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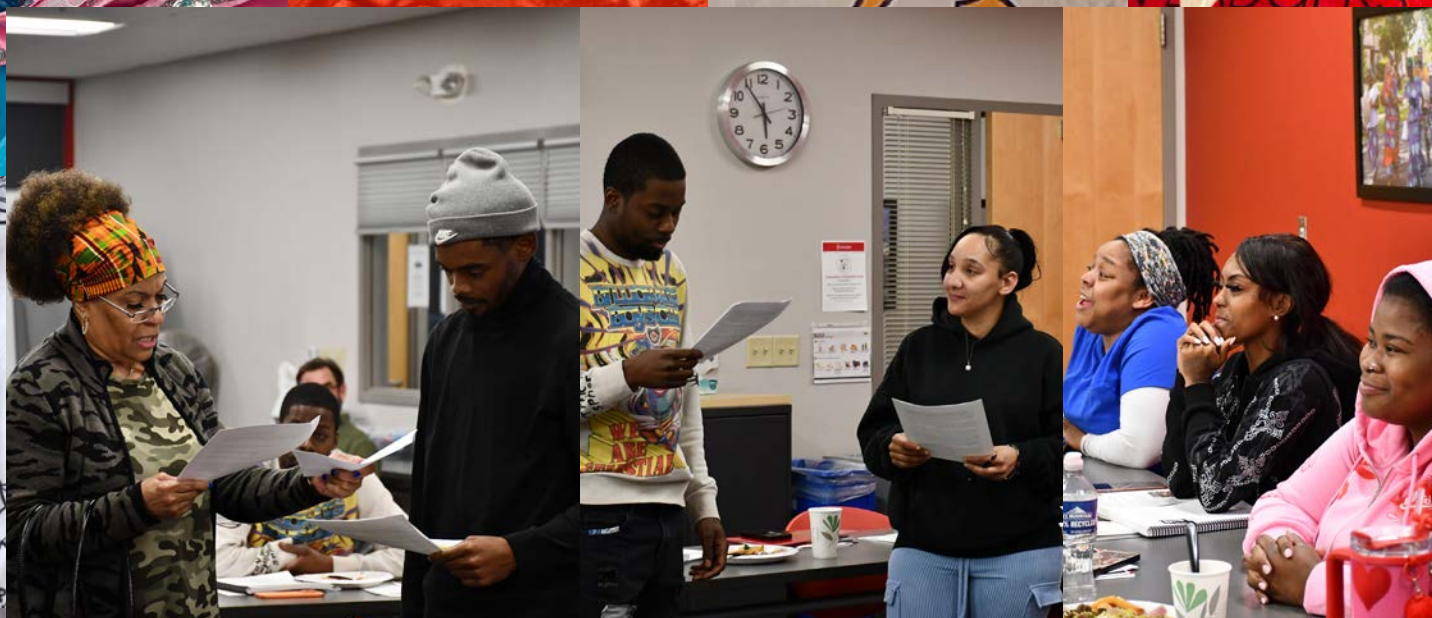
MARCH 11, 2026

ODYSSEY



ORACLE

CLASS SONGS AND QUILT



Contents

Song of the Class of 2026..... 2

Songs of Ourselves 3

The Fabric of Our Lives 12



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SONG OF THE CLASS OF 2026

We are the Odyssey Class of 2026!

We have worked as a CNA, nanny, cook, bartender, waste manager, medical assistant, stay-at-home mom, custodian, special education assistant, house cleaner, cashier selling calendars at the mall, hair braider, grocery bagger, school lunch server, security guard, dialysis tech, student bus driver, waitress, caregiver, case manager, life guard, handyman, and truck unloader, with jobs at Taco Bell, Burger King, T-Mobile, Sprint, UPS, Walmart, Madison Metropolitan School District, UW Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, and the City of Madison.

We hail from Madison, Racine, Onalaska, and Milwaukee, WI; Brooklyn, NY; Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA; St. Paul, MN; Nashville, TN; Flint, MI; Baltimore, MD; Gary, IN; Louisville, KY; Montgomery, AL; Atlanta and Dunwoody, GA; San Juan, Puerto Rico; South Africa, Italy, the Gambia, and Russia,

With ancestors coming from Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Florida, Pennsylvania, Texas, West Virginia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Spain, the Gambia, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, and South Africa,

Speaking Spanish, English, Ebonics, Taino dialect of Arawakan, Soninke, Mandinka, Foilani, Wolof, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Zulu, AAVE, Cherokee, Aramaic, and Nahuatl,

Worshipping as Catholic, Anglican, Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, "some kind of Christian," nondenominational, and spiritual.

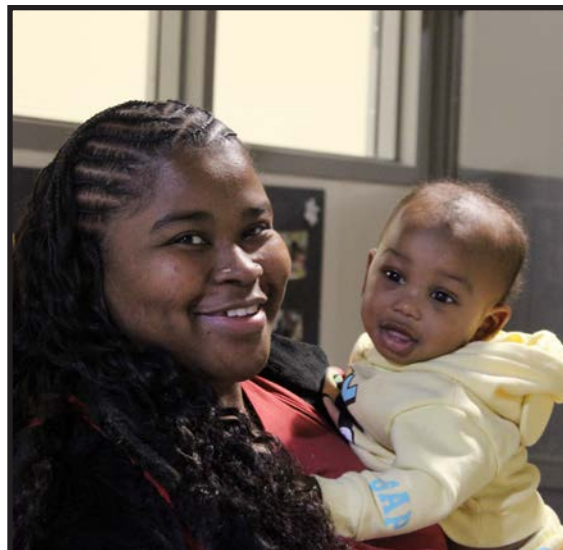
We call ourselves strong, beautiful, sarcastic, loving, playful, spontaneous, encouraging, focused, determined, bright, fierce, tall, firm, reserved, caring, bold, sensitive, small, open, honest, smart, soft, kind, mean, funny, assertive, empowering, short, hilarious, mighty, quiet, original, independent, feisty, fun, outgoing, busy, complex, compassionate, loyal, ambitious, resilient, forgiving, dark, driven, spiritually growing, thoughtful, compassionate, active, happy and sad.

We are the Odyssey Class of 2026!



SONGS OF OURSELVES

I am Laura Jay
 I am Music, I am Laughter, I am soulful cuisine.
 I am family above all things
 I am a mother, a daughter, I am four of nine siblings.
 I am romance, a fairytale lover, an early 2000s Disney dream
 I am a well-seasoned traveler
 I am flights, sailing in the breeze
 I am trips out of the country, I'm a passport junkie
 I am courage, I am bravery, a survivor of many things
 I am knowledge, I'm a learner, a great big world of wonder
 I am many things, a jack of all trades
 I'm imperfectly but perfectly made, by man and by woman,
 that is how I'm made
 I am a woman, divine, creator of all things
(Laura Bass)

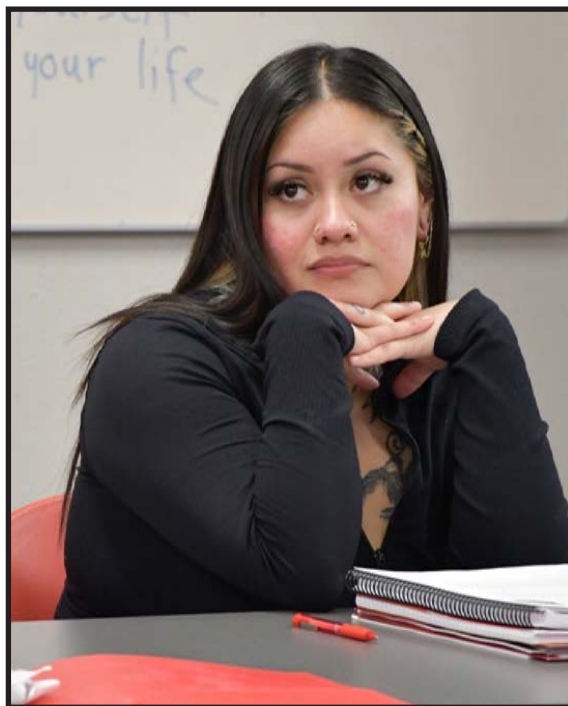


I am Serene
 I am a young black woman
 The first and only daughter to both of my parents
 Raised by resilient and empowering women
 I am a go-getter, striving to achieve my goals
 I am a mother devoted to giving my daughter the best life
 I am a loyal friend
 I am a caregiver always willing to help those in need
 I am reserved and observant but talkative and funny once
 you get to know me
 I am Serene
(Serene Boyd)

I am Lisa
 formally known as Anisha
 once a product of the "state"
 A CHOSEN daughter through Adoption
 Roots of my origin unknown, Blended is all I know
 Black, beautiful and strong
 The youngest and shortest.
Fierce spirit with a soft soul
 Sharing my love for humanity through cooking
 I rock to the beat of my own drum,
 Feeling the energies in every room.
 Daydreamer and wanderer of life
 I represent the Odyssey community
(Lisa Brown)



I am Richard
 The son of Richard
 Grandson of Richard
 Raised to be a man by Shawntell, my mother
 I am Richard Butler
 The father of Knowledge Shawntell Burton-Butler
 I am Richard William Butler III
 And I am the protector of my family!
 Have you heard of me?
(Richard Butler)



I am Stacy
 Born here from parents
 Born outside here.
 I am here for you
 To hear about our culture.
 To understand why I represent
 Their motherland.
 I'm a mother to a
 Mexican and Black child
 He's my reflection; a
 Life where he does not lack.
 My life; a cup half full,
 Nourishes my thirst
 To be the first
 To reach a successful ending.
(Stacy Castillo)

I am Cquemiah
 The oldest Daughter
 I am strong
 The strongest there can be
 I am confident
 Yes I can do it
 I am growing a life
 Yi'lynn's Mommy
 I am worthy
 Worth anything in this world
 I am beautiful
 Beautiful as I can Be
(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)



I am Valencia, the first daughter of a sunfish and the second daughter of a curved horned ram.
 I am Valencia, the granddaughter of a Mississippi native and the great granddaughter of Cherokee.
 I am Valencia, Jadon's sister.
 I am Valencia, the one who got up every time.
 I am Valencia, most powerful most brave.
 I am Valencia, a mix of culture and stories.
 I am Valencia – my heart beats with passion and resilience.
 I am Valencia, dedicated to personal growth, embracing each challenge as a chance to evolve.
 I am Valencia, on an Odyssey of self-discovery.
(Valencia Collins)



I am Paola
 Jibara straight from La Isla del Encanto
 I am brown skin and proud
 I am beautiful, I am strong, I am resilient
 I am a great mother, daughter, sister
 I am quiet and shy, but also confident and loyal.
 I am a leader, I am a woman, I am Me.
(Paola Damiani)

I am Tida
 I am a Gambian-American woman
 I am a daughter, sister, and a mother
 I am a nurturer of all
 I am learning to be a calm person to my siblings
 I am a very very shy and quiet person in public
 I am also learning about myself and trying to find out who I am and what I can become
 I am shy and observant and learning to be patient and caring
 I am Tida
(Tida Drammeh)



I am Destiny!
 I am a strong black dedicated mother
 I am beautiful!!
 I am a caterpillar that blossomed into a butterfly.
 I am focus
 I am a child of God!!
 I am resilience!
(Destiny Drone)



I am Kiana.
 Daughter of a wise intellectual woman.
 Mother of a daughter with an old soul that shines like the sun.
 Sister to a charismatic, funny, loving young woman.
 Partner to a sweet and considerate man.
 I am an enthusiast of the outdoors.
 I am a lover of animals.
 I am a woman trying to find her way and voice in this world.
 I am quiet and caring.
 I think deeply and dream frequently.
 I am loving and trustworthy.
 I am loyal.
 I am Kiana.

(Kiana Galloway)

I am Took Ghee (Tikoya)
 unique in my own way,
 I am different, weird one might say.
 The first daughter to my mother and father.
 The first grandchild to my father's side.
 I am the strong one, who problem solves.
 I am a dark skin warrior, who loves the skin tone.
 I am a lupus warrior.
 a warrior of depression and dark days.
 I am the one who believes in God and his glory.
 I am faith. I am inspiration.
 I am going as far as my dreams can take me.
 I am Took Ghee the Ghee-est of them all.
 The one who never fall and stay down.
 but get up and ball.
 I am a sister, a mother, a friend, a daughter
 I am Took Ghee Dare to be different.
 Tikoya Took Ghee
(Tikoya Gilmer)



I am Larry
 I am strong
 I am Black
 I am smart
 I am confident
 I am powerful
 I am a father
 I am a man before I am anything
 I am a provider
 I am a King
 I am trustful
 I am a leader
 I am capable
(Larry Grant)



I am Antejiah . . .

A quiet horizon before the Sun, dreams folded in my pockets like maps I half-remember.

I love with a heart that stayed pure, even after learning pain up close, even after love tried to teach me fear.

I move with certainty between vision and reality, I rise when it's time, and I stand firm when tested.

I have known wounds should be hardened, but I chase healing this time instead, turning scars into proof of survival.

I move with certainty between vision and reality, SOFT where it matters, unbreakable where it counts.

I am the pause before courage, the spark after doubt, the place where imagination goes to feel safe enough to be LOUD.

I am not finished and that's the best part.

(Antejiah Greer)

I am Shataya

A mother – A foundation and pathway to their success

A gentle nurturer – A lioness with a lullaby, I am fierce yet I am tender

A quiet fire – shaped by the wind carrying warmth to the ones I love

I am Shataya

A daughter – A continuation not a copy

A Daylily – impossible to destroy – blooming in every season, rising taller with every storm – unbroken

My roots gripping soil of the past – branches thrusting forward toward the future last

I am Shataya

A child of God – rooted in the blood unshaken by the flood – I am covered not broken

A giver of love – A thread that binds mending hearts with minds

A woman of strength and perseverance – A mountain whose story is shaped by time towering tall through trials and tribulations

Rooted in God – made of love – forged by strength

I am held by grace and built to endure

Leaving footprints in the garden for those who follow

I am Shataya

(Shataya Hall)





I am Jacqueline Desmona Hawkins
an Afro American woman,
a loving, caring, and devoted mother and student.
I am kind, empathetic and strong.
Guided by my faith in God and compassion,
I am committed to growing, learning,
and building a better future for myself and my family.
(Jacqueline Hawkins)

I am Brittany.
I am shaped by late nights and early faith.
I am the kind of woman who makes something from
nothing and calls it a beginning.
I am a mother before anything else,
Learning strength in quiet moments,
Learning patience in the middle of chaos.
I am a builder of beauty
Brands, ideas, futures
Even when resources are thin and expectations are heavy.
I am drawn to walls and windows,
To empty rooms that wait for intention.
I see possibility where others see square footage.
Ownership where others see limits.
I am softness that learned strategy,
Vision that learned discipline,
Dreams that refuse to stay imaginary.
I am still becoming, still moving, still choosing growth.
I stand in my own name,
Unfinished, undeniable, and here!
(Brittany Hughes)



I am Angel, I was born on a Winter morning, January 31st,
1957, to the daughter of Howard and Nancy Moore. Love and
labor are running in my blood. I am a sister to five. One voice
among a living choir, whose laughter, tears, and lessons echoed
through the house like hymns. We learned early to share bread
secrets and dreams and to find strength in each other's stories.
I came into a world still stretching towards freedom. In a world
where my mother's prayers were both lullaby and shield, they
called me blessed before I even spoke a word. I grew up in the
rhythm of gospel, jazz, and kitchen wisdom. I danced in the
face of sorrow; I lifted my hands when words could not rise.
I am a daughter, mother, grandmother, great grandmother,
niece, auntie, niece, cousin, friend, dreamer, and witness. One
thread in the tapestry of those who dare to survive and then to
sing for I am a song written by the eternal. **(Angel Moore)**

I am Viwe
 I am a son of Africa
 I am of the "Bantu" speaking people of
 sub-Saharan Africa
 I am a brother, son, and uncle, and
 I am slowly realizing
 my current reality is not my future.
 I am inspired to be the best version of myself.
 I am more than enough.
 I am thoughtful, kind, considerate,
 and above all else God-fearing
 I am no better than you
 just as you are no better than me.
 I am destined for great things.
 I am because you are.
(Viwe Mpurwana)



I am Shelton
 I am an alien
 I am divine
 I'm a father and a creator
 My skin is made from the ether
 My soul is a beacon for the seekers
 I am a teacher to the preachers
 A creator that seeks the truth
 For his leisure
(Shelton Murphy)

I am Roché
 I am a twin sister, oldest of seven,
 I am a mother of one,
 such pure love without a question,
 I am a CNA, a bartender, and also a student,
 I am caring, I am loving, I am prudent,
 I am on a journey searching for more,
 I am ready for that peace that I can no longer ignore.
(Roché Palmer)



I am Roncal
 I am late nights, early mornings,
 Three little hearts, hope in my eyes.
 I am from strong Black women who made a way out of nothing.
 I bend, I heal, I don't break in half.

I am boundaries, I am grace, I'm not my past.
 I walk away and keep my face.

I am calm, because jail is not the place.
 I am a mother, I am a flame.
 I lost some pieces, found my name.

I am quiet, I am rooted, but my presence is still noticed.
 I am brown skin, soft smile, serious face.
 I am laughter in the kitchen, music loud, Sunday dinners.

I am an observer, deep talks, Odyssey, I'm on my way.
 I am healing without announcing it, prayers mixed with faith.
 I am she, I am her, becoming me every day. **(Roncal Riley)**



I am Lilibeth
 Descendant of Aztec, bloodline of Huastec
 A proud child of immigrants
 Watching my parents work all day in the fields
 Hard and tiring labor they continued for 15 years
 Self-taught myself a new language
 Helping my parents translate, since I was young
 Loved and love unconditionally
 Lost my father to cancer, my grandma to heart failure
 Learned a bit late to cherish time for its limit
 A mother of 3, A sister to 4, An aunt of 8
 And a wife to a wonderful husband
 Reading, Family, and love—is a large part of me
 Peace, happiness, and unity—is what I dream of this world to be!
(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)

I am JuJu
 Daughter of Sheila and Orlando
 Mother to six
 Auntie to many
 Sister of John, Jeremy & Ransheta
 A Beautiful Black Queen
 Courageous and smart
 Short and round
 Still learning and growing
 I am JuJu fierce and free
 Strong and willful
 Future EMT
 I am JuJu, this is the
 makings of me! **(JuJu Stallworth)**





I am George
 A father of five
 I am the first born
 A loving son
 A big brother to my siblings
 A big sports fan, football and basketball
 I am determined to graduate
 I am officially a college student
 I am Odyssey determined to go far
(George Sydnor)

I am Shaneece, an ethereally radical goddess
 I am abundant in spirit, with abundance in pockets.
 Born & raised in the 608.
 From the land of the cold & the cheese-head state.
 A mommy to Nyla, the brightest star that I've seen
 She reflects the fight and light that resides within me.
 I love music, traveling, sweets, & art
 learning & earning or any matters of the heart.
 I'm community focused, & youth invested
 At every point in my life, injustice was protested
 I'm fun, spontaneous, and carry lots of passion
 If someone's being mistreated, it'll manifest in a different fashion.
 I deserve a life free of fear & full of positivity too.
 If I repeat that mantra day & night, it's guaranteed to come true.
(Shaneece Taylor)



I am Joseph the natural born leader
 I am a man with purpose
 To Overcome
 And achieve each and every goal I set
 I once was the Prince
 now I'm the King Who's Beat the odds by any means
 I am a focused father paving the way for his Kids
 I will be a UW Odyssey graduate
 I will get my degree in education
 I am destined to succeed!
(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)

I am Kharmen.
 I am the love felt in good memories.
 I am the seas and oceans in tranquility.
 I am the soothing voice in an hour of need.
 I am the flower beautifully grown from the darkness and seed.
 I am the phoenix emerging from ashes and flame.
 I am the humility lost in the glamor of fame.
 I am the lessons hard learned with wisdom and age.
 I am the person who healed the pain turned to rage.
 I am the soul you feel in rhythm and blues.
 I am the somber in a room when bearing bad news.
 I am the embrace hug from the sun's warm.
 I am even sometimes the chaos and storm.
 I am the civil disobedience to ring the alarm.
 I am the hard truths we avoid to negate any harm.
 I am the Malcolm, Martin, Theresa, Nelson all in one.
 I am the abnormal, the social stigmas, resisted to succumb.
 I am the abstract, as this doesn't bring on shame.
 I am unapologetically me far from the mundane.
 I am most of all only human like you.
 So without intent to harm I deserve to also exist in my truths.

(Kharmen Thomas)



I am Shakila.
 I am a black queen, shaped by pain I didn't ask for.
 Strong even when I'm tired.
 I am Zabrina's daughter,
 Some would say her twin, well most,
 but I am Shakila.
 I am a mother who loves deeply,
 a student learning how to heal,
 showing up even when it's hard.
 I am faith filled, resilient, still growing yet becoming,
 still standing.
 I am Shakila!

(Shakila Woods)

THE FABRIC OF OUR LIVES

This quilt was made for my daughter Madison when she was just three months old. She will be 13 this year, and I'm hoping she can keep it forever. On one side, it has her very first baby photo along with characters she loves like Dora, Hello Kitty, Big Bird, and SpongeBob. Seeing those pictures reminds me of how small and curious she was, and it brings back joy and excitement of those early days. She still sleeps with it, which makes it even more special to me.



The other side has a beautiful flower pattern, which makes me feel warmth and love every time I see it. I had quilts like this made for each of my children, and gifting them feels like wrapping them in love and care. The quilt isn't just a blanket – it's a keepsake full of memories and the special bond I have with my children.

(Brittany Hughes)

The piece of fabric that I chose to write about is my son Joshua's baby hat. I chose this piece of fabric because it's so sentimental to me. It signifies when I became a mother. It signifies when my son and I first met. The soft cotton, just thin as breath, stretched into pale blue, white, and pink stripes that blur together when my eyes fill with tears of joy. I remember his hat being just a tad bit too big for him. It sat low on his head, grazing his eyebrows, the edge rolling slightly where a nurse folded it down. Just thinking of his hat reminds me now that time waits for no one. In that very moment of me just having my son I remember how I felt that time stood still. **(Roché Palmer)**



As a kid some of my best memories of my brothers were watching them in West High blue, yellow, and white basketball jerseys. I watched them play the sport/game they loved the most. I've seen the dedication they had when they put those jerseys on. All three of my older brothers played varsity basketball for West. Seeing them in school colors played a core memory in my life. My family and I spent so many days attending games, championships, and finals. My brother Tony was one of the best basketball players in Madison, around his time.



Almost anybody would tell you the same thing 20 years later, almost 21 years. His name still rings bells and is brought up in conversations on the best player topics when it hits social media. The somewhat silk number 23 jersey is an image that always reminds me of him. I've watched about 50 games be won in that jersey. I can picture him wiping the sweat off his face while on the court. I picture him running up and down the court showing off his immaculate skills. He did slam dunks at just 14/15 years old in that jersey. I can picture him balling up the sides as he placed his hand on his hips for breaths.

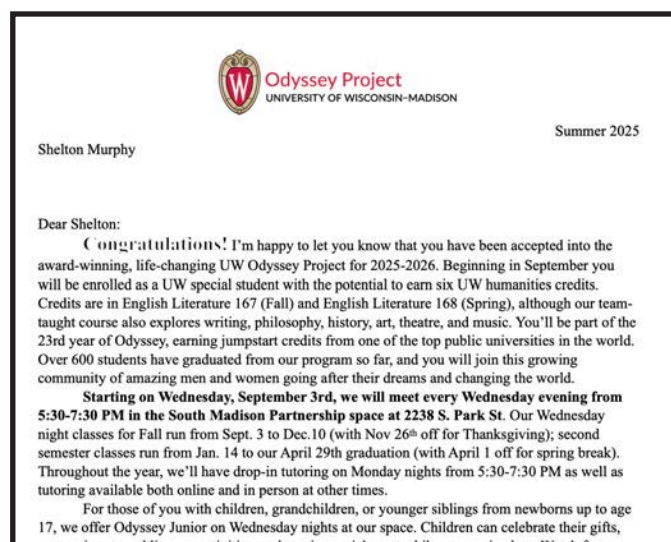
The first basketball game in Beloit, WI after he passed, the teammates carried his jersey around. When announcing his name like he was still here to play the game, his teammates walked down the spirit tunnel holding it up, and a moment of silence took place in the gymnasium. They laid his uniform on the chair where he would sit for the entire game. The next week later, the school retired my brother's jersey. No one will ever be able to wear the number 23 at West High. The school gifted the jersey to my family.

I have been in possession of the jersey since 2008. My mother gave it to me and I've had it since. The

school also framed it in a glass picture frame and it's been very sturdy. Once I gave birth to my son, who resembles my brother Tony so much, I knew I would gift it to him: it was decoration in his room. My son was always so mesmerized by the framed jersey. I would see him or catch him sitting next to it just staring or playing by it. It made me feel like his uncle was always close by even in spirit. **(Tikoya Gilmer)**

Unfortunately, the universe won't let me be materialistic. Every time

I hold something dear to me, it ends up getting destroyed or taken. Even the Taoist monks say it's good to detach yourself from earthly desires—to attain a higher self and work on your spiritual desires like peace, harmony, and the universal slows of nature. So now I use things as markers in my life to mark my growth or evolution. The most recent achievement that marks my growth is my acceptance letter to Odyssey Project. It made me feel like keeping a positive mindset I can recreate my reality. **(Shelton Murphy)**



This “fabric of our lives” assignment had me stuck for a bit. I really couldn’t think of anything until I thought of my daughter. I work for the Madison Senior Center, and a sweet lady named Rosie that attends there for activities knitted my baby a pink throw blanket and booties that match. The blanket feels like a soft, stringy handmade fabric, the kind you don’t see very often anymore. It’s a blanket made with love and care! A pattern of crosses connects all together to make a flexible comfy sleeping tool for my baby. When I see Knowledge wrapped up in her throw blanky, I see Rosie! It makes me feel good to know my child not only has my unconditional love but also the love from others who love me just as well. That’s something I didn’t grow up with, so knowing Knowledge has it through me is something that could bring tears of joy to my eyes. If it was my blanket/blanky throw cover, I could say more, but this belongs to my baby and she could probably tell you more! Haha **(Richard Butler)**



In 2018, I took a road trip with one of my best friends. We drove from WI, down to NOLA, and then back up. Our plan was to attend the Drake and Migos concert that was in Atlanta, Georgia. Drake is my favorite artist, and that was my first time seeing him in concert. I felt a lot of emotions: anxiety, exhilaration, gratitude, and even exhaustion from all

the driving we’d done. During a break, I bought a bright red bomber jacket that’s five sizes larger than my size. This jacket reminds me of that special moment that all fans hope for: a chance to see their favorite artist in concert. **(Shaneece Taylor)**



The Gift of Hope

Every week during her dialysis sessions, Lola kept her hands busy with small projects. One week, she was especially focused, carefully knitting a hat as a handmade gift for a friend who had supported her through many treatments.

When the session ended, Lola handed me the knitted hat with a gentle smile.

“This is for you,” she said softly. “Thank you for helping me stay strong and reminding me I’m not alone.”

As I held the hat, I felt the meanings in every stitch.

It wasn’t just a piece of fabric. It was a symbol of hope, gratitude, and the bond we had formed.

From that day on, it became a reminder of why I do what I do. **(Antejah Greer)**



The fabric is a blanket I've had since childhood. I was adopted so I was never able to receive a baby blanket. As a child when we would make trips down to Waukesha, we would have picnics in my grandmother's living room. She would bring out the blanket and lay it on her living room floor. My brother and I thought it was the coolest thing there was. Watching our cartoons and eating lunch or dinner, we sat out there as her kitchen table was too small for all four of us to sit at. Anything she did was viewed with awe through our young eyes. The colors are of a light beige, soft jade green, and pink. Now that I am older, the blanket is with me when I go to sleep. It's a form of comfort and connection. It is one of the few treasures I was able to keep, and I have a grateful heart for the memories.

(Lisa Brown)

The day my grandmother passed, I was honored to take home the quilt that rested on her as she took her last breaths. That blanket became a gift to my unborn child in the very moment of her death---a



passing of love from one generation to the next. It carried her warmth, her scent, and the quiet presence she left behind.

When my second-born child, Justyce, arrived, I wrapped her in that quilt. I wanted her to be held by something more than fabric. I wanted her to be embraced by the touch, the scent, and the love my grandmother had for her before she ever took her first breath. As I wrapped her up, it felt like I was connecting them across time---letting my grandmother's love reach her in the only way it could.



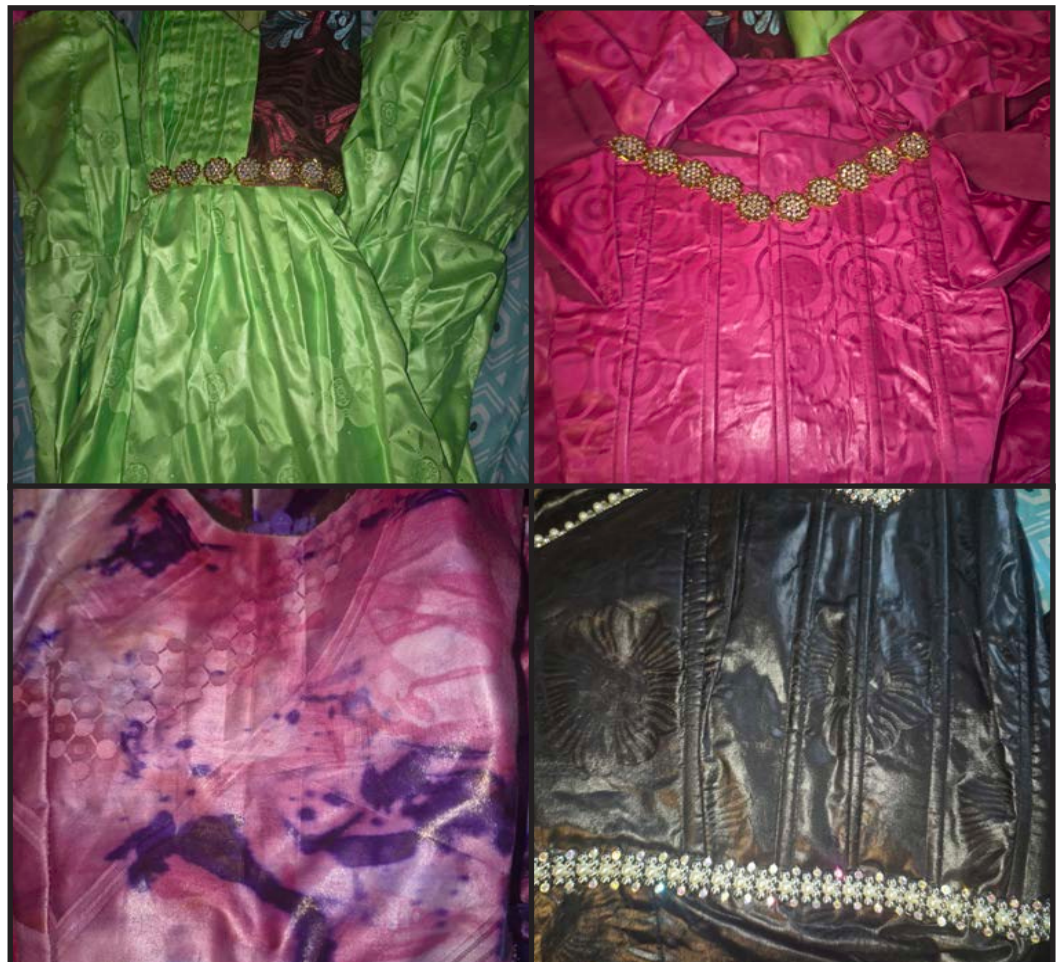
This quilt is more than a blanket. It is my memory, grief, and comfort stitched together. It holds the weight of loss and the softness of new life. Even now, I don't wrap my children in it the way I once imagined. I want the scent of my grandmother and Justyce to stay with each other forever. My daughter never got to meet her grandma, but through this quilt, she carries her. Every thread holds the love my grandmother gave so freely. It keeps her close---still caring, still loving, still finding ways to show up for us, even in her absence.

(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)

I have both of the light blue, stretchy, swaddle receiving blankets my babies had in the hospital after their births. I truly cherish them, and every time I come across them when I'm putting away clothes on laundry day, they evoke overwhelming emotions. They still carry the smell of a fresh baby, and I'm taken back to the first time I held my babies after carrying them for nine months. Finally seeing the life that grew inside of my body and the sacrifice I made and all my body gave to get them here is an indescribable feeling, and just for a moment I'm frozen in time. They evoke a sense of euphoria, pride, and an overwhelming amount of happiness. I am so proud of the fact that my body grew my babies on the inside and grew on the outside as well. These blankets remind me of the strength and bravery I am capable of. **(Laura Bass)**



A piece of fabric I want to talk about is called "Bazin." Bazin is typically worn by West Africans. It is a high quality, stiff, and shiny cotton damask fabric popular in West Africa especially Gambia, Mali, and Senegal. It is hand dyed to achieve vibrant colors. It is the primary material for crafting elaborate, loose-fitting Boubou robes for men and women. It is worn during the holidays like Eid, weddings, or naming ceremonies to celebrate the occasions. The Bazin is traditionally passed down from generation to generation. The fabric connects me to the homeland and makes me feel proud for continuing the tradition. It is more than a fabric: it is close to the heart and a reminder of home! **(Tida Drammeh)**



A special item of clothing that I have is my dad's motorcycle jacket. It is a thick, heavy leather jacket covered in patches. My dad was a part of a Motorcycle club called the Smokin' Wheels Motorcycle Club, formally known as The Unknown Riders Motorcycle Club. He was a member for over 20 years and was one of the founding members of the club.



The jacket still carries that thick leather smell I can remember from all the riders. When I was younger, I went to motorcycle club parties with him and my mom. I'd give him a hug, and the jacket would smell like leather, cigarettes, and exhaust fumes and always a hint of Paul Masson brandy. That smell is something I'll never forget.

My dad was grandfathered into the club right before he and my mom moved to Illinois so he could stay a member. You usually have to live in the state that the club is in to continue to be a member. Normally, when a club member passes away, the jackets must be returned to the club. However, they allowed my mom and our family to keep my dad's jacket. I'm incredibly grateful that they did because the club meant so much to him, and having the jacket keeps us connected to that part of his life.

I also like to bring his jacket with me whenever I go to a club party. It makes us all feel like the fallen riders are there with us - like old times. **(Shataya Hall)**

My son's baby clothes remind me of the most precious moments I could never go back to. His body so small and fragile, he could fit right on my forearm with my hand cupping his small head.

It smells of soft powder mixed with fresh soft linens, and faintly milky. Many don't know but this aroma is a mixture of lingering amniotic fluids, vernix caseosa (the white substance babies are born with) and glandular secretions. This smell helps mothers identify their newborns by this scent alone, and for that I'm grateful to have my sensorial abilities.

My son's soft clothes that once fit him like a glove continue to help me remember the blessing I received almost five years ago. And I pray that scent does not fade away. **(Stacy Castillo)**



Every year since my mother divorced my father in 2012, he created a Christmas gift tradition of gifting my sisters and me coats. Flash forward to December of 2017. I had saved up to buy a North Face coat because I knew it was too expensive for my dad to give me. I was looking at coats online when my dad came up and asked me if I was going to buy a coat. I told him that I was and I would still want his Christmas coat as well. My dad looked at me and said, “No mija yo te la compro (no my daughter I’ll buy it).” I told him it was too expensive. He looked at me, smiled, and said “yo te la voy a comprar mija (my daughter I’m buying it for you)”

I laughed and told him the price, expecting him to refuse and say, “What! No, for that price I’ll buy you three.” My dad didn’t even blink or criticize the price. He handed me his card and told me to get the coat I wanted. I was confused as I stared at him. He placed the credit card on the counter, sat next to me, and said I should get a black coat like he always gave me. I ordered my black North Face coat and thanked him a million times.

My dad had been a frugal man, always conscious about how he spent his money. I found his sudden generosity odd, but I didn’t dwell on it because I finally had the coat I wanted! When I got the coat, I was so excited that I immediately put the coat on and went outside to test its warmth. After staying outside fifteen minutes, I ran inside to tell my dad how warm the coat kept me even in the freezing cold. He laughed and said it was money well spent since I loved it that much. I didn’t know that it was the last coat I would ever receive from him as he died a month later. A simple black coat became the most treasured, cherished, and by far the warmest coat I own. Nine years later I still refuse to get rid of it because it reminds me how much my father means to me. **(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)**



My brother’s blanket holds sentimental value and feels like a connection to him. It carries memories of his presence, comfort, warmth, and a sense of closeness. When I miss him, the sight of it reminds me of his bright smile, his strong structure, and his presence; it is a silent companion in my grief and a symbol of his and our love. It’s not just a blanket; it’s a reminder of his life and the bond I still carry in my heart. Some days it’s my strength.

His photo serves as

a reminder when I look up to him how I want to make him proud. **(JuJu Stallworth)**



A tie is meant to be worn at milestones, graduations, and interviews. The tie I chose was worn to a funeral instead. It holds the memory of my cousin, Rydell Da'runn Ards-King, and the moment I realized how final loss can be.

Rydell was sixteen when his life ended in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He never got to graduate, never got to create his own family, and never got to see his siblings grow up or succeed in life. Knowing that someone so young could be taken so violently forced me to understand how fragile life truly is.

The tie brings me back to seeing him in a casket. He was younger than me, and that made the moment unbearable. It was the youngest funeral I had ever attended, and it changed me. Seeing someone who should have been living, growing, and dreaming lying still made death real in a way nothing else ever had.



What hurts most is knowing his father had asked us many times to come see him, and we never did. We believed that there would always be another time. There wasn't. The last time I saw my cousin, he wasn't laughing or speaking; he was sleeping in a casket. That image stays with me and reminds me how easily time slips away.

That day awakened me. I realized this isn't just something that happens to other people; it is real life. People don't always get second chances. The

tie represents that awakening, the moment I was forced to grow up and see the world as it truly is.

This tie is more than fabric. It carries grief, regret, and love all at once. It holds the memory of Rydell and reminds me to cherish the people I still have because tomorrow is never promised.

(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)

The piece I chose that is special to me is a small cotton hat with blue and pink stripes. The hat was made for my daughter by one of the delivery nurses. When I hold this little hat, I feel a burst of happiness. I remember lying on the surgery table feeling nauseous and very tired. The only thing that kept me awake was the anticipation of my boyfriend bringing my daughter around the blue curtain. The room went silent and suddenly I heard a high-pitched cry. I asked my doula, who was sitting beside me, "Is my baby okay... Is she cute?" I wondered so much in those few minutes that felt like forever. Then the anticipation was over and my boyfriend appeared holding our beautiful daughter. She was swaddled in a teal blanket wearing a small cotton hat with blue and pink stripes. I went through a lot of trials and tribulations during my pregnancy. But holding this little hat reminds me that everything I went through was worth the beautiful outcome. **(Serene Boyd)**



The clothing item that holds my heart is my son's Chicago Bears jersey, number 40, Gale Sayers. He wore it faithfully every game, win or lose, proud and unashamed, cheering for his team with the same steadfast spirit that carried him through life.

This jersey is more than fabric and thread; it's faith and fondness woven together.

His love lingers in the fibers; his laughter lives in its folds. Even now, it feels like him, warm, strong, steadfast, unshakable. When I slip it over my shoulders, it's as if his arms wrap around me again.

This jersey once hugged his body; now it hugs mine. What once symbolized his passion for the Bears now symbolizes my everlasting bond with him. In its scent, I find some solace, and in its memory, I find moments of mercy that mend my soul.

My son Nathan Lee Moore left this earth on October 5, 2021, so yes, this jersey holds more than just a piece of fabric: it carries his courage **and cradles his cheers.** (Angel Moore)

It is a grey blanket with white lettering which reads "A hug when you need it." Your fingers glide over the silky soft but fluffy blanket giving rise to various senses. The blanket was a gift from a friend who understood my current circumstance and wanted to give me something to remind me that I am not alone. Whenever I snuggle in this blanket, I am comforted. It is a



reminder for me that I may be far from home, but I am never truly alone. The softness of the blanket invokes a mother's gentle touch, warm, light, and ever-present. (Viwe Mpurwana)

This pillow reminds me of when we came from Florida. I had a childhood where I was just so happy, and it abruptly got taken away. I remember traveling with this pillow the only thing that I had that was mine besides my clothes and memories of a place I would no longer go back to. It was

my safety net. The ride from Florida to Wisconsin was so long and so gloomy. It rained through most of our ride. I remember being so sad that once again I was leaving family and friends behind. I was just a scared little girl unsure of what the future would hold. This pillow now reminds me of how far I have come from being that scared little girl who wasn't sure about anything, to this strong, independent, wonderful mom who is no longer scared of what the future holds but looks forward to what the future will hold. In a way this pillow is a symbol of strength and a reminder that no matter what I will be ok. (Paola Damiani)



Silky soft pink and blue fabric, bedazzled with rhinestones that were stitched into a delicate pattern throughout the dress. This was the dress my oldest daughter wore on her first birthday. January 4th, 2021. The theme was a winter wonderland, and the dress was perfect for her. She looked like she was headed for a pageant, bright and full of light.

Finding that dress wasn't easy. I couldn't just pick anything. I needed it to represent me...the brightness she brought into my life during a time when everything else felt heavy. Life was already a lot, and somehow, she made it lighter just by being herself. That day was emotional. Seeing her smile, watching her exist so freely, filled my entire heart. I was stressed, running around trying to make sure every detail was perfect for her without realizing that she probably wouldn't even remember any of it. She didn't care about the decorations or whether everything matched. She cared about the people who showed up for her, the bright colors, the toys, and maybe even the food lol. As a single mother, I wanted to shower my daughter with love and gifts. At the time, she was my only child, and I was always doing the most, going above and beyond, because loving her was the one thing I felt fully capable of doing right in life.

That day will forever be a core memory for us, even if she doesn't remember it the way I do. The



fabric of that dress holds meaning far beyond its appearance. I still have it, carefully put away, and now she's six years old, wow. I remember crying that day, not just from joy, but from the weight of it all. I had been forced into single motherhood while her father was incarcerated. I planned the party, gathered family and friends, managed finances, and held myself together mentally even when I felt like I wasn't fully there. Yet somehow, I made it happen. I gave her the best birthday I could. In many ways, it felt like my birthday too, a celebration of survival. That year marked the moment I officially began to acknowledge my strength. The best part was seeing her smile and dance and celebrate with her family and friends.

That fabric will forever represent love.

(Roncal Riley)



The Fabric of our lives is stitched with softness and silence.

A small blanket holds a story never spoken out loud
Hope folded into cotton, dreams cut short by time

I felt Joy rising, then drifting away,
like the light through a closing Door.
My baby sister walked through Shadows,
Strong where pain tried to break her.

I stayed beside her
With no answers,
Just presence.

Some things don't leave us.
they weave into our bones. **(Valencia Collins)**

It is a gray and dark gray two-tone scarf. I am remembering back from my second-grade year walking home from school with friends talking and walking. Not paying attention, I round the corner and out of nowhere I turn and run right into a tree.



From that moment on I was George of the Jungle. “Watch out for that tree” was my name for the rest of the school year. **(George Sydnor)**

My UW blanket might just look like a regular blanket. It’s soft and comfortable. But to me it’s a lifeline. What I mean by that is that my UW blanket gives me hope. It was given to me as a gift by the Odyssey Project program that I hope to complete. I often get discouraged questioning why did I get into the program, but I continue to uplift myself to keep moving forward every day. We are learning each and every day; no matter who you are, you are capable. My UW blanket will be a part of me for the rest of my journey. **(Larry Grant)**



This blanket was two of the best moments in my life—the births of my daughters. After the screaming and “F bomb,” “Give me my baby” is all I could say until they handed them to me. The feeling of falling in love twice is engulfed in this tiny blanket. The joy, fear, love, and flood of simultaneously feeling a multitude of the spectrum called emotions flooding my body at once. That went away and was replaced by love the moment I felt my

babes on my chest.

I delicately placed the blanket on them and knew that I would do anything for a stranger who invaded my body. The moment that I shared with five generations of women in my family, I felt as embraced as my babies each time. The instant amnesia that the baby just came out negated for love. I was told I would never have children, and then to have my daughters creates an unexplainable feeling I have about them.

The moment I looked in their eyes, I realized a version of me was born that day. I cried because I have never felt so connected to anyone. When they nestled closer, it felt like we said everything and nothing in the moment. The blanket is the memory of the day I vowed to never lose my voice again because I always had a reason to speak up. **(Kharmen Thomas)**



