you feel as if you are Aries, the God of War himself.

Close to the conclusion, as the MSO played, the doors to the right of the stage opened



Breathless: Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England
MSO tickets compliments of Bob & Carroll Heideman

without the use of visible hands. Not a single body entered, but the sound slowly strengthening sent chills through me. The combination of violins, cello, horns, harp, organs, and winds combined with a sound like beautiful sirens overwhelmed my listening senses! Oftentimes, I looked in the air to see if I could see them or anything because through the remainder of the concert, the audience never saw where the sound originated from—a sound that came compliments of the Madison Symphony Women's Chorus.

I would encourage anyone who listens to music of any kind, whether it be Al Green, Luther Vandross, The O'Jays, Patti LaBelle, James Ingram, Christopher Cross, The Doobie Brothers, The Doors, 3 Doors Down, Korn, Pink, Pussycat Dolls, Christina Aguilera or Milian, Wu Tan Clan, Brand Nubians, Jay-Z, The Game, Mary J. Blige, Lenny Kravitz, Randy Travis, Willie Nelson, Alabama, The Neville Brothers, or even the annoying (to us adults) "I love you, you love me..." Barney song that your kids can sing all day and night, give the colors, energies, and power of orchestra music a chance, especially if you love to create. Your craft will never be the same.

Frederick Douglass Speaks

Odyssey students read an editorial from an 1852 issue of the Southern Quarterly Review arguing that slaves were happy, that slavery was God's plan, and that slaves could not conceive of liberty. They were asked to respond with a letter to the editor, penned in the eloquent language escaped slave Frederick Douglass might have used at the time.

Dear Editor:

After reading your newspaper, *The Southern Quarterly Review*, many emotions flowed through my soul. It seems as if you have never spoken to a Negro, never asked a Negro his thoughts on freedom, never put yourself in a Negro's position because if you had, you would not have made such comments. Your words at best seem mediocre-minded mixed with a misunderstanding of what God destined Negroes to be. **(Otis Harris)**

I think your statements and your

opinions are so wrong and untrue when it comes to Negro slavery or any other type of slavery of a human being. I can't imagine any human in captivity that would not dream of freedom and want to be free. In my own personal opinion, no man's or woman's ideas should belong to anyone but himself or herself, and to God. **(Charles Tucker)**

This editorial, like most of your other work, is malicious and quite offensive. You are the worst kind of oppressor, with your false and condescending niceties, all wrapped up in so-



called Christianity. To say that a Negro doesn't dream of liberty is saying that a Negro is not a man. Every man dreams of liberty; in fact, it's all I dreamed about. God destines no man to slavery. Your words are Blasphemy and not that of a Christian man but of an evil hypocrite! I will be my own master, and I've devoted my life to freeing my brethren.

(Wynetta Taylor)

I was born into slavery. The slave masters considered us nothing more than property. We have not been treated like a person with a heart or a soul. When one slave owner would decide to sell us, or had died without a will or letter giving us our freedom, we found ourselves having no say in where we would be going.

(Alice McDaniel)

To even think that the average Negro only desires to be a slave is supreme insanity. Go on, Mr. Editor, ask him, that Negro man there, would he desire to "bask in the sunshine" (as you so eloquently expressed) in 20, 40, 60, or more acres of cotton fields from sun up until sun down? Ask him is he happy when the lick of a leather lash stings across his bleeding back for the fortieth

time? . . . Ask the average Negro woman did she feel "free from interference" when her children were torn from her suckling breast only to be sold away from her to the highest bidder, sometimes never to be reunited again? Indeed, sir, ask this strong Negro woman does she not "dream of liberty" when her fat, slobbering slave master comes to her in the middle of the night, smelling of liquor and sweat, only to rape her once again?

(Charles Sallay)

The white man lives to arbitrate and dictate another man's life like an autocrat, acting beastly but being treated like a saint, and is worshipped for his consistency in creating colored corpses. For years, white men have been full of complacency, high amour-propre, and haughtiness. When I look at a white man I see a charismatic hellion, a knave demigod, and a respected miscreant. I would rather die running on my fettered naked feet than to live under the control of a self-righteous beast. My tears scorch like fire on the outside and tear like old fabric on the inside.

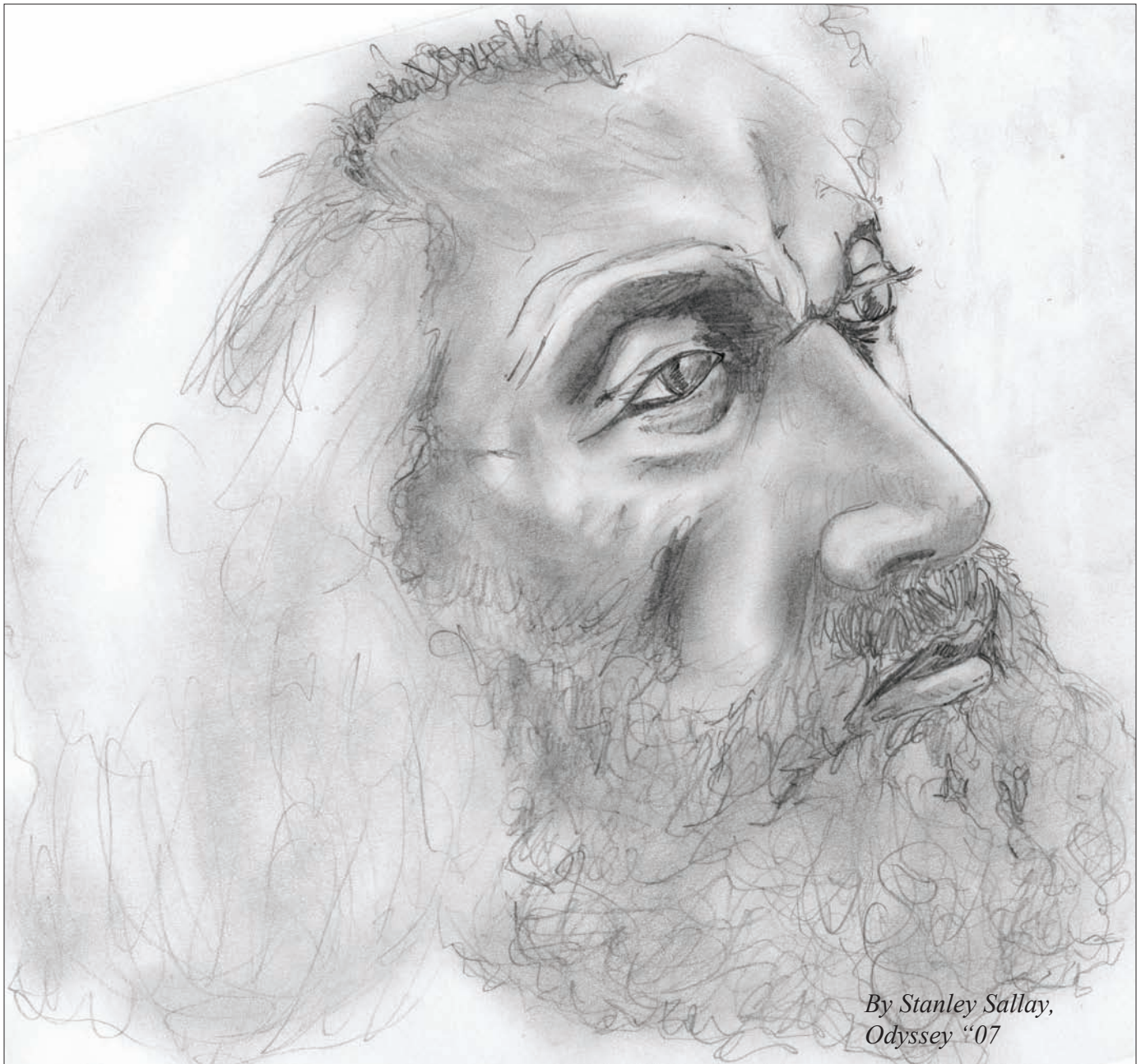
(Dominique Christian)

Sir, the things that I have witnessed while in this caress of Satan, also known as slavery, have molested my very soul in the vilest and most indiscriminately vicious ways. There are no words to express in full detail the levels of despair and depravity and the scenes of unrelenting brutality. I have witnessed firsthand, my dear editor, many family members, friends, and colleagues endure starvation, mutilation, and senseless slaughter, their heads cracked open and scrambled with less thought than one would an egg with their breakfast! . . . I am afraid for a land who so overtly disregards another human simply because of the roughness of his hair, the broadness of his nose, the darkness of his skin! What is the future of a nation founded on freedom yet prospering on the backs of another?

(James Horton)

Slavery is cruel, sick, unjust, and morally wrong. A slave is deprived of all the beautiful things in life. There's no contentment in being treated like trained dogs. God created all men equal. I believe no one was created to be stuck under darkness, bound by cruelty and slavery. I believe God has a better





*By Stanley Sallay,
Odyssey '07*

purpose for me.

(Felicia Anderson)

To beat your own slave to death just because he or she was a little rebellious is just plain out-and-out madness. Do you think the Negro Community doesn't know about the 16-year-old girl who was beaten to death by her slaveholder just because she didn't hear the baby crying in the middle of the night, after three days of already sitting with the

child? That 16-year-old girl was beaten to death with many, many lashes until she died. . . . Slavery is a killer. **(Roberta James)**

I've seen and experienced the most indescribably cruel and inhumane disregard and disrespect for human life that one could possibly imagine not to mention comprehend. I've witnessed suckling babies being torn from their mother's nurturing bosom, not having adequate

food, clothing, and shelter, being denied rights to an education, and having the personal right to live, learn, and grow stifled by the deadening, relentless limitations of slavery. **(Mary Moore)**

I was separated from my family as a young child with no sense of who I am and where I came from. I was worked to the bone from sun up to sun down in all types of weather. I was whipped and beaten to a bloody pulp. I was

deprived of proper food, clothing, and living conditions. . . . We were not just slaves but prisoners and property, considered less than human. (**Shannon Lawrence**)

How do you think you could enjoy being owned, not being educated, and treated like a disposable piece of cloth? Can you grasp that idea? . . . Am I not a man? Why do I not have the right of liberty? Do you know God—did you speak to Him? How do you know what he has destined for me? (**Stephen Taylor**)

Would you be content with working day and night without being adequately fed or compensated for serving someone else? Would you be content watching your family be sold as if they were cattle? Would you not want, desire, and yearn to have the choice to work where you want, to live where you want, and to eat what you want? (**Felicia Jones**)

God created all men and women equal. He loves everybody, without seeing if you are white or black. I was born the same way you were, I eat the same way you do, and I have the same heart and emotions you do. I was separated from my mother while you were enjoying love from your parents. I was working hard on the yard while you were playing, running, and laughing with your friends. I was suffering from cold in the winter while you were sleeping warm in your bed. (**Erika Rosales Serate**)

All my life I've been working for the gods of slavery, the honorable robbers. I do not intend

to speak grateful words towards my masters. I've dreamed of liberty and freedom, intending to break out of bondage to slavery. Christians are known to be honest beings, yet stand so hypocritical before me. Keeping men in bondage is the way Baltimore Christians do the devil's deed. (**Nicole Barnett**)

To arrange the two words Christian and slavery in the same sentence is to me a true defilement of what Christianity stands for. I have by all accounts watched my slave masters swear by Christianity yet beat me to a bloody existence. They claim to pray to a God in heaven who has given them all supply, yet starve their slaves until death seems pleasing. Is this Christian slavery you speak of from heaven? Is it a gift from God? Nay, I declare it just the opposite. (**Rhonda Johnson**)

My grandmother built her master's false legacy, provided a backbone for this coward, only to die alone! She cradled him from birth to the casket. All that



her master offered her was identity theft. . . I am here to be her voice, to show you I am a result of her dreams, and that her endurance of pain, suffering, and loss have strengthened my dreams of liberty. (**Betsy Peltó**)

What you wrote sickened me. What you have is the worst case of ignorance I've ever seen. And what concerns me the most is that you have this sickness and you choose to cough without covering your mouth. You have chosen to take your pen and breathe on everybody with your beliefs. You have chosen to give them your strand of ignorance, exposing strangers, friends, and family and setting them back at least three or four generations. You say I do not dream of liberty, but I live in a continuous nightmare that you couldn't fathom. (**Robert Garel**)

Have you ever been kidnapped or had your family taken away from you—not just even taken away, but slaughtered, tortured, shipped away, never to know your roots or even your birth right? Only a purely evil person could do

something like that to another person. Then not only do you take away our lifestyle but you try and take away our minds. You don't want us to know how to read and write, so you beat, whip, and abuse us if we even look at a book. That is why I made it my business to learn how to read and write. **(Jaunté Willis)**

Now I know that if I had learned a long time in the past what I learned and know now, I would have become free from slavery long before. Why? The white man wanted to keep slaves in the depth of his veins. He wanted us to know only of him. Fear! The white man gave us the power to be "free," but he would kill us if we tried to find real freedom. That's not happiness, and that's not freedom. **(Emily Robinson)**

We as enslaved black people sing songs to pray to God, to express our feelings, and to back up others trying to escape from slavery. God would not want any man to live like this. The white man made black people believe that slavery is a state of being. Slavery is wrong, and I will fight

hard all my life to help stop it. I will be free one day!
(Samuel Bester)

You write of a "Christian slavery" that you say God has destined for the negro. The God to whom I pray knows not of what you put out as your "truth"! To think that a man that is being whipped until his clothing is soaked in blood is basking in the sunshine and singing happy songs is among the most barbaric notions. My blood bleeds red just like any other man. When you speak of these happy slaves, I know not of who you speak. I am testimony that slaves do not sing because they are happy. They sing because they want God to answer their prayers for a society that treats every man as equals.
(Lea White)

The mask of ignorance has been removed from my eyes. . . . What you believe as righteous and just, and what I believe as harsh and barbaric, is as far apart as the east is from the west. I look at you as mulish and unreasonable to think of me as content while fettered and flogged. How obstinate to think that being the thief of a

human soul is something God approves of as righteous. God forbid! **(Ricky Barners)**

Didn't God send Moses to free the Israelites because they too were being persecuted by Pharoah and the Romans? Say that the slaves were working in the fields from dawn to past dusk, barefoot and physically and mentally scorned, picking cotton, feeding and milking the cows until their hands bled like a crown of thorns. Who would dream of wanting to live like this?
(Lavern Brown)

Isn't it your duty as a "Christian" to uplift and enlighten a fellow "Christian"? I know that if Negroes had the tools, if we were able to think for ourselves, speak for ourselves, and protect ourselves, we would be able to effectively respond to your insults. If we take the initiative to obtain knowledge, courage, and control of our lives, you, the white man, will be amazed, astounded, and astonished.
(Sherice Lewice)

Everything you have printed in your newspaper regarding slavery is absolutely ludicrous. I can attest to everything I say because of the proof that I wear on my back. To use Christianity to cover your barbarism will be the sin of all sins when you have to stand before your Maker.
(Dennis Cotton)

Sincerely yours,
Frederick Douglass



Memories of Childhood Pain

Waiting in Glossy New Shoes By Nicole Barnett

I feel somewhat the same Frederick Douglass does about his mother (known as like a stranger) about my dad. Since I was a little girl, I grew up feeling lost, with a lot of pain and baggage I was carrying. My dad (ever known as the stranger Larry) was never there for me.



I remember one sunny afternoon as I watched for my dad to arrive on my big day, graduation from 8th grade. As I sat and waited with a 500-watt smile on my face, I just knew my dad wouldn't miss my big day. I sat and waited and

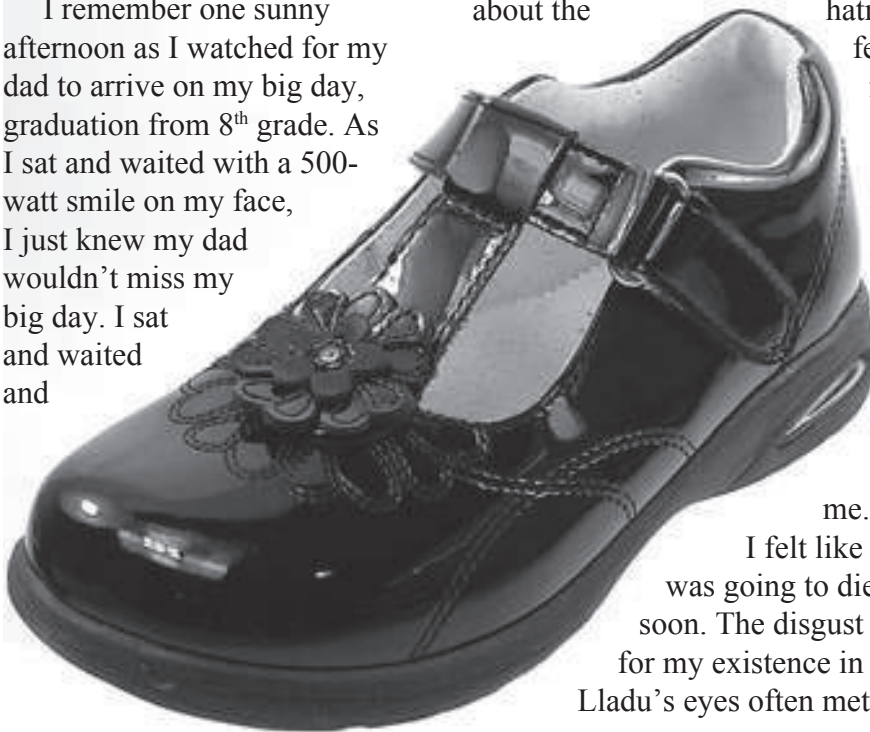
waited, patting my black glossy brand new dress shoes against the wooden floor as if I were trying out for a tap dance school in my new hair style to match my new dress that I couldn't wait for my dad to see because I wanted the compliment.

I finally realized he wasn't coming. From that very day, I had a painful, numb, and devastating feeling against him. . . . When I needed my dad the most, he wasn't there, and what he needed most wasn't his kids, it was a needle. From then on I was lost because I knew he had abandoned me and he didn't even know.

Lladu By Cameron Travis

I partially opened my bedroom door so I could hear what was going on beyond the threshold. I wanted to run because I was horrified of what was going to happen to me because I knew about the

hatred
felt
for



me.
I felt like I
was going to die
soon. The disgust
for my existence in
Lladu's eyes often met

mine, which made me afraid of him even more.

He was finally given permission to show me how much I was hated. Lladu slowly entered my room with a black cord wrapped around his fingers forming a black rubber fist with two loops of whips about three feet long extending from it. The look in Lladu's eyes said, "I am going to enjoy this."

As he towered over me, I balled up. The first lash went across my shoulder, down my back, impacting the hardest on the lowest part of the opposite side of my spine. I screamed and tried to run. He grabbed my arm and raised me off my feet. Lladu swung so hard the cord whipped around the middle of my shirtless back and chest, embedding in both.

I only remember the first two hits, but for the duration of my "whatever the hell this was," I felt cold and stinging on so many parts of me I just grew weak from trying to run and get away. I remember at one point, Lladu held me by my throat because I wouldn't and couldn't stay in one place. He held me up against the wall and wanted to hit me in my face with the cord. I blocked it with my right forearm, and the cord made two horseshoe brands in my flesh.

I don't remember much after that, only being dizzy and my sister coming in (after he got tired). She held me while I bled, cried, and hurt.

Lladu is his name backwards and was my mother's boyfriend.

On my right forearm, I have a tattoo covering the lashes. It shows a “beast” reminding me of Udall’s claws grabbing my throat.

This is one of the MANY reasons why I am clingy towards my own children and despise adults who hurt children, intentionally or unintentionally, in any way, form, fashion, or condition.

Instant Disapproval **By Felicia Jones**

As a student at William J. Bogan High School, I had a Caucasian friend named Kimberly Sterrie. She and I hung out for three years. I’ll never forget her mother stating she wanted to meet me because she had heard many nice and positive things about me from our teachers and our volleyball coach.

I had spoken to Kim’s mom many times within the three years Kim and I were friends, but we had never met. She knew where I lived, had knowledge of my parents’ profession, and all that seemed to be fine until she picked me up and saw that I was African American. Kim’s mom instantly let me know of her disapproval of her daughter being friendly with a black. Kim’s mother felt that I had misled her. My speech was very articulate. When I spoke, I didn’t sound like I was African American. The reason Kim’s mother was under the impression I was Caucasian was because my family was the first black family in nine years to have moved to that particular city block. In 1970 it was unheard of to the whites that blacks were moving into that area.

After all that took place, Kim’s mother transferred her from Bogan, and we no longer had contact with one another.

Witness to Violence **By Dennis Cotton**

In 1956 about the time that Emmett Till was brutally murdered in Mississippi, there was a lot of confusion and disbelief about that tragedy. There were two men arguing in the alley. Both had pistols. Only one had his baby on his hip. Shots were fired by both individuals. The child on the one man’s hip was struck in the head by the bullet intended for her father. It was a terrible scene to witness.

I was just a little boy. To witness this gruesome act of violence was terrible. It impressed upon me a sense of hate for all mankind. That baby did not have to die. These men were drunk. And so life goes on.

Relieved to See Him Go **By Ricky Barners**

I did not know my father at all. My only memory of him was that he was a violent person. I remember when I was five years

old my mother would not let him into the house because he was drunk. He broke the door open, came in, and beat my mother. Hearing his loud voice and seeing the bruises on my mother, I stayed away from him.

About two years later, he left one day and did not return. I was relieved. As I got older, I saw how hard it was for my mother to raise nine kids.

I grew to hate him for abandoning my mother and for the shame that I experienced. There were times when my mother sent me to the corner store with a note asking to get food on credit. My friends would laugh at me for having to ask for food handouts.

Security Blanket with a Heart **By Dominique Christian**

When I was about four years old, we lived with my aunt in the projects. The hallways were the most dangerous place to be. Dim yellow lights swept the floor, mice and rats screeched through the cracks in the brick walls, and trash, liquor bottles, and drug needles made up the flooring. It definitely wasn’t a place for a



child to be standing. I wandered off into the deep dark staircase.

"Move, move, stop, it's the police!" The police came running up the staircase chasing a dark-skinned black male wearing a black sweater and dark colored jeans. As they ran up, I was knocked down three flights of concrete steps.

"Dominique, Bobby, my baby!" my mom yelled, as I continued to tumble down the staircase. When Bobby, the father of my two younger brothers, finally reached me, my lip was bleeding and my body was trembling in fear and in cold from the wind gust that poured through the cracks and fenced hallways. I cried and cried.

My mom snatched me from Bobby's arms and held me so tight and so close that I could feel her heart beat while her pulse rushed through every part of her body. Crying inside, she said, "Baby, it's gonna be OK. Don't cry. Mommy is here now." As we walked through the yard, we could hear yelling from the roof top (a place where the drug dealers always ran if they couldn't bust into someone's apartment).

My security blanket is not made of cotton with different patterns and textures. My security blanket is made of a heart, covered by flesh, and stands 5 feet 9 inches up, with a caramel skin complexion. She is my mom, my angel who birthed me and will protect my mind, body, and soul.

Odyssey Junior

Thanks to Sandra Lebi, Patty Washington, Deb Ham, and Sarah Schmid, our Dane County Parent Council childcare staff, and to Odyssey '08 graduate and UW student Sherri Bester, our faithful and loving volunteer, for working with children of Odyssey students each Wednesday nights at the Harambee Center. Here are a few photos and some writing samples we hope to include in an "Odyssey Oracle Junior" featuring creative work by all the children.

I Wish

By Taliya S. Brown,
age 10 Daughter of
Lavern Brown

I wish I had a dog.

I wish I was invisible.

I wish I was rich.

I wish I was tall.

I wish I was smart.

I wish every day was
Christmas.

I wish every day was
my birthday.

I wish my hair was
long.

I wish I would never
die.

I wish I didn't have to
get glasses.

I wish I didn't have to
get shots.

I wish I was a good
writer.

I wish . . .





Art by
Syngletin Harston,
age 10 Son of
Tiffany Harston

Journal Thoughts
By Keysean Rodgers,
age 8 Son of
Wynetta Taylor

I like to dance
with my brother
and to sing with my

brother. . . .At home
I give my mom hugs
and kisses. I play with
my brother. I love
my mom, and I love
my brother, so even
though we fight we
still love each other.
And this is a sad story
about my dad. When
I was a little kid,
my dad and I played
together, and when

I started to grow up,
he died, and I cried
so hard. I love him so
much. Sometimes I
think about him.

At Thanksgiving
we would love each
other and sing and
bless God and family
and friends and us
and different people.
We are lucky for what
we have because

people out there have nothing, in the cold, outside, nowhere to live, and no food. So that's why we bless and why we are thankful.



Journal
Thoughts
By Simone Johnson,
age 12
Daughter of
Rhonda Johnson

For Thanksgiving my family is coming and we are going to see each other after a long time because they live up in Michigan. I am so excited that we are going to have some good soul food, like mac & cheese, chicken, mashed potatoes, greens, turkey, peach cobbler, chocolate cake, and sweet potato pie.



Orok Rice ('07), Chief Justice
Shirley Abrahamson, Ivonne Ramos ('08), and
Kegan Carter ('04) at an October 30 event
sponsored by the University League, one of the
key supporters of the UW Odyssey Project.