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ODYSSEY



ORACLE

CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY



Contents

Chazen Choices.....	2
Foundations of the Future	10
Envisioning Eight Years from Now	18
Poems that Pack a Punch.....	29
Making Metaphors	30
Odyssey Metaphors.....	39



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CHAZEN CHOICES

On a spring field trip to UW's Chazen Museum of Art, Odyssey students found a work of art that spoke to them in some way and wrote responses in poetry or prose.

STUDY FOR STEEL DRAWING/AMY RECLINING BY TOM WESSELMANN

The art piece caught my eye because of how big and vulgar it was. There's a lady lying down and she's naked. Although that's what you see, I think the artist is expressing how a woman should embrace her body. Her posture is expressing relaxation by the way she lies with her arms stretched and legs resting. To me, this piece says relax and love yourself. (Serene Boyd)



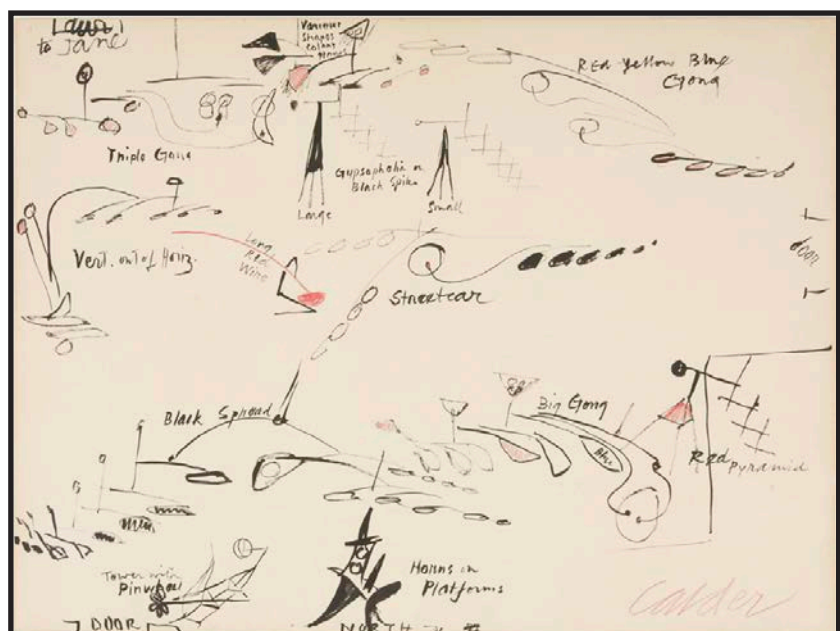
THESEUS COMBATING THE MINOTAUR BY ANTOINE-LOUIS BARYE

This piece stood out to me as man (human) fighting internal demons within—perhaps conquering a struggle or even an obstacle that may be holding one's self back from full potential.

This sculpture gives me the feeling of empowerment and internal strength. It is a mix of realism and mythology (blended). Words that come to mind are strength, power, and freedom. (Lisa Brown)

STUDY FOR AN EXHIBITION BY ALEXANDER CALDER

I see myself drowning. I see myself lost, not knowing which way to go. Looking for every exit, every door, every escape to more. I see my plan laid out but all over the floor. Mind cluttered, running out of space. Trying to gather my thoughts for this plan of action. If I succeed, that wins from practice. (Richard Butler)



MARILYN MONROE
BY ANDY WARHOL

I think this is a wonderful picture because there are not too many pictures of her in color. I'm so used to seeing just black and white photos of her. But the color brings her out more. I feel like I'm seeing the real her. Black and white is the fashion of it, but the color brings out the reality in her. If you notice you only see black and white; this is the first colorful one I've seen. Marilyn reminds me of my mom because Marilyn had no care in the world. There were rumors spread about her, but that did not stop her from being who she was. She was beautiful and had a lot of meanings behind her. **(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)**



LITTLE TRIPTYCH WALL 1960
BY LOUISE NEVELSON

My stuff all my stuff.

I lost it once before.

You can't have my stuff. Not all my stuff. I got it put up, locked away safe with experienced steel walls, and fire crying chains. It will never be easy to just have all my stuff because it's been compartmentalized, all my stuff.

My stuff is old. My stuff is solid. My stuff is knowledge. I just got so much stuff. That's my stuff, all my stuff.

I kept all my stuff through all the royal golden tears, through all of the diamond sweat after all these majestic years.

I've kept my stuff.
(Valencia Collins)



ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS
BY FRANCISCO CAMILO

When a new life is born
 The joy is immense
 The world is dim
 Yet the light is intense
 One moment full of love
 Where pure happiness exists
 The world looks in awe
 As you look in love
 One little life
 One little gift **(Paola Damiani)**



LIBERATION OF THE TOWN OF KISANGANI BY TSHIBUMBA KANDA MATUKE

Tshibumba painted scenes from the arrival of the first explorers from the area through the oppressive Belgian colonial occupation to post-colonial struggles in the Congo. His painting is revealing the brutality of Belgian colonialism and how cruel and oppressive they were on arrival, causing millions of deaths. They were focused on resource extraction, building infrastructure for exports, and restricting educational and political access for the Indigenous population. The Congolese people were forced into labor and faced severe punishment for failing to meet standards. The population suffered from massive population loss, famine, and disease.

I chose this picture/painting because this is still happening in the Congo because of their resources that don't benefit them because of the greed of the Western countries. The Congo is still not free and is the richest country in the world. Because of their resources, they are being exploited. **(Tida Drammeh)**



FARM BUILDING WITH TREES AND WATER DITCH BY PIET MONDRIAN

This painting reminds me of driving through the Wisconsin countryside. The greenery is calming. The painting shows how peaceful the countryside is, and it captures the serenity of life away from the city. **(Kiana Galloway)**

SONGBIRD BY ALISON SAAR

A woman's strength is beyond misfortunes. Bandaged by the feet, feeling unstable or insecure, held upside down, meaning to create chaos and confusion. But even with uncertainty it creates a cage of strength and security. Creative of life for others. Safety for all life even while hanging on for life. Within herself sing a song of strength to get through chaos and harm and hurt. **(Tikoya Gilmer)**





BUSY PEOPLE NO.1, 2010
BY SU XINPING

I walk

As the world around me burns,
Forward I walk with no shame.
I am filled with rage and regret,
Forward I walk with no compromise.
These tired and tattered shoes,
Forward I walk with no way back.
I clench my fist and hide my discomfort.
Forward, forward, and forward I maintain. **(Viwe Mpurwana)**

THE BLACK ODYSSEY, CIRCE
BY ROMARE BEARDEN

This painting to me represents so many different things. The cultural practices of the melanated people. It shows the divine connection to nature and the ether, while also giving you an understanding of why voodoo is called black magic. **(Shelton Murphy)**



SPIRIT WALL
BY QIAO FAMILY WORKSHOP

I am protected
Even when I cannot see
I am shielded
By spirits seeing the good in me
I am secured
Knowing that I am on the right path
I am guarded
By dragons protecting me with their wrath
(Roché Palmer)



UNTITLED
BY ROY LICHTENSTEIN

Today I wandered around, looking for art that speaks to me. Specifically, I was looking for an art piece that fills me with emotions by just looking at it. As I walk past, a finger points at me, as if calling out to me, “Hey you! Yes, you!” I stop, staring at the art portrait in front of me, and begin to reflect deeply on myself. I begin to think of who I am and what I represent, unknowingly, becoming one with the art.

Red with reason as a warning to stay away; a hand with one finger pointing towards me.

I am a reflection in the glass frame.

Not a piece of the art, but a part of the art.

I am pointed at without accusation, yet in my own mind I begin to ponder all especially my wrong doings.

Called out by no one, drawn in by my own guilt, digging deep to find what it is that I am looking for.

Unhurried, as I reflect through my mind—processing my unfiltered thoughts, with the one finger pointing towards me as the reason. **(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)**

UNTITLED #7 FROM THE PROPHECY
BY FABRICE MONTERO

A woman that's stuck, defeated, bound to a life of poverty, children, and household duties. A woman that's tired, restless, and ready to give up. A woman that is drained on the inside. I see me: a woman. Speaking for most women I have been here, many have also, but as a woman we are resilient, strong, courageous. We have the ability to be knocked down but we never settle and stay down. We as woman are brave and the weight of the world we can withstand on our shoulders. I see a defeated woman but a strong one. **(JuJu Stallworth)**





DISFIGURINE (COMPETITION)
BY JUSTIN NOVAK

This is the product of survival targeted chaos. Not growth or connection, but how much you can strip of someone. Clothes, identity, skin, dignity. We all play along hoping one day we can watch the others do the same. It feels wrong, yet we celebrate the ones who do it best. If I don't do it to them first, they'll surely do it to me. **(Shaneece Taylor)**

OVOID VASE
BY ED AND KAREN ROGAN

When I came across this beautiful piece, I instantly thought of my grandma. As I read the information, I noticed it said, "in memory of." The vase is shaped just like the one I have of her. There is a picture of a beautiful woman surrounded by her family. She has long black straight hair similar to my grandma. This makes me feel like we made the right decision. Walking past, this artwork would not have stuck out. I am not sad, just missing her a little more. **(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)**



L'AMANTE
BY BETH CAVENER

I didn't just see a rabbit; I saw a person laid out fancy and free. No guard, just vulnerable. It made me think about real love – the kind when you gotta open up and risk it all. The way it's lying there is symbolic to being ready for the "next." Love requires you to put your guard down, and that can be uncomfortable.



The details on the body remind me that everyone carries their story differently. I feel the artist used an animal to show more emotion because humans mask their pain. The piece shows love ain't just sweet, it's also risky. **(Shakila Woods)**

This artwork reminds me of "The Chronicles of Narnia" like something magical that could come to life at any moment. The artwork looks as if it belongs in a fantasy world where animals have wisdom and voices of their own. It feels like the rabbit can speak, like it understands more than it shows. At first, the sculpture looks like a rabbit resting, but the longer I look at it, the more it feels human. Overall, to me it gives a magical feel and is a beautiful piece of art. **(Brittany Hughes)**

THE MEANS TO AN END...A SHADOW DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS
BY KARA ELIZABETH WALKER

I see slavery...a mother that is forced to nurture a slave owner's child; that's why she isn't holding on because she feels no attachment to this child. While her child is thrown to the wolves, there are still innocent children lying beneath the surface swimming for their way out of hell. A woman is shown prancing, maybe trying to cause a distraction to its slave owner for freedom of the lost little souls who are hoping to see light one day. The means at the end shows no matter how far you may get there's always a slave owner in the shadows waiting to capture the innocents. **(Destiny Drone)**



To me, it represents being trapped in a cycle of trauma. The mother is different in ethnicity/race from the child. She is nursing, she is detached, she is watching her own child be carried off to the wolves. Then it seems she is escaping, but when you look closer her foot is backwards. She is also stepping on those similar to her to get to the other side. To me that represents the crabs in a bucket survival response, with her body primarily opposing her child's. Those beneath her seem to have met defeat along the way. Then at the end it seems the very child she raised is the very harm she seeks to escape from, holding a girl that mirrors her.

For me this is parallel to the current state: the hero and the villain can't be the same person. To me it represents a cycle that many marginalized groups face in America. There seems to be no end in sight, just a false promise of hope and freedom. I got the feeling that she was running inevitably backward. **(Kharmen Thomas)**



NIN MAMAKADENDARN (IT IS ASTONISHING)
BY TOM UTTECH

This image truly captures the peaceful beauty of nature. The gentle colors of the sunset create a warm, calming atmosphere. The birds soaring across the sky symbolize freedom and hope. The tall trees standing quietly remind us of the strength and resilience of the natural world. It's a moment of quiet serenity inviting us to pause and appreciate the wonders around us. **(Anteijah Greer)**

What I got out of the artwork was a feeling of freedom and peace. The way every animal coexisted showed a powerful sense of community and belonging where being different didn't matter. I love how there was no separation. It was calm and brought a sense of relaxation. I just wish that we as humans could be this way too—living in peace and accepting one another. **(Jacqueline Hawkins)**



LA ALBEREA
BY JAMES CASEBRE

The tone of the painting to me is darkness and depth. The choice of a deep blue tone is eerie. It's an empty pool in which we have no perception of how deep it is; there are no labels. And although the pool is full, the room feels empty. With the disruption above, it fully circles the creepy vibe. Possibly a skull or a building destruction. **(Stacy Castillo)**

It gives relaxing vibes, a place to meditate, to be a release of hope. It looks kind of worn out but also a place to take a deep cool dive in a pool; very historic. **(Larry Grant)**

HOMAGE TO MIRÒ
BY JOÁN MIRÒ

Leap, froggy, leap. Little froggy at the pond's edge,
Odyssey calling – time to leap!
Through muddy waters, lesions learned.
Each hop a page,
each jump a turn from timid croak to mighty bound.
You've crossed the reeds, claimed higher ground.
Challenges leaped, doubts left behind.
Knowledge your lily pad, wisdom your crown.
Now at the end of this project grand, stretch those legs,
take your final stand, your lily pad of love.
Leap, froggy, leap into the wide!
New wombs await on the other side.
The Odyssey ends, but your journey's alive.
Hop bold, hop free, continue to thrive. **(Angel Moore)**

When I look at this piece of art, I see someone's mind stuck in a box trying to break free. I see eyes that may represent observation or awareness. The colors red, blue, and green remind me of children's colors and represent youthfulness.

This painting represents his mind, the thoughts in there by the things he's seen and experienced during his youthful years, expressed through abstract art. **(Shataya Hall)**



FOUNDATIONS OF THE FUTURE

Odyssey students were asked to imagine that in the future they had accumulated so much wealth that they could start a foundation in their name to benefit a cause they are passionate about.



The Laura Jay Foundation

The Laura Jay Foundation is for mothers with post-partum depression/anxiety/psychosis. Its mission is to help mothers with the transition into motherhood and

support them in whatever way they need, whether that be mentally/emotionally with therapists and medication --- or the holistic approach with herbs/supplements, exercise (gym membership with childcare). It would help financially like with stipends (monthly) and rental and energy assistance to assist with the financial stress that comes from being off work but still having to take care of bills. Also, it would help with the stress of not having to rush back to work. The program would help with 3-6 months of bills/stipends, up to 3 years of mental/ emotional support, plus a twice weekly support group.

The moms would gather for 2½ hours to talk, get advice, eat, get childcare, plus get whatever support they need. My foundation would help with baby supplies—clothes, diapers, formula (or lactation support).

The body goes through a lot of changes to grow and birth a baby. It literally changes our chemistry, shrinks our brains. So many things can go wrong.

Society expects your body to go through this traumatic thing and for you to be okay to go right back to life like nothing happened with a new baby. A lot of careers don't even pay for maternal leave let alone give you enough time off. I hope this foundation can help with that and move our nation in a different direction on supporting our women and giving them the time they need. This is IMPORTANT and we need to see the importance of it.

Post-partum depression almost claimed my life.
(Laura Bass)



The Serene Boyd Foundation

The Serene Boyd Foundation is an organization that provides resources to women 18 and older who are struggling to gain stability. The foundation's

mission is to help women find confidence within themselves and take steps to building a successful future. We provide counseling by influential advisors to give financial advice, create career plans, and more. I chose to establish this foundation because I once was a young women seeking a brighter future. I then used the resources I had, one being a program called The Odyssey Project. The program provided resources for me to obtain a nursing degree and create stability for me and my daughter. Now, I want to give back to the community and help women.
(Serene Boyd)



The Lisa Brown Foundation

My foundation is to support those who age out of foster care. Resources for housing, work, and health care would be offered.

Classes for money management are included as well. The Lisa Brown Foundation is set up in love and the desire to see others succeed to remind each individual who aged out that they are loved and have support.

I was in the foster care system for the first four years of my life. Although I was young, I remember moments that weren't good. I've heard many stories of those who aged out of the system with nowhere to go, feeling overwhelmed on where to start. My foundation is the steppingstone, the bridge to success and independence. (Lisa Brown)



The Rich Poorman Foundation

This foundation would support fathers in need of support when it comes to their rights as a father.

This foundation would provide resources and knowledge as needed

when having legal battles for your child. This would include helping men pay for lawyers. **(Richard Butler)**



The Stacy Foundation

The Stacy Foundation will be for single mothers who are low-income based, just trying to get by.

My foundation will focus on helping with diapering, food, and extra-curricular activities. I plan on having a “diaper drive” for mothers to have easy access without the hassle of reaching out or waiting. Food pantries will be available two times a week, providing all essential/healthy foods. And for my final offer of help for single mothers, I’d like to offer children six-week courses of sports of their choice.

These three resources helped me greatly while raising my son. Different organizations made all of these offers possible for my family. I would love to give back to others by offering this three-in-one help that will benefit plenty. **(Stacy Castillo)**



Not Homeless or Helpless Foundation

My foundation would be called Not Homeless or Helpless. I would start by providing

apartments in my building for the homeless: one bedroom for a single person, and two to three or more for a family of three and more. They would get provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Each apartment would have a dining room, bathroom, and kitchen. There will be free Wi-Fi for kids to do their schooling, watch TV, and actually

be able to enjoy their childhood. I would make it feel more like a home than being homeless. There will be free laundry, and I will pay for transportation to jobs, schools, doctors’ appointments, and so on. It will be theirs and will feel like home. This is my dream someday. **(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)**



The Valencia Collins Foundation

The Valencia Collins Foundation was created to support any persons who are suffering from any type of trauma.

The foundation will provide 20 hours per week of trauma-based care, focused on addiction, abuse, and recovery and free of cost. The mission is to bring awareness of the generational traumas of America and to ensure the quality of life for our next generation.

I chose this as my cause because it’s something not talked about enough. There are not many resources dedicated to the quality of care for our nation on how to heal and be okay with moving. **(Valencia Collins)**



The Paola Damiani Foundation

My foundation, the Paola Damiani Foundation, would be for incurable diseases. Our mission would be to investigate diseases that have no cure. It would go into stem cell

research and finding a scientific way to cure cancer,

AIDS, San Felipe Syndrome, and ALS. Our mission would be to cure and completely rid the world of diseases so humans (our future generations) can live a longer, healthier life, and so their kids can, and so on. I chose this because nowadays we have so many diseases that are taking our kids, moms, dads, and friends so young when they should be living a long healthy life. **(Paola Damiani)**





The Tida Drammeh Foundation

In the future, when I accumulate a Tida Drammeh foundation, I would build a really big Masjid (mosque) where everyone is welcome. I hope it looks really beautiful, on both the men's and women's sides. There will be daily worshipping prayers, Jumu'ah prayers (Friday prayers), Ramadan Taraweeh, and educational workshops to learn how to read and write the Quran. It will have marriage counseling and food distribution for all families. Those in need will just have to call and we will be there for all communities. It will also have a youth center for anyone. We will organize interfaith dialogues, community iftars (breaking fast), and funeral services.

This cause will be available worldwide to reach every hungry family out there in need. Helping out the poor or the needy is one of my biggest dreams, if I have unlimited money and resources. I hope to have my own charity foundation someday! **(Tida Drammeh)**



The Destiny Drone Foundation

My foundation is filled with so many resources for single black mothers who show resilience in what they have been through. I will hold one-on-one phone calls for mothers

who just would like someone to listen to whatever they would want to express. I'll also have care plans for mothers who had been struggling with building wealth for their family by expressing what I've gone through but also redirecting them with resources and support. I've searched so hard alone with teaching myself.

A foundation can hold love, support, resilience, and generational wealth for better days. And the reason that this foundation is so important is some people might feel freer to express or listen to a stranger that's been through what they've been through or even given them a safe place to come for support. Some people feel uncomfortable or feel judged by expressing their emotions or even life situations

with family members. So to have a stranger but someone who can relate to their struggles gives me warmth to want to help. **(Destiny Drone)**



Kiana's Kindness Foundation for Youth

If I could start a foundation in my name, it would provide resources for homeless children and teenagers. I believe it is important for children and teenagers to feel supported and nurtured. They are the future of our country, and they deserve to be respected and heard. Many children feel voiceless and powerless; however, with the right care and understanding, they can grow to their full potential. My foundation would provide services such as funding for housing, clothing, groceries, hotel vouchers, essentials pantries, vouchers for mental health care, rehabilitation services, summer camps, daycare, car repair vouchers, and much more.

My foundation would not require only single parents to qualify for help. I know firsthand that there are hardworking families that need help for the whole family. By helping young people and their families, my foundation can support keeping families together. When parents are supported, it helps them support their children. Promoting a healthy family dynamic can help break generational cycles of neglect and more.

When I was just seven years old, I witnessed my mother struggle to take care of me, and that had an impact on my emotional health and mental wellbeing. I was forced to grow up sooner than I should have. I remember a time when we slept in an abandoned home because the shelters would split my little family apart. I know that there are shelters in place for families, but there are nowhere near enough. There is a need for resources for homeless shelters and housing for low-income families. This current economy is erasing the middle class, and soon more people will need help. I would like to help my community by providing help to any family that needs it and not just those from single parent homes. **(Kiana Galloway)**



Dreaming on the Spectrum Foundation

My foundation would be for single mothers with older children who have autism. It would provide those children more opportunities

to participate in afterschool activities like clubs, afterschool programs like Boys and Girls Club, MSCR, something that is specifically for them, but also let the children feel independent and involved. It could be something parents can also participate in and join. The foundation would provide sensory things for children and field trips to experience new and different things. My foundation would be called “Dreaming on the Spectrum.”

I would also do a foundation called “The Braiding Lab” teaching young black girls to take care of their hair and learn protective styles of how to braid. I would provide teachers and the products and equipment needed. It would be somewhat of an afterschool program or weekend club or camp. **(Tikoya Gilmer)**



Make a Teen Dream Foundation

I chose this to encourage teens to self-educate. It's okay to learn. It is a positive chance

to chase their dreams. Some kids have been misguided into the wrong direction. They often would rather chase the street life selling drugs and gang banging. They don't have the understanding of doing the right thing, and that is be educated, have faith, and believe in themselves. They need to build their self-understanding, their worth, and their place in society. To allow them the opportunity to become something in life, free learning tools need to be offered. **(Larry Grant)**



The Antejiah Greer Foundation

This would be a single mother/parent group/center. I strongly want a foundation supporting many parents who are struggling together and gave up on growth

in their kids' future or have bad habits. I would love to support change, building a safe place for mothers/parents and children so they don't feel alone and have support coming and a way out of transitional fears.

This safe, welcoming foundation would help them reach for the stars. Beating the odds has always been something I do enjoy—not going through it but loving the outcome. **(Antejiah Greer)**



The Shataya Hall Foundation

The Shataya Hall Foundation helps support and fund students and families needing help to pay for out-of-school sports and in-school programs. In-school programs like

trips to D.C. cost \$3,000 for the parents to send their child on. Trips like these can open a child's eyes to a whole new world and hopefully spark a



new flame in them. So many inner city and lower poverty level children do not have the funds to pay for sports costs in and out of school. Outside school sports can cost a parent upward of \$3,000 for a season. A lot of very talented kids lose the opportunity to go further with sports and other educational programs because their parents cannot pay.

My foundation will help low-income families cover the cost of these and many more programs that they cannot attend due to financial burdens.
(Shataya Hall)



The Jacqueline Hawkins Foundation

In the future, I would start a foundation called The Jacqueline Hawkins Foundation. My foundation would focus on helping young boys before they get into trouble or end up in the system. A lot of programs are made for kids after they already made bad decisions, but I want to reach them early, while they are still learning and growing.

My foundation would provide mentorship, life skills, and a safe place for young boys to go. My staff and I would teach them discipline, respect, and how to make better choices in life. We would also teach them about money, saving, and how to manage their finances so they can build a stable future for themselves. There would be programs focused on building confidence, handling emotions, and learning responsibility. I want them to understand their worth and know that they have a future.

I chose this as my cause not only because some boys lack guidance but also because I have seen boys who are educated still make bad choices simply because they have too much free time and no direction. I believe if someone reaches them early and keeps them focused, it can change their entire life. I want to be that change for them.

My goal is to help build strong, responsible young men who can grow up and make better choices,

not only for themselves but for their families and communities. This foundation would be about giving them a chance before it's too late—because sometimes all it takes is one person to step in at the right time to change the entire direction of a life.

(Jacqueline Hawkins)



The Foundation of Beauty

My foundation would be called "The Foundation of Beauty" to remind women how beautiful they are no matter what they look like. The foundation would mainly focus on women with health conditions that have cost them to lose their confidence, such as cancer, alopecia, lupus, etc.

I am choosing this because because my grandmother died from cancer, and I remember how hurt and heartbroken she was when she started experiencing hair loss. Her hair gave her confidence, and it hurt to see her feel as if that was taken away. I know there's no way I could help women grow their hair with these conditions, but my company/foundation could provide wigs to help restore confidence or even do makeovers to make these women feel beautiful and confident again.

(Brittany Hughes)



Angel's House of Hope

My foundation is already in my head and established on paper: it's a ministry that will assist men and women exiting the prison system. I desire to raise them in an already existing hotel but wish to purchase the property from the owners. So many of our men and women coming from the prison system have no stability and do not have family members they can depend on to give them consistent and stable housing.

My foundation will be a faith-based ministry devoted to walking alongside men and women re-entering society after incarceration. Through heartfelt prayers, encouragement, mentoring, and practical guidance, I/we will create a safe,

stable space where shame is replaced with dignity, brokenness with restoration, and isolation with constant companionship. I/we will help them rebuild their lives rooted in Christ's love discovering recovered identity, purpose, and hope for the new life journey ahead.

This assignment came at the perfect time. My actual vision is called Deborah's House of Hope: D-dedicated to prayer and walking besides those rebuilding life; E-empowered through faith to rise above the past; B-bold in love, courage, and intercession; O-overcomers by God's grace and mercy; R-restored in purpose and identity through Christ; A-Anointed to serve, uplift, and encourage others; H-hope filled, trusting God for new beginnings; S-sisters (and servants) in Christ, united in compassion and strength. This is a real calling I'm praying into. **(Angel Moore)**



Black Homeownership Foundation

My foundation would focus on providing the funding through low-interest loans for black families to obtain the American Dream. A house is not just a

house; it is security and a space for growth not only for oneself but also for the family as a whole. The focus of my foundation would be to provide

low-interest loans as well as fiscal counseling. The foundation would not just provide loans but also offer a holistic approach. The foundation would provide financial advice and encourage fiscal prudence. The role of the foundation is to turn the "ghettos" back to bustling and beautiful African-American communities again. **(Viwe Mpurwana)**



The Shelton Murphy Foundation

Here at the Shelton Murphy Foundation, we strive to help everyone see with their spiritual eye and think with a divine mind. We promote spiritual awareness

and financial literacy, so you understand the flows of the world. We teach you about the laws of vibration, attraction, cause and effect, relativity, polarity, and rhythm. These laws help you understand how the universe works, giving you mental and spiritual clarity. We want you to understand the torus field and the polarities that humans possess for you to sync to, along with the intricacies of nature so you can see and learn how to harness its energy.

Our second mission is to help you achieve your sovereignty and separate from corporate America. Being sovereign is your right given to you by the Creator. You will learn the true "Common Law"

to battle the fake "Maritime Law," which goes hand in hand with teaching you self-defense and how to use a firearm. We will give you an understanding of the Chakra networks and how to connect the meridians of the body. We will show you how you are born rich through spirit and Zygote. Once you are able to access the book life (aka your Federal Reserve bank account), we can go ahead and do what the Creator wanted us to do: learn how to be godly and then create Heaven on Earth. **(Shelton Murphy)**





The Roché Palmer Foundation

If I had a foundation, I would make it for children with learning disabilities such as ADHD, ADD, etc. It would be to fund a specific school just for these particular kids. I am choosing this topic because a few of my family members, friends' kids, and others just aren't getting their needs met in a system that is primarily developed for the "standard kid." For the ADD student I would have stress balls/toys if needed for relaxing. ADHD students could have an "active area" to let off some energy. There would be overall support to get these kids to learn what they need like their peers. It would be just like an Odyssey for kids. I would also provide them one-on-one options if needed to help focus and a safe space just for them so they aren't feeling separated or different. **(Roché Palmer)**



The Lilibeth Sobrevilla Foundation

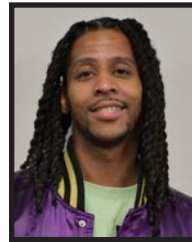
My foundation would be for all college students who need health assistance for doctor visits/vaccinations/medications. College students who win the scholarship would be given a health certificate to cover any upcoming medical expenses they have. Our mission is to make sure college students can focus on school without worrying if they are able to afford their health or health expenses. The reason I would start this foundation is because throughout my life, health affordability was always a worry that never left me. I know the struggle of having to sacrifice your health to afford daily expenses. I hope that my foundation's mission inspires many to help thousands. **(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)**



The JuJu Stallworth Foundation

The JuJu Stallworth Foundation is dedicated to supporting survivors of domestic abuse, providing them with essential resources, a safe place, and programs to foster healing and empowerment. Our mission is to inspire hope, resilience, and a brighter future for those overcoming the trauma of abuse. I choose this foundation because I am a survivor of domestic abuse and I

understand firsthand the challenges and emotional scars it leaves behind. By ensuring they know they are not alone, I hope it inspires them to want to build an empowered future. **(JuJu Stallworth)**



The Sydnor Family Foundation

My foundation will benefit single fathers looking to find a job, housing, food, education, etc. I know being a single father is hard, especially when you're a black male in America. Even Wisconsin black men need real support when it comes to parenting needs. In my early years of parenting, I figured everything out on my own. My support from my family really saw me through. **(George Sydnor)**



Reimagining Life Foundation

The foundation I would create would be Reimagining Life. Its main purpose is to support individuals who want to live in smaller, isolated communities. The goal is to eliminate the dependence on modern day capitalism and advanced forms of technology. It would invest into people knowledge/expertise on gardening, water systems, energy and heat, carpentry, working with others, first aid, etc. This is important to me because it's a goal I have for myself, but I believe no one should feel the pressures of contributing to capitalism at the expense of losing housing, food/water, healthcare, etc. **(Shaneece Taylor)**



Save the Youth Foundation

If I were to start a foundation, it would include youth and teenagers. "Save the Youth Foundation" is what it would be called. This foundation will be aimed towards young individuals not receiving guidance from home or community. The mission is to educate, uplift, and provide for them. Any youth involved would receive a mentor to help guide them through tough life situations like being kicked out, abandoned, or looking for guidance. This foundation would be a gift to all of those teenagers feeling alone and helpless. **(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)**



The Kharmen Thomas Foundation

My foundation would focus on intersectional education bridging gaps due to social determinants of health. Whether it's helping with access to education for a career or creating the network for social programs/support to combat the barriers, I chose this as my cause because I have observed and experienced the way intersectionality plays a role in the quality of life. From a medical and personal standpoint, I've learned how there is causation and correlation. There are enough records and documentation to no longer refute and negate the impact.



The lack of access to education and healthcare has created a ripple effect of barriers. For example, lack of education for someone with a lesser socioeconomic background status: there is less funding to schools and a lack of access to education because in privatized (for profit) healthcare systems, there isn't incentive for corporations to build clinics/hospitals in lower income areas. Therefore, there are fewer healthcare options to break the poverty cycles because of health costs. Because of the lack of money for education material and social opportunities, diagnosis for any cognitive delay or mental health needs doesn't happen. Additionally, there isn't access to the proper network to understand and educate about the intersectional impact. This cause is one that I'm passionate about. **(Kharmen Thomas)**



Unbreakable Roots Foundation

If I had the resources, I would start the "Unbreakable Roots Foundation" focused on helping youth and families going through homelessness and hard times.

My mission would be to give real support – safe housing, education, job help, and counseling so people don't just survive; they actually get a chance to rebuild their life.

I'm choosing this because I lived it. I know how it feels to be down, trying to stay strong for your kids while everything around you is falling apart. I know what it's like to have to figure it out with no clear plan but still push through. That's why my foundation would also pour into the youth because if we catch them early, guide them, and give them support and counseling, we can change their whole path.

This wouldn't just be a program; it would be a safe space. It would be a place where people feel seen, heard, and understood, where they can heal, grow, and realize they are bigger than their situation. I am living proof that you can go through it and come out stronger.

And at the core of everything, I would be pouring into them a God-fearing mindset, teaching them how to lean on their faith, trust God even while life don't make sense, and keep going when it gets hard. I want to show them what it looks like to really walk by faith, not just talk about it. I would remind them daily of God's grace and mercy, that no matter how far you feel like you've fallen, He's still there covering you and pulling you through. For me, I truly believe you can't do life without God, and once you tap into that, everything else starts to align differently. **(Shakila Woods)**

ENVISIONING EIGHT YEARS FROM NOW

Back in February, Odyssey students imagined a day in their lives eight years from now: in February 2034. Here are excerpts from their longer essays.

Eight years from now, February 2034, I don't know what things will be like. What I do know is my daughter Knowledge will be eight years old exactly. I picture myself sober, still working hard to provide the life and love she deserves. I would hope to be married by then to her mother, Kiara.

Knowledge and I are most likely to be best friends and shopping buddies. . . . A typical day looks like me waking up early getting Knowledge ready for school, cooking breakfast, possibly her getting herself ready while I cook. Weekends would most likely be filled with fun things to do. This would include movies, bowling, picnics, long distance travel trips, and anything else fun and suitable for an eight-year-old. . . . During the weekdays after school, her mother or I would be helping her with homework or just extra studies to make sure she is always prepared. Two days out of the week would be library time because I want her to be in the habit of reading. We will take walks in the park, as her mother likes to do, and I would also be teaching her simple cooking skills early, things like cracking eggs and seasoning foods. . . .

We will find a church and try to go as much as possible. . . . I will have a car by then, of course, and I'm sure car washes would become a good bonding experience that she would love. . . . Kiara, Knowledge, and I also will be going to places like Disney World, the one in Tokyo, Japan. Eight years from now, we will be enjoying and living our lives together and happily! There will be so much love and care in the air. **(Richard Butler)**

. . . Mark Twain once said, "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why." I won't wander anymore; I will walk in that why, steady, steadfast, and renewed.



I long to see the streets of Jerusalem where Jesus walked, and healed, to trace the dust of His miracles and let that same dust cling to my sandaled feet. I want to encourage and teach young women how to find themselves, to trace our roots like a vine ascending to its heavenly origin. I see myself bold and unashamed like the apostle Paul on his way to Damascus, struck by light, changed for purpose, and set afire with truth.

Eight years from now, I see myself reading aloud with no hesitation, leading, leaving my own footprints in the sand besides the Master. I see a life not just lived but poured out, like oil on the altar, rising as both offering and testimony. I see the success of my children's children as seeds of faith taking root in good soil. And if grace allows, I'll still be standing, not where I began, but exactly where God needs me to be: faithful, fruitful, and finally fully awake to why I was born. **(Angel Moore)**

Eight years from now, I envision myself free of sickle cell anemia. I envision myself one of the healthiest people alive. Eight years from now I am a graduate from UW-Madison from a computer program or even have a master's degree. Eight years from now I am sitting on my porch drinking tea in my own four to five-bedroom house with my two degrees and also a very high paying career. I am enjoying life with my daughter in our house and traveling around the world. Nothing is impossible. I will also be helping preparing my girl for college or university to go for something she really loves. Eight years from now, hopefully everyone in the U.S.A. will be getting along and making this country a great place to live. **(Tida Drammeh)**

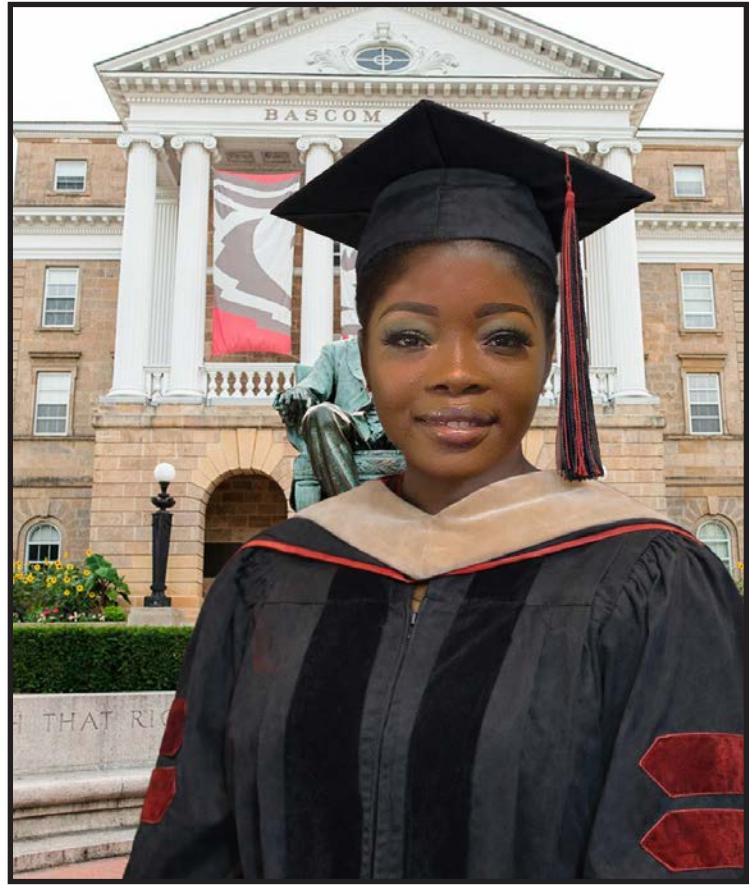
My life in eight years I think I will be owning my own business. My kids and I are in a stable environment so I can take care of them. I am married, making money, and loving my family. I have a better job and college credits. Hopefully living in Texas, I'll be 43 years old and living life to the fullest. **(George Sydnor)**

Eight years from now, I will at age 35 be a mother of two kids. My oldest will be a teenager, and my youngest will be a preschooler. I'm still going to be the "cool" and "chill" mom, but more mature. We will be living in a three-bedroom apartment with my partner and kids, and I will finally have my own bedroom back; and not my bedroom in the living room anymore.

Eight years from now, I'd travel to at least four new states as well as visiting Mexico with my family. My associates degree in Social Science will be complete, and I'll decide it's time for me to go back to school to continue my education.

I'll be on the bleachers of whatever sport my son decides to pursue, cheering on and hopefully not embarrassing him. I will look at both my kids and partner and know that all my sacrifices were worth all of our happiness. **(Stacy Castillo)**

If I'm writing with transparency, eight years from now feels like an oxymoron. I can't presently



imagine eight months from now. Our country is in a place of regression. The very freedoms that should be foundational are being distorted, and the antipathy some of us feel is being met with a lack of benediction. There's been a consistency of circumlocutive conversation around the fact that there's been too much diversion from the "humanity" that separates mankind. Judgment of the content of character not on physical characteristics seems only conceptual in this objective reality.

I teach with intention the generation under my guidance that compassion and understanding is the way we rectify. As we continue, the intentions vs impacts are key for continuation of humane treatment of all. I wasn't sure if the impact and rippled decision would cause the necessary discernment to grow as a society, but it's seemingly become apparent. The advice I would give, if any, is to remember not to diminish those around you. History shapes a future for the better when we don't negate the lessons by erasure. **(Kharmen Thomas)**

Eight years from now, I envision myself and my daughter living in New York, standing firmly in my purpose and finally at peace with how far I've come. I imagine myself leading a successful business that serves children and families who are doing their best to rise above their circumstances. It's a space filled with warmth, guidance, and understanding, a place where families feel supported, valued, and reminded that their struggles do not define them. I see myself running a nonprofit dedicated to homelessness and housing, providing safe, rent-free homes for individuals and families while surrounding them with job training, life skills, and emotional support so they can regain stability, rebuild confidence, and believe in their future again.

This passion comes from a place deep within me. Hearing about my mom as a seven-year-old in Milwaukee, learning to take care of herself at such a young age, stayed with me and shaped who I am today. Knowing what she had to carry so early in life pushed me to want to go harder for youth and for people in this world who don't always have what they need or the encouragement to move forward. It made me want to be the support and the push that helps others believe they can create better lives for themselves.

Eight years from now, I see a life built on purpose and commitment lifting others as I rise, turning pain into impact, and creating hope where it once felt lost. My future is not defined by what I own or where I live, but by the lives I help change and the love I leave behind.

(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)

Envisioning myself eight years from now brings chills to the body—chills because I can see a different version of me. I can see that knowledgeable woman that I was destined to be in all aspects. I can see myself finishing my education to pursue my career as an optometric sonographer. I will find peace with my past trauma so that I can prevail through my future.

At this time my son will be 16, and with the energy he has now, I just know my son is going

to be a star athlete. I can see my weekends now, being filled up with games or practices for Joshua. During the week he'd be going to high school, still requesting me to make him hot breakfasts at home like I do now, ha ha. I'd just be working one job at this time, so I'd have a lot more time to spend with my son, or even time for myself. Once I complete schooling, I do want to relocate to give my son and me a fresh start that we so desperately deserve.

(Roché Palmer)

In eight years, I envision myself living the American Dream. I really want it all, and I know if I can believe it and dream it, I can achieve it.

I see myself married, happy, healthy with a beautiful five-bedroom, three-bathroom home with a fulfilling career that keeps me on my toes and motivated, while also running my own business. I also envision myself with a daughter added in the picture. I have that bachelor's degree I dreamed of and have the healthy lifestyle I envisioned for myself. I imagine I'll be running a Family Hookah Lounge on the side of my career that has a full bar and kitchen service on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday nights. I imagine a life of luxury and romance. . .

(Laura Bass)



In eight years, I envision myself sitting on my front porch having a warm cup of coffee, rocking back and forth on my rocking chair in the countryside. I am watching my dogs run around enjoying the warm summer air. My older kids will be out and about to enjoy the task of taking care of our animals on our miniature farm, while my youngest will be running behind them asking them a million questions about how he can help. Once these tasks are done, we will go down the road and visit our neighbors, which will be family because we will be living on a compound. We will grill out and reminisce about how our kids are all grown up and things we miss from the past. Once we are done laughing and enjoying our family time, I will go back home and tuck everyone into bed and then go out on my porch, pour me a glass of wine and thank God for allowing me to be able to enjoy this little life.

(Paola Damiani)

First and foremost, I always put my kids first. When I think about eight years from now, I picture my daughter Journi graduating from eighth grade and my youngest, Justyce, graduating from fifth grade. Those milestones matter deeply to me because they remind me of why I stay focused and motivated. I want to be present for them and show them what commitment, perseverance, and growth look like in real life.

In the same future, I see myself finished with school and fully established in my career. I imagine working with different nonprofit organizations, either holding a leadership position or running my own nonprofit that focuses on supporting teenagers and youth. I don't have every detail mapped out, but I am confident about the direction I'm headed. I know my work will be rooted in community and that I will be strongly connected to people who are doing meaningful work. I want my



professional life to reflect my values and to create opportunities that make a real difference for young people and families like my own.

(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)

When I envision myself eight years from now, I see my life filled with blessings and things I've always dreamed of. I will wake up in a home I either have built from the ground up, or something I have purchased: four or five bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, a full basement, and a three-car garage with the car I dream of. I wake up to my son getting ready for high school on his own. Preparing my morning coffee as I send my son off to school, I am able to catch up on business emails and charts. I drive to shops or salon suites I have purchased and rented out to other stylists. I pick my son up from extracurricular activities and attend those performances.

I see myself living in true peace and with the blessing of God. . . . I am living my truth. I envision calling my best friend, sitting on the phone for hours laughing. I will be able to have girl nights or days filled with adventures and fun and laughs, being in my soft woman era of life. **(Tikoya Gilmer)**

Eight years from now, I will have graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in social work. I will own my own home, and I will be financially stable, and my hard work will have paid off. I'll be visiting Lauren in college and taking her for shopping and lunches! Eight years from now I will be happy, proud of myself for how far I've made it, and content.

With my bachelor's degree, I will work at an elementary school and make a difference in children's lives. I believe so deeply that children need trusted adults who value their safety and respect their feelings. Ages two to seven are considered the first major critical period for brain development; this is why elementary school social work seems so critically important to me. I will have my own office with a tranquil environment for the children. I will keep extra snacks for them, hygiene products, and try to provide a space that feels like a safe zone. Children deserve to have their mental health taken seriously, and I want to be part of the solution.



My home doesn't need to be extravagant. All I need is a cute little house on the countryside where I can have a garden and plenty of space for any animals I want. I see myself having quiet mornings watching the sunrise with a cup of coffee and my partner by my side. I envision nights where I can watch the stars and see the Milky Way from my backyard. I'll have bonfires, cookouts, football parties, birthday parties, Thanksgivings, and much more! It has always been my dream to have the house where people want to be for fun times and a warm environment. . . . **(Kiana Galloway)**

Eight years from now in Feb. 2034 I will be planning my spontaneous lovely son's 17th birthday (Feb 2 is his birthday!). I am hoping we will be out of the country, experiencing swimming with turtles and pigs, creating beautiful memories with all three of my babies!!!

Also, eight years from now I see myself as a business owner or a realtor. I will have a paid off car, a three-row truck, and I will own my own land with an estate on the property for my three children to stay close by. Eight years from now my oldest will be 18, graduating and prospering and heading off to college. I will also be getting prepared for my youngest's Sweet 16 party, gifting her a car because she will have her driver's permit. Eight years from now, I'll be 36, praying no grandkids that early, just an abundance of wealth, a healthy life for all of my babies! Eight years from now life should be lived in a different country learning other cultures and living stress and debt free.

(Destiny Drone)

I see myself married to the man of my dreams, I see myself no longer socially awkward and around people I can trust that love me. I see myself waking up every day going to the career of my dreams, no longer worried about financial hardships. And my children are happy, healthy, and full of life. I see myself traveling more, becoming closer to God, and having more wisdom. I see myself in my own home, the one in my dreams. I see myself no longer doubting my potential. I see myself happy, stress-free, and truly living. **(JuJu Stallworth)**

In eight years, I will be a mom to a ten-year-old daughter. I will be thriving in my career continuing to support families and being an integral part of communal change. My hope for my daughter is that she is happy, healthy, loving herself, and thriving in whatever special interest/talent she has. We will have a warm and beautiful home and a functioning and reliable vehicle. We'll be growing all of our produce, taking an international trip, and redefining what family means to us. **(Shaneece Taylor)**

I envision my future as being bright. As I navigate through life from setbacks, through my ups and downs, I will keep myself motivated. I can allow myself to set goals and complete milestones as I age. Making sacrifices along the way, I am also committed to my aspirations. That's very important for me because I can easily get distracted and or discouraged. Therefore, I have to encourage myself and believe in myself. I can keep focused and move forward.



The future is something most of us look forward to. I often dream of buying a family home with a huge pool somewhere in Arizona with acres of land, investing and building properties. I truly believe that if my accomplishments are met and the system I design is made for me to succeed, I am mentally and physically able to live out my life as planned. I'm very skilled in carpentry. My life as a carpenter is really good while using my hands, especially with tools and building. I really think that's my passion; it's something that I have a lot of love for doing. I overlook it sometimes because I like to explore and build other skills and opportunities, but eight years from now I can see myself as a professional carpenter, homeowner, and eventually an entrepreneur. **(Larry Grant)**

I wake up early in our sunny, cozy home near the coast. I start my day with a quiet prayer and scripture along with a warm cup of coffee, savoring the peaceful moment before the house wakes. Then I do a quick workout—either a jog along the beach or core work in our home gym to energize me for the day.

Once I finish, I take a shower and head to the kitchen where my husband is already preparing for the day. My children—my 16-yr-old daughter, now proud to have her first car, and my 14- and 13-year-old boys, both active on the basketball team—begin to stir in. We gather around the breakfast table for pancakes, eggs, bacon, and fruit while sharing laughter and plans. I help my daughter pick out an outfit, blending my love for fashion with her confidence. The boys talk about their game tonight. Often, I'm doing paperwork and planning events for my youth support group, mentoring young people and creating a safe space filled with love. Occasionally I pick up shifts as a PDN (Pediatric Dialysis Nurse). . . .

Our home is spacious, surrounded with warmth, love, faith, and purpose. I strive to be a positive role model, showing my children and others kindness, faith, and perseverance. I look forward to each new day, grateful for the life God has created for us all. **(Anteijah Greer)**

Journal entry of a Grand Rising Queen, 2/12/2034

I am just getting home from a very smooth day as I am officially an outpatient substance abuse therapist. I have about 20 clients outside of the inpatient clients that I have at the Black Excellence clinic. I absolutely love everything about life right now. I've been in my home that I built from the ground up for three years now. The twins are turning two in three days, so we're doing a home party with a watermelon cake; the girls are going to love it. I know I went a little overboard with the essential oil diffuser. I got orange, apple, and lemon scents. I'm so excited to be back in school working on my doctorate (PhD/DSW). I had to make sure I made my journal entry today. Self-care is the best care. . . .

I'm loving everything about my life and my family. Eight years ago, I would have never thought I'd have a supportive, loving, God-fearing partner, two beautiful twin baby girls, a beautiful home with a wrap around porch I've always wanted, and folders full of certificates and degrees. Life is great!
(Valencia Collins)

It is February 2034 . . . I wake up every day but peacefully, no longer rushing in chaos. . . . I am working in a career that I am passionate about, one that truly makes a difference in people's lives. I move through the hospital with purpose, pride, and patience, aware of the impact I'm making. It brings tears to my eyes sitting here writing this because this is and has always been my dream. . . .

Lawd, I'm getting old! My birthday is in three days and I'll be 41 years old. I have a 19 year old, 17 year old, 11 year old, and a 9 year old. Oh, how time has just gone on like a ticking clock with no batteries. I am a proud mom.

Zamauri is 19, and watching him step into adulthood fills me with

quite the pride; it's hard to put into words. We share a close bond. He doesn't feel too grown to give Mama some of his time. He is away at the college of his dreams on a full scholarship, building the life he once talked about on our car rides. . . . Zyne is 17, and I find myself having way too much joy sitting on bleachers and park benches, watching him do his big one showing off everything he's worked hard for since a little boy. Every drill, every practice, every sacrifice shows as he performs for recruiters, chasing a full scholarship. . . . Zaniyah is 11. I am the loudest, proudest mom in the room attending her dance recitals and sitting front row at her modeling pageants. I make sure she hears my voice cheering her on, reminding her just how beautiful she is inside and out . . . Zion, my little 9 year old, is taller than me. He is so full of energy and determination, keeping me constantly on my toes. He is dominating the football field, running track, and basketball court with fire that lets me know he is just getting started. . . .

I am just glad that God never took his hands off the plans He had for me. I am living proof of what God can and will do. My days are busy, loud, and full, but they are rich with purpose, joy, love, and I wouldn't trade this life for anything. . . .

(Shakila Woods)



Eight years from now, I see myself living a life that feels calm, intentional, and earned. I'm no longer rushing or reacting to everything around me. I move with confidence and clarity because I trust myself and the choices I've made. I've grown into a woman who knows her worth and protects her peace without guilt.

My life is structured in a way that supports both my goals and my family. I've built stability through hard work and consistency, and my days are no longer filled with stress or uncertainty. My career and businesses run smoothly, allowing me to be present and engaged instead of overwhelmed. Financial security brings relief, but more importantly, it brings freedom. . . .

When I look back, I'm proud of the woman I was during the hard seasons. She showed up, even when it was difficult. She stood up for herself, protected her children, and kept moving forward. That version of me laid the foundation for the life I live now, and because of her, I am at peace.

(Brittany Hughes)

I wake up in my 10-bedroom 4-bathroom house, take a dog around the lake in my yard, and bask in the sun. I dispatch the routes to all of my truck drivers for the day. Then I go and check on my in-home nursing care business—the staff and residents.

After saying my goodbyes, I go and drop off the prepared food to the vegan food trucks so that they can start their day. This leads me all the way up to the time I have to pick my girls up from school. I ask how their day was and then we have to go to the grocery store to get the ingredients for dinner. And of course I have to grab flowers, wine, and candy for the wife. . . .

I get dinner prepared for the family: an apple chili with sweet potato corn bread. I check my bank account, smile, and have glass of wine with the wife. Then off to bed to rinse and repeat.

(Shelton Murphy)

It's a cold February afternoon, and I'm waiting in the student pick-up line for my nine-year-old daughter, Sa'nae. I spot her from a distance eagerly running to the car. I just know she's excited to tell me how her day in school went but more excited to see her grandmother. I mentioned earlier that morning that we would all go shopping together. And with Valentine's Day coming up we needed goodies to give out to her classmates.

After spending some time shopping at a few stores, we're finally heading home. I just know my dog Sassi is anxiously waiting at the door for our arrival. As we pull into the garage of our home, I turn around and notice Sa'nae is sleeping in the back seat. I gently wake her up, and she rushes into the house to greet Sassi. I enter in shortly after with a bunch of shopping bags. . . .

As I stand in the kitchen marinating the chicken

I plan on cooking. I began to reflect on my day and furthermore how blessed I am to have made it this far. Currently, at 37 years old I've obtained a bachelor's degree in nursing, married, and blessed with a beautiful family. Eight years ago, the chapter I'm living in was just an aspiration. But with the grace of God, the Odyssey Project, and my determination, in 2034, I've beat the odds! **(Serene Boyd)**



Hello all, Shataya here, it is 2034 and I am finally living in sunny southern California. I moved here from Madison, Wisconsin in 2029. I couldn't take the brutal winters any longer. I have my beautiful dream home, which has five bedrooms, enough room for my children and their families, a huge backyard with a pool, hot tub, fire pit, a comfortable outdoor patio, and a spectacular view of the ocean, which is only a few blocks walk away. I am a successful real estate agent here in San Diego County.

Living in San Diego has been great, and I am the happiest I have been in a very, very long time. I have been dreaming of moving to California and being a real estate agent for over 15 years, and I finally made it. . . . My babies are all grown up now. My son is 29 years old, happily married, raising his children and working in the electrical engineering field. My middle daughter is 24; she is an entrepreneur working in the music industry, running her own clothing brand. My youngest is 17 turning 18 soon and graduating high school this year; she will be attending UC San Francisco and has been accepted into the Obstetrics & Gynecology program. I turned 44 back in December and I spent my birthday traveling Europe with my

fiancé. . . . I will be getting married in September in my dream wedding on the beach to my amazing person, and I could not have asked God for a better person! . . . I plan on cutting down to a very part-time worker to be able to spend time with my grandchildren, who are coming in fast. I also plan on doing a few mission trips, some domestic U.S. trips and some overseas, another thing that has always been a dream of mine. **(Shataya Hall)**

7:30 am the alarm on my iPhone 60 goes off and I open my eyes ready for the day. It is a cool morning as the sun rises, bringing a little warmth along with it. I open my eyes, eager for the day ahead. My fur baby is jumping all over the place, begging to be let outside. I take care of my dog and get ready to head to the office.

I work for a non-profit as a director, and this is a fulfilling job but also one that makes a change in somebody's life. When I get to the office I am greeted by smiles from my colleagues; they smile and are happy because of the work we do. I am surrounded by like-minded individuals whose sole purpose is to make this world a better place. In no time the day is over because when you are doing what you love, who needs breaks? I am suddenly reminded by a coworker that it is time to go home.

As I walk back from work to my apartment in downtown Madison, I remind myself how far I've come. I get back home greeted by my husband and fur baby and ask what is for dinner. I can smell the roast in the oven, and I rush to wash my hands and make myself ready to eat. Kerry serves dinner and I begin to tell him about my productive day. Just like that, the day comes to an end. **(Viwe Mpurwana)**



When I think about where my life will be, I see myself staring out the kitchen window of the house I have bought with my spouse. I am watching my future children (two children) play in the backyard. Dinner is cooking on the stove. The fragrant smell of yummy food is filling the air. I am now happily married to my partner. We are both successful in our careers in healthcare and the construction business. I have an unspoken confidence with a sense of peace as I have created this life for myself and the privilege to live it. I am at peace with where my life has led me.

At this point in life, I have successfully obtained my bachelor's degree in Healthcare Administration with the help of the Odyssey Project. I am still employed with UW Health but have since moved up the ladder for leadership. I have been able to utilize both my degree and clinical experience to advocate and implement real and effective changes for patients and the staff. In this role I am a representation of what I wanted when growing up to see in leadership. **(Lisa Brown)**

It is February 2034, and I wake up wrapped in my big, soft, plush blanket, the kind that feels like a warm hug before the world even asks anything of me. For a short moment, the room is quiet and still—not the quiet of emptiness, but the quiet of safety and happiness, like my body is truly well-rested. My shoulders are relaxed and at ease. There's no rush, no sigh of distress, no survival mode pulling me out of sleep. I open my curtains and watch the sun reflect off beautiful framed photos of a life well lived, memories with my family and some of my favorite '90s neo-soul artwork.

Suddenly, I hear loud giggles and fast footsteps approaching my door. My girls rush in, competing to be the first to give me hugs and kisses. My husband is already awake in the kitchen, moving gently. I inhale the

amazing smell of buttery grits, savory scrambled eggs, pancakes drizzled with sweet magnolia syrup, fresh fruit, and a cold glass of orange juice, just the way I love it. He approaches me with a soft, "Good morning, love," and kisses my forehead, reminding me how gentle and steady his love is. . . . After the kids leave for school, . . . I step into my workday. My name is on my office door. The degrees I worked so hard for hang proudly on the wall. I'm living my purpose: leading, mentoring, and changing lives, especially for families who once looked just like mine. I'm finally fulfilled, not drained—no more applying to 20+ jobs, and no more rejection.

. . . The curse really did stop with me. I finally get to enjoy this life without living in survival mode, without struggling to be present when my girls need me most. The girls are tucked into bed, rested, and peaceful. The house grows quiet. . . . After a long, hot shower, I slide back into my big, soft, plush blanket and close my eyes. For the first time in my life, I fall asleep without worrying about tomorrow because tomorrow will be another blessed day I've always hoped for. **(Roncal Riley)**



Eight years from now I see myself as the co-owner of a nonprofit organization where my son is the owner. We want to help guide young boys and help them grow into men before they get into trouble. Sometimes all a young person needs is someone to talk to and someone who believes in them. . . .

I see myself traveling the world with my new husband, loving life and enjoying each other while making memories together. At the same time, I will be watching my children and grandchildren build their own lives, and that will make me proud.

I also want a few things in life just for me. I want a boat so I can enjoy the water and relax. And I want to get my motorcycle license so I can experience the freedom of riding.

I also hope to give back to the Odyssey Program by helping other students the same way they helped me. The encouragement and support I received there meant a lot to me, and I would love to be able to do the same for someone else.

Eight years from now I just want to be happy, helping others, enjoying my family, and living a peaceful life. **(Jacqueline Hawkins)**

Eight years since I graduated from The Odyssey Project, many things have changed; I have completed my Bachelor of Science and am currently working towards my Master's. I am now also working part time as a therapist in the mornings while in the evenings the kids are involved in sports. I have started a donation in my father's name towards helping minorities further their education. In my spare time, I volunteer to help families with filling out paperwork, finding resources, and translating.

A typical day for me starts off hectic getting the kids ready, walking Niko my dog, and making sure everyone is fed before leaving. I work at my dream job helping people and hope that I will be able to work full time in the future. Although life might be crazy and chaotic, I have never been happier. I am an educated, strong, and determined woman/mother. I am proud of my accomplishments, and I must thank The Odyssey Project for showing me that I had it in me to succeed.

However, I owe a special thank you to Emily—the first one to believe in me. I remember telling Emily in my Odyssey interview, “I don’t know who I am anymore. After having kids, I don’t

know me. I don’t think I know what I can offer other than kindness.” I replayed this conversation throughout the entire time in school. Emily had given me a chance and she didn’t know me, but she believed in “me”? “She believed, so I have to believe in me”: this was something I always said. In the end, thanks to her, I found myself within myself. I will forever remember what she did for me eight years ago, and I will do my best to be the “Emily” in people’s lives. **(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)**



POEMS THAT PACK A PUNCH

After reading a seven-word poem by Langston Hughes (“I wish the rent / was heaven sent”), Odyssey students wrote their own seven-word poems. Here are samples:

The world ought to be color blind. **(Laura Bass)**
 Life is a blessing and a lesson. **(Serene Boyd)**
 The sun holds power, as do I. **(Lisa Brown)**
 I love you enough to let you go. **(Stacy Castillo)**
 Nights were long, bills piled high, hope. **(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)**
 Nothing is more powerful than your love. **(Valencia Collins)**
 Self care because loving yourself is important. **(Paola Damiani)**
 I wish life wasn’t so very difficult. **(Tida Drammeh)**
 Empty pockets, full heart, she built everything. **(Destiny Drone)**
 Grass is greener where it is watered. **(Kiana Galloway)**
 Time doesn’t heal wounds, just numbs feelings. **(Tikoya Gilmer)**
 I wasn’t great, I am the greatest. **(Larry Grant)**
 I wish I thought, thought like God. **(Anteijah Greer)**
 I’m making money – I’m not acting funny. **(Shataya Hall)**
 Wishing when family passed, grieving wouldn’t last. **(Jacqueline Hawkins)**
 Faith’s quiet fire outlines the raging storm. **(Angel Moore)**
 Acknowledging one’s imperfections produces a perfect being. **(Viwe Mpurwana)**
 God is in everything but the government. **(Shelton Murphy)**
 Why is sleeping my most peaceful place? **(Roché Palmer)**
 I’m staying alive for tomorrow’s laughter still. **(Roncal Riley)**
 Grief: happiness and love, no longer shared. **(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)**
 I shine bright like Wi-Fi sometimes spotty. **(JuJu Stallworth)**
 There’s always space for a smiling face. **(Shaneece Taylor)**
 I beat the odds stacked against me. **(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)**
 Old workout plan; get cake from kitchen. **(Kharmen Thomas)**

A Poem of Seven-Word Lines

God carried me through storms into blessings.
 Four littles watching Mom. Never give up.
 Homeless yesterday but today we have shelter.
 I wish life would give mothers grace.
 Love stayed even after you were gone.
 Grief never sleeps, it only just rests.
 Their tiny hugs are far beyond love.
(Shakila Woods)

MAKING METAPHORS

Students in the Class of 2026 created metaphors about themselves, about Odyssey (see the next section of this Oracle), and about many other aspects of their lives, from parenthood to cell phones.



I am a boomerang. Doesn't matter how you throw me: turn around and I'm back in the game even better than the old me. Life has thrown me in many different directions with struggles, responsibilities, and loss, but I have never stayed there. I always find my way back like a boomerang. I may bend under pressure but I don't break. I don't depend on a certain season to fly again. No matter what season good or bad, I always come back stronger. I have faced seasons of things that should have broken me. But every struggle shapes me and teaches me resilience. The further life throws me, the stronger my return becomes. I rise again with more wisdom, more strength, and more determination. I am a boomerang. My setbacks are never the end of my journey; they are the path that reminds me that as long as I have breath in my body, God by my side, and four little people that depend on me, life can throw me but my path will always bring me back stronger! **(Shakila Woods)**

Life - a compass?
North, that's the way!
...Right?
Wait – it could be South
Or East
Maybe even West
How can you know
with a needle running loose like a moose
Navigating life with a directionless compass?
Seems impossible.
Follow the red tip -
It points the right way!
At least, that's what they say
But how do I know the way
when the bright red tip is spinning,
Spinning free like the planets and stars?
God please don't let this thing take me to Mars
Do I still use it as my navigator?
Yes - let it spin, let it dance with the wind.
Let it guide you, for it will only take you
where you are destined to win.
(Shataya Hall)





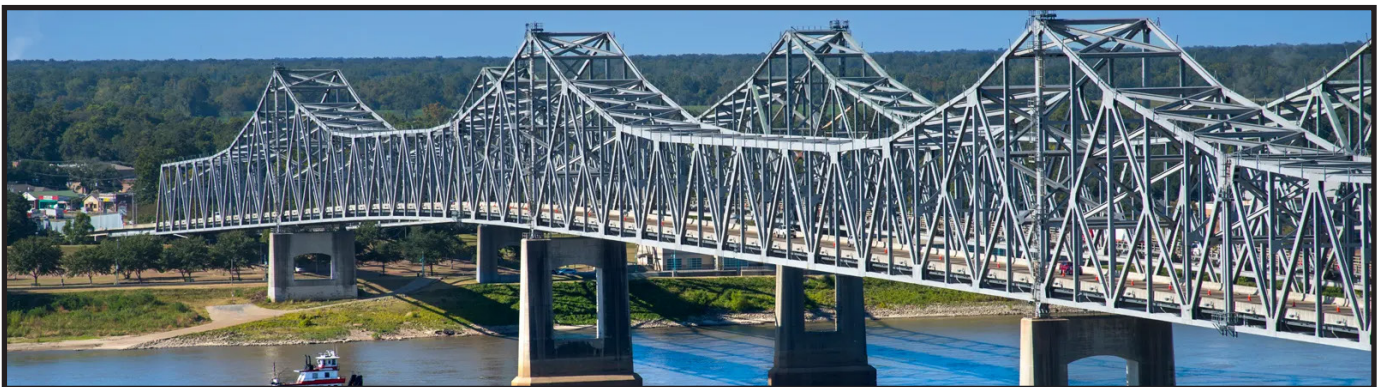
Parenthood for me is coffee reheated twice and still strong.
 I am braids done at midnight, a teacher that goes over
 work to keep retention.
 I am a light bulb that never cools.
 My hands are match sticks, striking hope from damp air.
 I am a lighthouse built from bone and prayers,
 standing alone in a storm, beaten up shore,
 with three small ships circling my light.
(Destiny Drone)

Parenthood is setting down a foundation of soil
 It is watering the soul
 It is nurturing the mind
 While soothing wounds
 It is caring, loving, and patient
 Parenthood is planting a seed in a garden
 and watching it grow **(Paola Damiani)**



Parenthood is a garden.
 Each child begins as a seed,
 carried carefully into the soil of love.
 You water with patience, feed with hope,
 and pull the weeds of worry that threaten to crowd out joy.
 Some days bring storms, others sun, but growth happens quietly,
 even when you can't see it. One day you step back and realize
 the garden has grown wild and beautiful – and so have you.
(Angel Moore)

Parenthood is building a bridge.
 You pour your heart into every brick, making sure it's strong enough
 to carry the weight of life's ups and downs. It's slow, sometimes messy work,
 and you don't always see the results right away.
 But one day, your child steps out onto the bridge,
 crossing with confidence not thinking about all the effort it took to build
 and that's okay because the whole point was to help them get to where they're going safely.
(JuJu Stallworth)

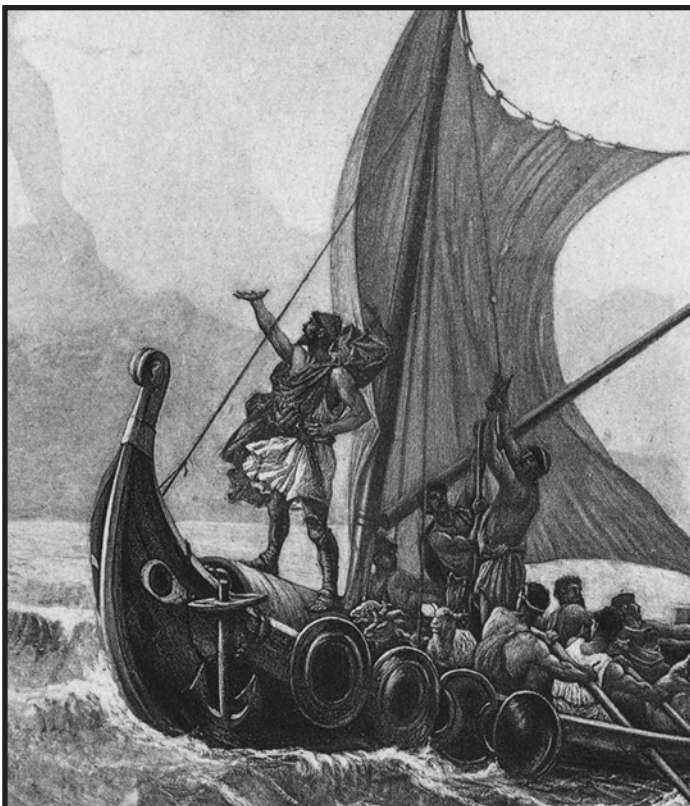


Parenthood is an orchard.
 It is very demanding and requires a lot of care.
 You must nurture and pour into it daily.
 The seasons will change with unpredictable
 weather conditions.
 However, your efforts will show as you watch your
 orchard grow. **(Serene Boyd)**

Parenthood is a tree.
 It has strong roots.
 It grows exponentially.
 It's never truly done.
 Well into adulthood the roots keep it grounded.
 Any leaf that sheds, shall grow again.
 It too takes time and patience to grow.
(Laura Bass)



Life is a voyage...
 It can be long and often turns into an excursion.
 The joy that a simple pleasure can bring.
 Unique in the experience each person's differing version.
 There's sometimes pain in the songs we sing.
 We often plan navigation in sunny skies and calm water
 then we are thrown into uncharted territory becoming a martyr.
 The change in temperament from smooth to coarse
 just as the waters of the sea become a force.



The solace found in bright sunny days with a cool
 breeze.
 Much need for the soul to be sailing along at ease.
 No matter how much preparing is done we still
 have to weather the storms.
 At the end of it all the outcome is the way it
 transforms.
 The voyage of life is taken with mystery of
 intention.
 Somewhere along the way to the end we find
 purpose
 in the investments bringing that purpose to
 fruition. **(Kharmen Thomas)**

Valencia is an Odyssey
 Each step I take is a vibration
 Each fall is a musical note
 In the silence between, I hear my own
 Heartbeat like a drum calling me to my fate
 I am the composer of this journey.
 Unfinished and undefeated...
(Valencia Collins)



I am a rain storm
 I come by very intensely
 Might take down things in my path
 But like all storms they don't last.
 Some things grow out of a good downpour
 Sometimes even rainbows appear
 Much like how I feel
 Once those clouds clear, clarity feels near.
(Stacy Castillo)

Sleep is an adventure!
 Some long some short
 Many different places, a lot of different people
 Some exciting moments some not so much
 Moments of fear in an unpredictable world
 Sleep is an adventure
 My daughter knows best!
(Richard Butler)

Sleeping like a log,
 Hitting the hay,
 Out like a light,
 Sleep as a recharge.
 Catching some Zs,
 Drifting off,
 Overnight maintenance
 For the brain.
(Tida Drammeh)

I am a rollercoaster,
 wildly swerving through the tracks.
 Life for me has been a rollercoaster
 starting at the top
 but flying up and down at full speed.
 As of now life has been
 more of a road trip car ride
 waiting to arrive to my destination.
(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)

Life is like a theme park,
 lots of rides and fun, but memorable
 moments.
(Tikoya Gilmer)





I am a key
I open doors
Unlocking new places
I open the way
To very big spaces
I unlock dreams
I am the key
(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)



I am a bee hive in summer.
My life hums with constant motion.
From the outside it may look chaotic,
but every movement has purpose.
I gather lessons the way bees gather nectar.
A little from every struggle, every blessing turning
even the busiest days into something golden.
The noise isn't weakness.
It's proof that I'm building, creating, and surviving. **(Anteijah Greer)**



I am an anchor
I provide protection for my children
Protect them from the dangers in the world
I am the anchor of my family keeping us solid as one.
(George Sydnor)

Shopping and walking are therapy. I love doing both, and they both help me to relieve stress. Walking allows me to clear my mind step by step, and breathing in the fresh air helps my mind settle. Shopping does the same thing except instead of moving down a path, I'm moving down aisles, looking at different options and focusing on small decisions instead of worrying. I leave my stress behind in both. In different ways, both are therapy because they help me reset, think clearly,

and feel lighter. When I'm tired and overwhelmed, I can do one or the other or both and feel much better.
(Jacqueline Hawkins)

Life is a board game, 'til you die
Everyday you roll the dice
To move along the board
to acquire new things to survive
The law is fake and history is a lie
And they give you Monopoly money to spend
If you open your eyes
Not about mastering space
but about mastering time
It's about mastering the God inside
(Shelton Murphy)



Cell phones are drugs. Some are so addicted that they can't put them down. **(Roché Palmer)**

My cellphone is a magnet that rips my attention away
from what is in front of me.

Notifications and messages make it hard to pay attention.

This is a big distraction in my everyday life.

(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)

Social media is a spider web.

It's easy to get stuck aimlessly scrolling.

Like a bug getting caught in a web, you get tangled up
in the fantasy of it.

Social media spins lies that can deter you from the
truth. **(Lisa Brown)**

Facebook is a python

It starts off small and manageable

Then soon it grows to be unmanageable.

It consumes a lot of your time to take care

As you feel it, it plots your own demise.

Unsupervised it will soon turn on you

Facebook allows one to shed their skin for a new one

In time it will learn everything about you,

Only to find your weaknesses.

Once raised and unmanageable,

it is thrown out into the environment

only to cause more destruction



The Everglades represent the destructive power
of invasive species on the natural environment.

So too can we bear witness to

Facebook's destructive power on society

(Viwe Mpurwana)

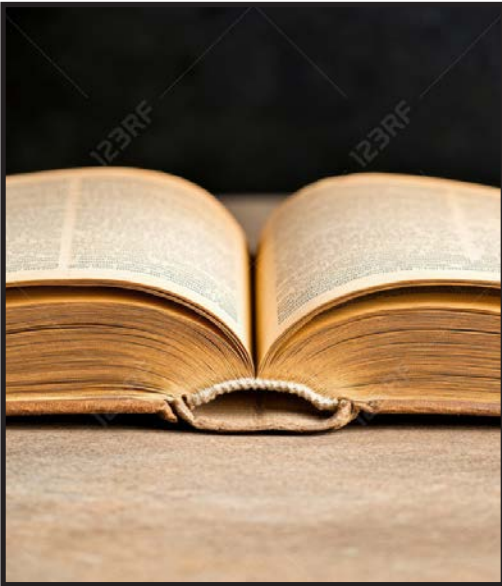


Makeup is life on a little palette.

Every brushstroke hides the flaws and
shows off the good stuff underneath.

Sometimes it smudges, sometimes it
shines, but every layer tells a story of
who I am and who I'm trying to be.

Foundation for my routine, blush for
the happy moments, dark concealer
shadows for the messy stuff, and
lipstick for confidence—put together,
they make a picture that's messy, real,
and perfectly my kind of beautiful
imperfection. **(Roncal Riley)**



Reading is a record that keep spinning – my eyes move forward, but my brain keeps dropping the needle back to the same line. I'm physically reading the words and my mind gets lost in the book but not about anything in the book itself. Maybe it's about what I'm eating for dinner, who I forgot to text back, or remembering an artist that I like is dropping an album. I have to keep going back to the same point 3-5 times before really understanding what I just read. **(Shaneece Taylor)**

Grief is a book
It has a beginning
It has an end
It has a unique story
It has many owners
And it has a name
(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)

I am a butterfly.
One crawling through a dangerous life.
Feeling afraid and small, every problem big and tall.
You see, I was consumed in a cocoon of darkness.
Abused by someone heartless, and then one terrifying night
he sure did try to take my life, but I survived.
I emerged from my cocoon to find life can be beautiful too!
I changed my ways and I must say that finally, I am safe.
I am now a butterfly.
I know now I can touch the sky.
I am graceful and calm.
I am gentle and warm.
I am flying away from the abusive storm.
I am strong but still fragile.
I love to travel – to lands of peace where the sun shines bright.
Man, am I glad to be a butterfly! **(Kiana Galloway)**

I used to be a caterpillar
A loner
In isolation
I built my cocoon
I went into hibernation.
But now I'm a butterfly that soars
I spread my wings wide
I fly high
I'm no longer a bore.
I'm super
I'm friendly
I'm a beauty
I am reborn **(Laura Bass)**



I am a racing car
Speeding through the night
Switching lane to lane
Morning to the night
Windows down, feeling every wind
AC on but there is wind
Music blasting miles from 90 to 110.
(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)



I used to be a turtle hiding in her shell
But now I am a rose who blossomed
Into something bold and bright.
(Stacy Castillo)

I used to be a stone
You can't crack, but smooth,
But now I am a gem,
Something you hold on to
Or place on the shelf.
(Valencia Collins)

I used to be a cub,
Small, scared, and timid.
But now I am a momma bear
Strong, smart, and tranquil
But a fierce protector when needed.
(Kiana Galloway)





I am an orange
Layered, guarded by tough skin
But when you take time to peel me back
You'll find something bright, messy, and real.
(Shataya Hall)



I used to be an empty canvas
But now I am a walking art display.
(Stacy Castillo)

I used to be a little mouse
Scared to face the big world
But now I am a tiger
Ready to take on the world
(Viwe Mpurwana)



I used to be a pigeon
Didn't like to fly much
But now I am an eagle
And I love to fly
(George Sydnor)

ODYSSEY METAPHORS



Odyssey is a sushi roll
all different flavors, textures,
brought together to make something delicious.
(Roché Palmer)



Odyssey is a rainstorm, wild winds,
trying to make it through to get to the other
destination,
getting homework done, stepping out of the box,
but the rainstorm brings out the rainbow and helps
the plants grow.
(Tikoya Gilmer)



Odyssey is an eagle
I am the prey
It lifts me high
Soaring in the sky
With its help
I reach the unreachable
(Lilibeth Sobrevilla)

Odyssey is a powerful, multi-layered metaphor
for overcoming adversity.

Odyssey represents a compass guiding us
from poverty toward personal growth, self-
confidence.

Odyssey is a collective, democratic journey
toward equality.

Odyssey is home, finding stability and a sense
of belonging, empowerment through literacy
and expression.

(Tida Drammeh)

Odyssey is a fountain
pouring an abundance of knowledge into our souls.
(Kiana Galloway)

Odyssey is a water well
Filled with pure flowing growth
Odyssey is a water well
That guarantees our educational path
Odyssey is a water well
You have to dig to not be left out
Odyssey is a water well
A friendly reminder that it's not just about yourself
Odyssey is a water well
A testament of one's self
(Valencia Collins)

Odyssey is a ladder for all who are accepted. Once you find the courage to climb, every step is earned. Your hands may get shaky, your legs might get tired, but you keep climbing. With each step, you rise higher, leaving behind that past you once were stuck in that tried to hold you back, getting closer to a version of yourself you never thought you could become or reach. **(Shakila Woods)**



Odyssey is a bridge. Odyssey is a bridge between my past and my future. It carries me from where I've been, through challenges, mistakes, and lessons, leading me towards new opportunities, growth, and purpose. Every step I take on this bridge is a step closer to the person I'm meant to become.

(Roncal Riley)

Odyssey is an ocean.
It is home to diverse people.

(Laura Bass)

Odyssey is a breakthrough of my life.
It can go up or down,
but I am motivated to keep moving forward.

(Larry Grant)

Odyssey is a crane,
the tool needed to make sure we get to the top.
When no ladder is tall enough,
the crane is there to lift us up to the top
where it knows we belong.

(Shataya Hall)



Odyssey is a cherry blossom tree,
unique, beautiful, and strong.
Many different paths like the branches taken
yet stands so beautifully as one.

(Anteijah Greer)

Odyssey is sweet candy.
Everyone is welcoming, loving, and caring.
The laughter is what keeps me going.

(Joseph Thigpen Jr.)

Odyssey is a resurrection
A new way of thinking
Creating a different path of life for success
A rebirth

(Serene Boyd)



Odyssey is a quilt made of unique pieces of cloth,
made into one.

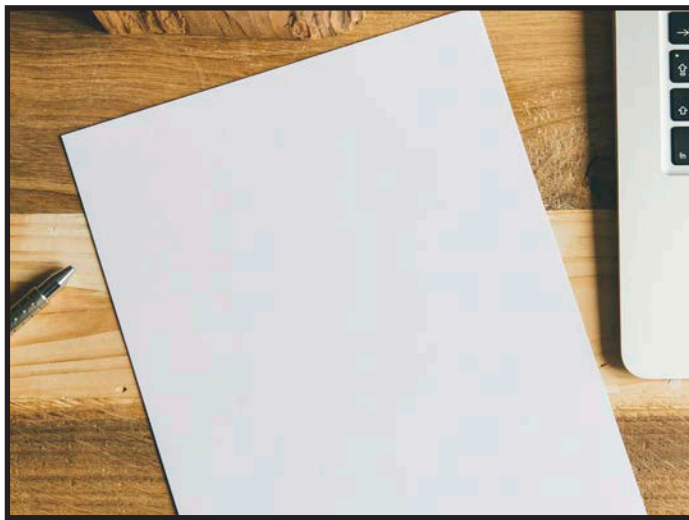
Each one of us bringing a piece of ourselves
to be sewn into the big picture
that is the Odyssey Project.

(Lisa Brown)

My Odyssey class we are like a den of dragons.
We are all wise and fierce in our own way.
And when the time is right for each of us
we will spread our wings and take flight.

(Shelton Murphy)

Odyssey is a dream most people never had a
chance to have.
Something a lot of us had forgotten.
Odyssey is a dream I've had and is now a dream
I'm living. **(Richard Butler)**



Odyssey is a blank sheet of paper.
You write your beginning, middle, and end.
Choose your own adventure.

(Shaneece Taylor)

Odyssey is a legacy
That grows on and on
Giving many light
When things could've been wrong
Taking step by step until everything done
Completing its course for many who couldn't
dream at all.

(Cquemiah Clark-Richmond)

Odyssey is a kindergartener walking into their first day of school,
nervous of the scene, but once you get to know your peers
it becomes a place a kid always wants to be.

(Destiny Drone)

Odyssey is a compass helping us find direction
to higher education and a better future.
It points us to opportunities we may not find on our own
and keeps us aligned with our goals.

(Brittany Hughes)

Odyssey is a project that never ends.

(Angel Moore)

Odyssey is a railroad,
There's a beginning and end point,
but so many curves and turns that lead to a destination.

(Stacy Castillo)

