MISSION STATEMENT
Wayne County Community College District’s mission is to empower individuals, businesses, and communities to achieve their higher education and career advancement goals through excellent, accessible, culturally diverse, and globally competitive programs and services.

VISION STATEMENT
Wayne County Community College District will be known as a premier community college and innovator in the areas of high quality academic and career education, talent development in support of regional economic growth, diversity and inclusion, and technological advancement.

VALUES STATEMENT
• Excellence in teaching and learning
• Diverse, international and intercultural education
• Student and community service
• Integrity

ACCREDITATION
The Wayne County Community College District is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission
230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, Illinois 60604-1411
800-621-7440 / 312-263-0456
(fax) 312-263-7462
info@hlcommission.org • www.hlcommission.org
MESSAGE FROM WCCCD 2
MESSAGE FROM 3
THE EDITOR
CONTRIBUTORS 4-9

REFLECTIVE ESSAYS 10-24

Simple Acts of Kindness Bring Great Rewards
By David Martin

Why Do We Have This System?
By Mohammed Rubel

In Pursuit of Your Dreams
By Raissa Mirelle

Life Struggle: Being a Parent and Student
By Segun Medunoye

A Hole In My Heart
By Babalola Afeez

Lost Some Friends
By Babalola Afeez

College Life In America: A New Cultural Experience
By Dafe David

Maintaining Balance: In the War of Life
By Gerard Dickerson

A Helping Hand, When It’s Needed
By Usef Saleh Julien

A Full Circle
By Shawnta P. Ward

REFLECTIVE CREATIVE 25-36
NON-FICTION

Still I Rise!
By Deborah Oni

A Long And Winding Road From Homeless To College Graduate
By Usef Saleh Julien

My Conversion to Christianity
By Dafe David

My Gender and Identity
By Ifeoma Princess Maduewesi

A Life-Altering Experience in Nigeria
By Ezinne Confidence Marizu

REFLECTIVE POEMS 37-42

You Called, So I Answered
By Usef Saleh Julien

Scabs
By Lindsey Hoper

Friendship
By Victor Usman

What Do You Crave?
By Shawnta P. Ward

Wonderfully and Fearfully Made
By Deborah Oni

Flower Love
By Shantrell L. Trammel

Nothing Wrong
By Betty L. Daniels

Weekend
By Betty L. Daniels

An Eagle, My Son
By Betty L. Daniels

I Didn’t Protect You
By Betty L. Daniels

Mom & Dad
By Yesmin Rahman

Undone
By Afeez Babalola

REFLECTIVE ARTWORK 43-48

The Old Man and His Bongo
By Winston Lightfoot

Reflections
By Winston Lightfoot

World Upside Down
By Winston Lightfoot

Colorful Night
By Winston Lightfoot

Life Reflections
By Yesmin Rahman

“You can do the impossible because you have been through the unimaginable.” - Christina Rasmussen
By Lindsey Hoper

Life’s Reflections
By Betty L. Daniels

Cover Photo by: Betty L. Daniels
“Bend in the River View of River Rouge from Henry Ford Campus”
Welcome to Reflections, the award-winning student literary magazine of the Wayne County Community College District.

We are excited to bring you another edition of this magazine. In working with this project, our students discovered and explored the treasures of writing and the visual art of photography. As the old expression goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

In today’s fast-paced world, the ability to express yourself and communicate with others through the written word not only will help you professionally, it will enhance your creativity and discipline.

There’s something magical about writing. It allows one to reflect on life, release emotions or tell a story. It provides a freedom of expression that can influence others in ways we never dreamed possible.

For many of the students who contributed to this publication, writing and using photography to capture what inspired them to pursue their dreams was a new experience. We are extremely proud of them and excited to share their talents with you.

I hope Reflections encourages everyone to start writing. Write a poem, an essay or a short story. Maybe start a journal. Whatever you decide to write, it will open up a new world for you.

Best wishes,

Unbreen Amir
Assistant to the Chancellor for Administrative Communication
Wayne County Community College District
As Others Reflect

It’s year two of reflecting with Wayne County Community College District’s students as we produce another edition of Reflections. We are officially an award-winning publication. Reflecting on life experiences is such a fruitful exercise. In fact, I think it is imperative that we all do that every so often in life. Too often, people wake up and wonder how they got where they are today.

The writers and photographers in this issue of Wayne County Community College District’s magazine have done just that – reflected on life, on careers and talents. Most students are new to this project with one talented photographer returning for year two.

Each contributor offers insight into what they have learned along the way and how reflecting enabled them to grow as a student and move forward reaching toward a goal.

Whether they were once homeless or dealing with cultural shocks as newcomers to America, each student became more self-aware through their writings; they shared that awareness on these pages.

It was an honor to work with this team of talented students alongside my colleague Dennis Niemiec as well as Unbreen Amir and her team guided by Dr. Curtis Ivery’s leadership.

This entire issue is dedicated to reflecting on life, on self, and on passions through one’s personal creativity.

Not only did each contributor learn something along the way, they shared lessons to be learned by those who will read this publication. Maybe through their work, you can learn to reflect on your own life.

Through this experience, I too have learned a tremendous amount that has changed the way I reflect on life.

With Gratitude,

Vanessa Denha Garmo
Editor
BABALOLA AFEEZ

I am an international student currently studying Cybersecurity at WCCCD. Growing up in Nigeria was fun, challenging and filled with many experiences. I earned my Bachelor’s in Accounting and Master’s in Marketing and worked with Lagos Internal Revenue Service in Lagos, Nigeria for seven years. I decided to challenge myself, step out of my comfort zone, and pursue new goals in the United States by entering a completely different field of study. I love my family and cherish my relationships.

BETTY L. DANIELS

As a creative person, I am rarely stationary. I have been a writer, actor, stage manager and have worked in radio production. My momentum continues. My last acting venue was a film that made it into the San Diego Film Festival. Photography is my current muse. At this time, I can really say as far as momentum, my creativity is an undercurrent seeking release. All of this has been sparked by classes I have taken at WCCCD.

CHELSEA FINGER

I am a graduate of the University of Michigan, with a major in Communications. I am an artist, and a writer, and working on Reflections has been the most inspiring and rewarding experience in my professional career. To see each student blossom into a talented writer, photographer or artist and witness the creative process is extraordinary. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be involved with and witness the impact of the WCCCD Reflections student literary magazine.
CONTRIBUTORS

GERARD DICKERSON
My name is Gerard Dickerson. I am a Pre-Engineering major at Wayne County Community College District. I’m self-motivated with an impulsive ambition to accomplish prolific achievements. I’m extremely family oriented and like to utilize my upbringing to impart wisdom. My principal goal is to leave an everlasting legacy, capable of nourishing the seeds of our future.

LINDSEY KAYLIN HOPER
My name is Lindsey Kaylin Hoper. I was born on August 25, 1996 to Darryl and Lynette Hoper. In 2014, I graduated from Southfield-Lathrup High School in Southfield, MI. I attended Western Michigan University for the first year of college in 2014 during which I was diagnosed with a blood clot in my brain but survived. In 2016, I started my journey at WCCCD and haven’t looked back. I have always loved helping and taking care of others. My mom says I’ve been that way since the age of five. I love music and dancing. I am heavily involved in church, including music ministry and youth fellowship. I love movies with crazy plot twists, medical shows and musicals. To many, I’m mama Lindsey and to others, just Linds. And, to my pastor I am a little evangelist. Upon graduation from college, I look forward to serving my community with great love and dignity within the medical field.

DAFE DAVID
I am an international student from Nigeria studying Criminal Justice with an emphasis in Law Enforcement. I am highly delighted to share my true-life stories in this publication. I am excited to study in the United States of America in general and Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) in particular. I believe my experiences will be of tremendous benefit to upcoming international students in the future. I am a proud member of the prestigious Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society. I have been married for 22 years to my beautiful wife, Sheila, and blessed with two lovely children, Oghene Yona and Eliroghene.

USEF SALEH JULIEN
As others have described me, I am a well-rounded, friendly and wise person. I pride myself on gaining knowledge and being disciplined. I enjoy sharing my testimony and extensive life experiences if I know it will help others. I pride myself on being honest, well-spoken and sociable. I hope that the leadership and communications skills that I have learned help to make me a valued friend. I am currently attempting to be a productive member of Southwest Detroit, the community in which I live. I am studying Biological Sciences and hope to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in Biological Sciences and a Bachelor’s degree in Nursing.
CONTRIBUTORS

WINSTON LIGHTFOOT
My name is Winston Lightfoot. I’m 22 years old and digital photography is my life. It is very rare I don’t have my camera with me, and I am always looking at the world through a photographer’s eye. My dream is to continue my professional career as a photographer and travel the world taking photos of all sorts of unique things.

IFEOMA PRINCESS MADUEWESI
I am often asked why I use my middle name. It’s better, I guess, to keep it short. However, I have always been my dad’s little princess and I like being his princess. My first name will never change even though many people refer to me as Princess. I attend WCCCD majoring in Surgical Technology. Being where I am today has really exposed me to a diverse society. I’ve dreamt of being where I am today and am glad I am on the path of pursuing my career and building a future for myself.

EZINNE CONFIDENCE MARIZU
My name is Ezinne Marizu. I am a 25-year-old international student at WCCCD. I was born and raised in Nigeria. When I am not busy, I stay home and listen to music.

DAVID MARTIN
I grew up in Detroit and graduated from Henry Ford High School in 1984. I volunteered most of my life at the Redford Theatre and through that experience, I gained 26 years of employment. I decided to earn a degree after being laid off. My experience at WCCCD has been life-changing. I am a member of the WCCCD Student Executive Council, Phi Theta Kappa and contributor to the Reflections magazine.
CONTRIBUTORS

YESMIN RAHMAN
My name is Yesmin Rahman. My family and friends call me Eva because it’s short and cute. I was born in Bangladesh and came to the United States in 2012. I became a U.S. citizen in January 2018. Currently, I am studying Computer Information Systems and am also a work-study student at WCCCD. I plan to get a degree in ATVA Higher Level Protection Management and ultimately own my own real estate company.

DEBORAH ONI
I am a Nigerian and am currently in the United States of America pursuing a career in Nursing in this great citadel of learning at WCCCD. I love to be an inspirational writer, which is why I did the piece on Anike’s challenge. I believe in going after your dreams and not giving up on yourself. Successful people never give up. If you don’t have a support system, support yourself. No matter how bad things get in life, I always say, “Still, I Rise!”

RAISSA MIRELLE
As a child in my mom’s backyard, I grew up watching airplanes fly overhead. This spawned a fascination with travel and an early interest in international business. One of my first jobs was an internship at a multinational exporting company in Brazil. It was at this time that I chose a career in business. A lot of my life has been spent traveling and learning and interacting with the cultures in South America, Europe and the U.S. I am a Business Administration student at WCCCD and look forward to achieving my associate’s degree and pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Eastern Michigan University.

SEGUN MEDUNOYE
I am a Nigerian with a background in Business Administration and Financial Management. I hold a certification from the Michigan Real Estate Institute of Detroit. I am studying Facility Maintenance at WCCCD. I plan to get a degree in ATVA Higher Level Protection Management and ultimately own my own real estate company.
CONTRIBUTORS

MOHAMMED RUBEL
I was born in Bangladesh and came to Michigan in 2016. Currently, I am pursuing an Associate of Science degree at WCCCD. I hope to transfer to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor to earn a degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering. I am very proud of this project because most students have creativity they can share with other students.

SHANTRELL L. TRAMMEL
I was born in Detroit, Michigan and was raised in San Antonio, Texas. I’m a hearing-impaired student who has overcome so many obstacles in life. I am a nursing student whose dream is to heal people from all over the world. And, most importantly, I love to spread love throughout life journeys. I was admitted to the University of Michigan summer research program.

VICTOR USMAN
I am working on Associate’s degree in General Studies. I am from Nigeria. I currently live in Detroit.

SHAWNTA P. WARD
I am an accounting major at WCCCD and will be pursuing my bachelor’s in Business Administration with a Concentration Management from Northwood University in the 3 + 1 Program that is offered through the two colleges. I am also a member of TRiO, which is a federally-funded program that assists students in their college endeavors. I am also an officer with Phi Beta Kappa, the Alpha Upsilon Zeta Chapter. I love to devour books while holding them in my hands and being in the kitchen making delicious concoctions, all of which led to the creation of my specialty bread business, Lovin’ from the Oven!
NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE INVESTMENT YOU MAKE IN YOURSELF
Simple Acts of Kindness Bring Great Rewards
By David Martin

Simple acts of kindness happen around us every moment of every day. Ordinary people doing ordinary things like a smile, happy greeting or kind gesture can define a person’s day, year and even life. As a giver, these simple acts don’t cost a thing but they will return great rewards. As a receiver, it can mean the world, restore hope and save a life.

There seems to be an innate instinct to intercede when help is needed. Acts of kindness are witnessed across all species, not just humans. For example, a dog babysitting kittens, saving human children, or alerting people to a fire. A dolphin distracting a shark so others can flee the danger. A gorilla in a zoo protecting an injured child. People greeting others with a simple smile. Traveling to a natural disaster site to rescue and care for displaced survivors. Spending time at food banks and homeless shelters. Or, even donating a kidney. The examples go on, defining the good in all.

When these events take place, people wonder why those “heroes” would put their life in danger to protect, rescue or be kind to people outside of their own family. They are perceived as extraordinary by some, placed on a pedestal and honored for their “heroics.” However, to the majority of those doing the act of kindness, this recognition is not wanted. When kindness is given out, the expectation of any reward doesn’t exist. They are ordinary people, acting as they believe anyone else would in the same situation. Knowing it’s the right thing to do for our fellow living creatures.

In my lifetime, I have experienced the power of kindness both as a giver and as a receiver. Participating in the spreading of kindness I have also worked on projects that gave joy to others and received powerful smiles and laughter in return. I have also been on a self-destructive path while I watched my life collapse around me. I was ready to call it quits. If it were not for the kindness of others to show me that I still have a lot to offer, I would not be the success I am.

continued on page 11
I went on a journey into self-doubt and hopelessness. Before 2008, life was good, I had the same great job for 26 years and volunteered for an entertainment nonprofit for 40 years, bringing joy to many people. I gave whenever I was asked, giving 100 percent of myself. In 2008, my older brother died from complications of muscular dystrophy. Losing him started my plunge into the abyss. I was laid off and I had to apply for unemployment. My wife started having anxiety issues and could not work. The mortgage company gave me the runaround, resulting in losing my house. When the other volunteers at the nonprofit expected more from me than I could deliver, I went into total failure mode. My thoughts cycled through failure, disappointment, inadequacy and disgust. I was worth more dead than alive. I felt like I was a disappointment to myself and others. In my mind, I let everyone down and lost everything. As much as I tried, I had nothing left to give. I felt hopeless and completely worthless.

Then a glimmer of hope sparked from the kindness of one man. He sat with me for a long time and told me “Ok… you’re at the bottom. There is nowhere left to go but up.” That gave me the thread to hold on to. He then brought back messages from my friends showing encouragement and love. That gave me hope, confidence and purpose. I combined all the threads into a rope. With the kindness of so many I climbed that rope to the top of that deep dark hole and continued toward my potential. Spreading the kindness back into the atmosphere, hoping to make a positive impact with as many people as I can.

The kindness that we give makes life better. It opens dialogue with all types of people and their beliefs. I measure my life not by material possessions but by how I positively affect others, using my talents to bring people together for a common goal, encouraging them to reach beyond their safety zone, finding their passions in life. We don’t know what effect we will have, but the ripple we create will travel across many generations. Kindness is the common factor between all races, beliefs and species. We can all participate in simple acts of kindness – if nothing else, just smile.
Why Do We Have This System?

By Mohammed Rubel

I am not a politician. I am not a specific supporter of a political group, but I love this country and I respect the constitution. I try to be a critical thinker. I try to analyze things.

I came to this country in October of 2017. That time was the election period in the United States of America. While I was in my previous country, Bangladesh, I heard about the election in the United States. People all over the world have curiosity about the presidential election in the United States of America. Why do we have two systems, the electoral vote and the popular vote, in the same election? I know this is a valuable part of our constitution.

But I believe it is not effective to have a two-system election. It is bad for the country. If the federal government takes the decision for a presidential election from the electoral vote, why even have a general election vote?

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Electoral College is the system where the president and vice president of the United States are chosen. It was created by the United States Constitution to provide a method of election that was “feasible, desirable, and consistent with a republican form of government. During most of the Constitutional Convention,” presidential selection was vested in the legislature. (https://www.britannica.com/topic/electoral-college)

I think this two-election system is a waste of time and money. The Federal Government and the presidential candidates spend an enormous amount of time and money leading up to the election. In the 2016 presidential election, more than $6.5 billion was spent for campaigning and other costs, as reported in the Washington Post. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/04/14/somebody-just-put-a-price-tag-on-the-2016-election-its-a-doozy/?utm_term=.af44ef50bf13).

After all that effort, the Federal Government takes the decision from the electoral vote. So, for the election, the federal government and candidates waste their time and money.

Every political party supporter has a curiosity about the presidential election. That’s why they follow the campaign and vote. With the Electoral College in place, their vote is not as valuable.
I think it would be in the best interest of the country to decide the election based only on majority vote. In 2016, the election’s total popular vote was 128,838,342 and electoral vote 538. The United States is the most popular democracy in the world. I think it would be in the best interest of the country to decide the election based only on majority vote.

Since the election of President Donald Trump, there has been a concerted effort by Democrats to rid the country of the Electoral College system. In 2016, when Hillary Clinton lost the election despite winning the popular vote, there were new calls to abolish the Electoral College. PBS Newshour produced a show to discuss whether the constitutionally mandated system can be changed.

In my opinion, the Electoral College is no longer needed. It is a waste of time and money. It also plays with people’s emotions. Give the vote to the majority. God bless the United States of America.
In Pursuit of Your Dreams

By Raissa Mirelle

In order for our dreams to become our reality, we need to take action on our goals. By doing this we can transform our lives. Two of the most important things we can do to achieve a goal are to reduce the fear of failure and increase the willingness to take action.

I clearly remember when I made the decision to come to the United States. Many of the students that I was in contact with decided to travel to the U.S., not only to improve their English, but to travel to a city they had seen in a movie. We wanted to ride a yellow school bus, or eat at one of the famous fast food restaurants. Behind each of these desires was also a dream. In my case, my goal was to improve my English and visit New York’s Times Square, and my dream was to complete a bachelor’s degree in the U.S.

To arrive in the U.S., I had a long arduous journey that today I refer to as an “adventure.” And at the end of the day, thanks to well-planned goals and a little persistence, I was successful in my endeavors. I arrived in the U.S. with a small suitcase, a medium-sized carry-on and a large dream. What was my main motivation for traveling to the U.S? I wished to know a different culture, people, and a new language while gaining an advanced education.

I came to the U.S. from Brazil and it has been a tremendous experience. It has been invigorating to be able to share my own culture with new friends and have the opportunity to learn about them and their cultures as well. I came in an exchange program in 2014 and I have lived with two different host families. In 2016, I decided to move to France for one year to expand on my French because the opportunity presented itself to me. After a wonderful year in France I returned feeling “magnifique,” ready to return to my studies in the U.S.

With my current goal to finish my degree, I changed my visa status and became a student. This was a particularly difficult time because it is a strenuous process that requires patience and fortitude. During this period of struggle, I recognized this was an opportunity to practice focus and determination that would result in becoming a stronger person. I believe that in struggle one can make themselves stronger, simply by fighting to push forward and not giving up.

While in pursuit of my dream, the journey has provided me a lot of good moments and memories. I met loveable friends and I also met my boyfriend and have two adorable dogs. I would say that we all have a fear of failure, but what we also all have is the perseverance to keep going.

Dream big, set a goal, work on it a little bit every day, and you will remove the obstacles that are holding you back from achieving your goals. Treat your journey as a treasure and take every opportunity to grow and love.
Being an international student means you are neither a U.S citizen nor a permanent resident of the United States of America. The cost of education is never easy for a foreign student. The fees double or triple, and a lengthy process has to be completed before you enroll, but at the end of the day, it’s worth it. The beauty is leaving your own homeland and acquiring knowledge in another country which will make you more informed.

My dream of schooling in the United States started when my parents first bought a colored television and a recorder in 1997. By then, I was already 18 years old, preparing to go into the University of Nigeria to study Business Administration and Management.

Movies we watched back then sparked the need for me to keep the dream alive. “The Last Dragon” was about a young, upcoming boxer who could have cheated to be successful in his career but had to learn the hard way before becoming a champion. Another film that caught my attention was “Good Will Hunting” with Matt Damon playing the role of a genius who chooses to work as a doorkeeper at (MIT) Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His talents were discovered by Professor Gerald Lambeau, who decided to always help the misguided youth.

I gained admission to the University of Nigeria and was amazed that most lectures were held in theatres. I wondered about the American movie I watched where they had few students and the class teacher. Meanwhile in Africa, we had students in different specializations who were required to take some special courses that had nothing to do with their area of specialization, but they had to pass those courses before they graduated. “How will everyone understand what was being taught when the class was crowded,” I wondered as I proceeded with my four-year course.

At the age of 18 and hungry for education, all I had to do was to make sure I read my book to have good grades while my school fees were the responsibility of my parents. At that age, a lot of teenagers are going to school and not working or having children. A lot of teenagers understand that education is important to enable you to have a good job before you can think of marriage or having children. This is why you see more Africans are educated and why we travel to countries like the United States or the United Kingdom to acquire more knowledge, because our parents have taught us since childhood the importance of education.

Having successfully graduated with a grade of 2.1, which is called 2nd Class Upper, I worked with Globacom for 10 years. This was one of Nigeria’s leading telecommunication companies at the time and I was the Regional Warehouse Manager. Then I worked for two years as a billing manager with Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC). Within six years, I was happy being a parent of two girls and a boy.

I decided to take a month-long vacation to the United States, touring states like Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia to research ways to develop my client base.

We may speak the same language but most times words can have different meanings. It’s just the cultural differences, I guess. An example is the word “sorry.” When an African says “sorry,” it’s not always an apology. It means, I feel your pain. So the response we get from an American when we say sorry is: “Oh, it’s not you that caused the problem or issue.” We try to make them understand what the word “sorry” means to us.

The vacation time was well spent, but it was time to return home to get back to my family and work.

Visiting the United States was a wake up call for me. I started to dream again. My dilemma: Do I sponsor my children to

---

continued on page 16
school in the States or do I achieve my own dream? I love my parenting back home and I realized my children are still little and they deserve to understand their culture and way of life. So it became imperative for me to start dreaming.

I decided to take my family on a trip so they could experience what daddy was talking about with them. This time, I had not only traveled with my family but with colleagues. While touring and visiting friends and family, my children always asked me why people were talking differently? I told them they also were talking differently because of the different accents. As months passed, my children continued to ask: “Daddy can we live here?” I told them: “No, you have to go home before school resumes.” The children had sad faces but I assured them everything would be okay.

With my F1 visa and great anticipation, I enrolled at Wayne County Community College District for a program that will last about three years. I began to wonder how I would be able to tussle between my education and my family, 6,613 miles away in Nigeria. But I realized I was doing this for them. Being a family man and an African, my responsibility is to not only take care of my family but also my fragile parents. It was a hard pill to swallow knowing I have to finish my degree before seeing my family. I could visit my family but I would only have to leave them again without knowing my date of return. That would hurt them and also hurt me.

My journey started and my school was in a classroom, not online. My first day was amazing, just like I had watched in the movie. No noise in class, no one coming into the class late, one-on-one assessment with our instructor, whom we call lecturer in my home country, and questions were asked in class. The most amazing thing was the class was never crowded like my experience with my first degree in my country. I realized that my instructor’s greatest desire was to help every student succeed. Awesome. I am studying facilities maintenance and project management.

With the time difference of six hours between the United States and Nigeria, I have to wake up as early as 4:30 a.m. to check on what’s happening back home. Knowing my home is at peace keeps me moving ahead with the plans for the day. It is imperative that I do a video call daily to speak to my children. How overwhelming it can be. Both father and mother have a great importance in every child’s life and I never want to miss a part as they develop. This means that a lot of sacrifice has to be made for the children’s stability. Not being around the child may change who you are but nonetheless you have to be a part of your children’s lives to ensure you are proud of them and proud of what you see them becoming at the end of the day. Again, as a father who is 6,613 miles away from my home country of Nigeria, I have to keep the communication alive because the truth is the impact you have on your children will determine who they will become as adults. Charity, they say, begins at home, and the foundation you give your children is key.

continued on page 17
Life Struggle: Being a Parent and Student

I had my challenges in the States where I had to live the life of a bachelor. I ate in restaurants for about a month. I never cooked in Nigeria. My male friends told me they cooked. I popped my eyes wide open and questioned them. Why? They told me in most restaurants, food is cooked by men. Wow! I never thought I would ever buy pots, let alone cook. I started looking for an African store. Well, you may wonder, if I can’t cook, how will I know the food stuff to buy? Hmmm… YouTube is the answer. I realized I have to learn how to cook a lot of dishes. In America, there is nothing like, “the man should do this while the woman does that.” It is an equal society. I am happy to say I am improving in cooking my dishes and I appreciate the opportunity of not being told the story but being the story teller. My feeding became stable but I knew there would be more challenges ahead.

Just when I was beginning to enjoy my bachelor life, the winter season began. I started dressing right for the season but it was never enough. I was still always cold and wondered why it was so. I didn’t have friends nearby. All my friends lived far so life wasn’t that easy and to tell the truth, as a married man and a foreign student, it’s not easy to have friends. I have to be more careful making friends or moving around places I have no knowledge of to avoid getting into trouble. Anyway, I woke up one morning feeling very cold. I wondered why and went out to see snow falling. I smiled at the sight. It was so beautiful. I quickly called my family and showed them on a video call but then I realized this was not funny after all. This is work and I mean real work. I had to figure out how to melt the ice from my car. I ran out and removed some ice and within 3-5 minutes, I ran back into the house because I was freezing. I observed I was the only one always running to my class while everyone else was casually walking. Hmmmm, I began to wonder...

Another struggle was how to dress right for the winter season. Some days I wear three inner wears (clothes upon clothes) and a big jacket to school. I got into my car which has been running for about 15 minutes, warm enough for me to start driving. Having arrived at my destination, I had a two-minute walk and started freezing. I observed I was the only one always running to my class while everyone else was casually walking. Hmmmm, I began to wonder...

I owe this achievement thus far to God Almighty, to my family, my uncle who sponsored me and to my tutor who helped me achieve my dream. I have always had a great desire to maximize my potential, encourage my best work and also impact the lives of people. I am ready to take the knowledge and experience I have acquired to the next level. I hope to be back to the United States of America for another course in Real Estate Management. This time I believe I will earn a scholarship because the sky’s the limit.
A Hole in My Heart
By Babalola Afeez

I have a hole in my heart and each time I worry about it, it stretches and expands. I wonder what I need to do because it causes me pain I can’t ignore.

As the saying goes, be calm and relax, time heals everything. Worry never solves anything but instead aggravates and escalates our pains and challenges.

So, I let the healing process begin and realized there really was never a hole in my heart. It was an imaginary hole as a result of worry over the issues and challenges of life we all deal with and which are needed to shape our lives towards our purpose.

Just like me, many have an imaginary hole in their hearts without knowing it. It’s about to end their lives and in fact, it has ended some already without knowing the cause. It was actually not death that took them away but the worry of the imaginary hole. The worry of the imaginary hole of the heart has maimed and destroyed many. It has led to suicide, depression, addiction and desperation.

Break the box and snap out of it. After all, it’s actually an imaginary hole. Worry less, time has a mysterious way of healing us.

Lost Some Friends
By Babalola Afeez

I have lost friends to many things without realizing it.

I have lost friends to pride when I thought I was better off or I felt they had nothing to offer. I have lost friends to pride when I disagreed with their line of thought and decided to let them be. I have lost friends to pride when I didn’t receive calls from them and concluded in my mind that what use is their call anyway. I have lost friends to pride when I judged my moral standards and principles to be better and higher than theirs. I have lost friends to pride when I imagined my life is more meaningful than theirs. I have lost friends to pride after I offended them and refused to apologize or when they offended me but I refused to accept their apologies.

I have come to realize we are not made the same and there are reasons why people come into our lives. If you are like me, don’t wait till you lose your friends to the cold hands of death before you realize you were supposed to make up with them. Make up with them now. Moments can be recreated only if there is life.
College Life In America: A New Cultural Experience

By Dafe David

After obtaining my first degree in Sociology and a Master’s in Peace and Conflict from Nigeria’s premier university – the University of Ibadan -- and with professional certifications in various fields, I came to Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) to study Criminal Justice with a lot of confidence and a bit of pride. However, this overconfidence and sense of achievement was very short-lived as I encountered many cultural shocks which turned out to be pleasant experiences I will cherish for life. Learning a new culture can be as valuable as anything learned in a textbook. Many of these shocks were general in nature -- the Michigan weather, invitation for lunch or dinner, “all you can eat” buffet, lack of traffic policemen and women on the roads, constant electricity supply, both hot and cold tap water and your relationship with your next door neighbor. In college, the cultural issues that sent waves down my spine were the different accents, student/instructor relationship, the high level of technology and take-home examinations, just to mention a few. The weather in Michigan was something else.

On the chilly day of January 10, 2017, we were greeted with severely windy and cold weather as we arrived from Maryland on a Greyhound bus in Detroit.

For someone coming from the tropics it was not a palatable experience. It was and still is very difficult adapting to it.

Traffic also shocked me. I quickly noticed there were no police on the roads controlling traffic. Functional traffic lights controlled the flow of traffic and most drivers complied with the signals.

I also was amazed by the quick response from motorists when an ambulance, police car or fire truck approached with a blaring siren. Every automobile stood still until the emergency vehicle passed. Back home, not much regard is paid to an ambulance because the siren is often misused. In fact, motorists have to struggle to use the road because of how ambulances are driven.

Motorists here use car horns less frequently than in my home country. In Michigan and other cities and states I have visited you hardly hear the use of car horns, except in extreme cases, to avoid a crash or collision. But in my country the usage is very indiscriminate, especially among the commercial drivers who simply cause noise pollution. I will find it difficult to adjust when I get back home.

Who pays the restaurant tab? That was another culture shock. In America, if a friend invites you to lunch or dinner you better have some money because the bill will be separated and you will be expected to pay for your meal. In Nigeria, when a friend invites you to lunch or dinner you can leave your wallet at home because your friend will foot the entire bill with joy. The only exception will be when the guest insists after a minor argument in paying some percentage of the bill. I ask my American friends: “Why do you invite your friend out when you cannot afford to take very good care of him or her?” In this regard, Nigeria is far ahead in terms of hospitality. I beg to be corrected.

continued on page 20
In terms of technology, I was surprised that all classrooms were equipped with modern learning technology and computers easily accessed by students. This was a far cry from the higher institutions I attended back home where access to the global information highway was very limited. For the first time, I used PowerPoint for a presentation in front of a class.

The excellent relationship between most lecturers and students was another new experience. In Nigeria, professors are treated like semi-gods. Here, students and professors interact freely, use the same restrooms, shake hands and speak about various topics. It is common to have a professor at class on Monday ask students about the Super Bowl played over the weekend, or discuss what films or plays they attended.

On the flip side, students here can be rude to their professors. One student walked out of class because he thought the professor was too negative. This type of scenario hardly ever happens in Nigeria. If a student was to walk out of class in anger, the possibility of that student not graduating would be very high. The aggrieved professor would spread the word and his colleagues in sympathy and solidarity would go for the “head” of that particular student.

Then there’s the “all you can eat” buffet. No such thing exists in Nigeria and if it did, the cost would be astronomical. On our first visit to such a buffet, my family ended up with stomach aches from overeating.

In college, the cultural shocks were real but not as pronounced. The biggest issue is the difference in accents. Initially, I couldn’t understand what my professors or fellow students were saying. It was as if they were not speaking English, but rather Greek or Latin. Nigeria as a nation was colonized by the British and our common language is the Queen’s English which bears the British accent. To overcome this obstacle, I devised five major strategies. The first was that I decided to sit in the front row at each class, and second, I would ask questions whenever I didn’t understand what was being said. Third, I would not speak as quickly as normal but instead would slowly pronounce my words and gesticulate to help clarify. I also made up my mind to be a voracious reader of all my textbooks and search the internet to be on top of my studies. Finally, I let my professors know that just as they feel I have an accent, they also have an accent to my hearing. It takes two to tango. These strategies worked and I received an “A” in every class except in one course and was selected for membership in the prestigious Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

With a degree in Sociology, experiencing culture shock was not new. But the level of the cultural differences between the United States and WCCCD and Nigeria has been significant. These experiences will help shape and broaden my horizons. I will view issues from very different perspectives moving forward.
Maintaining Balance: In the War of Life

By Gerard Dickerson

Life is a beautiful misconception. As human beings, we’re born into the war of misunderstanding. A fight for communication. A battle between positives and negatives. The beauty in the struggle comes from the harmony produced by conflict.

For me, every day is a struggle to maintain balance in relationships, schoolwork, and bridging the gap between outdated generational standards and practices. With so many miscommunications fighting against the peace of our planet, I feel a moral obligation to filter out as much insalubrious information as I can and pass on as much healthy information as possible. In so doing, I hope to give future generations a running start on understanding how to prevail over whatever battles they face.

Communication in relationships can be one of the most challenging battles. Most of the time people fight for an advantage over the opposition instead of understanding the complete dynamic of the situation. Often the conflict involves you and a person you love, and the mental bartering can be taxing on your emotions. Whether it be a marital dispute or trying to relay a message to your child without discouraging their feelings, the back-and-forth exchange can weigh heavily on your mental stability.

The beauty in these situations is the relief from hostility. That occurs when your wife finally allows you to sleep back in the bed instead of on the couch. Or, when you encourage your son after a bad game, only to watch him come back and succeed the next game. That sense of relief in your heart can give your brain a feeling of emotional bliss!

I haven’t been blessed with a wife and child just yet, but I do find other ways to fulfill my thirst for gratification. Right now, college is my relish. The struggle between being an adult and being a student is a full-time grind. Trying to juggle my time between class hours, work hours, study time, and playtime can be very overwhelming and exhausting. Dealing with the personality of professors and the complexities of the course work can be frustrating. I reach a point of contentment knowing my hard work, organization, and preparation will pay off one day with a college degree.

Another challenge is overcoming generational standard and practice. Being the first to attend college in my immediate family, it would have been easy for me to graduate high school and be content. For my family, a high school diploma was more than enough justifiable evidence that I could make adult decisions on my own. In fact, 18-year-old teenagers still need parental support. Unfortunately, being satisfied with a high school diploma is an acceptable standard in my family.

Attending college is in direct conflict to the lifestyle I was living after high school. I’m certain prior generations of my family supported the idea of higher education, but financially we have been forced to help support our families as quickly as possible. I had to make a conscious decision to go against my environment in pursuit of a college education. For an 18-year-old young man, such a life altering decision weighed heavily on my ego and mental stability. Every 18-year-old wants to do the things that their friends are doing.

The relief for me comes in knowing one day my children and grandchildren will have the freedom to create and evolve as productive human beings without the worry of financial burdens. It’s difficult being the first to do anything when you don’t have a clue about the outcome. Stepping out into uncharted territory with the fear of falling short carries its own burden of anxiety. But the joyful feeling of watching my children graduate college and become successful will be worth every ounce of sacrifice.

Life is a war, and we’re all soldiers fighting for balance. And with balance comes understanding. Balance gives us a chance to see both sides of the spectrum from an equal point of view. No matter the age, sex, creed or color, we need to figure out how to relate to each other.
A Helping Hand, When It’s Needed

By Usef Saleh Julien

Hard times come and go. An inability to pay for necessities—electricity, gas and water, food and clean clothing for your family, automotive insurance, rent or property taxes—can lead to hard times.

Then there are other kinds of hard times such as not getting that job you wanted because you don’t have a driver’s license; depriving yourself of success because you have warrants for your arrest; not being able to pay your child support on time; having a drug addiction that’s hard to beat, or maybe even not being allowed to see your children because the other parent doesn’t like you and you believe there’s nothing you can do about it.

Many things can cause our hard times but I’ve learned one truth—if we surrender ourselves during hard times, there will always be a helping hand.

For me, that helping hand came from the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit, Michigan. I had spent a long time figuring I would not find real success because I had warrants for my arrest, a dozen or more traffic tickets and a felony traffic offense. I knew these issues would prevent me from becoming a registered nurse. I also knew my past would soon haunt me unless I confronted it head-on.

I walked into the 36th District Court in Detroit offering to turn myself in so I could start the process of clearing my criminal record, but to my disappointment I was rejected by the clerk, who said I would have to provide a cash payment for the court to even recognize me. There I stood right in the middle of a large courthouse with seven warrants for my arrest and no one that could help me. I left the courthouse that day with my head down, truly discouraged.

About one week later I met with my career advisor at Michigan Works and she mentioned this program called Street Outreach Court Detroit. I was a little skeptical. One thing that encouraged me to give it a try was that the next meeting fell on my birth date, November 20, 2018. This would be the chance I needed. I started the program that day. I was to attend at least one mixed Narcotics Anonymous/Alcoholics Anonymous meeting a week, work on gaining stable living conditions, maintain employment or school and complete community service averaging 30 hours for every $1,000 that I owed. I quickly began doing community service and became very active in the program. I started sharing my thoughts and feelings within the group and unintentionally managed to kick the habit of smoking cannabis. I was interviewed and told I had met all the criteria necessary to gain a hearing in front of a 36th District Court judge.

The hearing was held on February 28 at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. I went to that hearing feeling proud of all the efforts and work I had done. I had the support needed, both spiritual and legal. I was called to appear in front of the honorable judge and by the proofs of my work I received a full pardon from all the warrants and traffic tickets I had accumulated in the 36th District Court.

Furthermore, the local portion of the mandatory clearance fees had been waived. All fees had a combined cash value of nearly $5,000, which I was not able to pay. After a great deal of effort during a quick three months, I finally have a clear driving record and will soon be able to receive my driver’s license. It’s all thanks to the Capuchin Soup kitchen and Street Outreach Court Detroit. I reached out and they provided a helping hand.
A Full Circle
By Shawnta P. Ward

I grew up in the city of Detroit in the 1970s. There was no better place or time to grow up, because if you can survive and thrive in Detroit, you can survive and thrive anywhere. Like Detroit, my life has had its challenges.

I watched as my city’s thriving community neighborhoods became what some call uninhabited wastelands. I grew up seeing people who looked like me own and run businesses to wondering if minority business owners exist anymore. I remember when the neighborhood school was a safe haven, a place to grow and learn. Now there are no schools for neighborhoods beset with crime. Even with all of that said, Detroit is still standing, not crumbling, as some would have you believe; and some would dare say it’s beginning to thrive again. My educational journey has taken a similarly winding course.

My first thought of college occurred in my senior year of high school. My counselor advised me to apply to Spelman College and since I thought I knew everything – as most teenagers do -- and wanted to leave home, I figured why not? Not only did I get accepted, I was also offered a full scholarship. However, there was a catch – I was only 17 and getting accepted required having my parents’ signatures.

Then life happened, as it so often does. I became a mother to four intelligent and steadfast children, and thus my education of another kind began with increasing speed. From 1991 till 1998 all was well. I had my family, a good job and a business; then illness hit me. At first I thought it was just a cold, and then it was just pneumonia, and then it was just a bronchial infection and then, and then, and then. Eventually, in the year 2000, I was finally diagnosed with fibromyalgia, an incurable auto-immune disease. This disease affects the muscles and nervous system. It brings severe musculoskeletal pain, accompanied by extreme fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues. That’s it, life over.

Fortunately for me, God had other plans for my life. After coming to grips with this illness and becoming determined that it was not going to control me or my life, I began to dream again. Working hard with my doctors, changing my eating habits and lifestyle along with exercising, I realized I still had more to offer to society.

continued on page 24
A Full Circle
continued

As my children began to leave the nest, I wondered what was next for me, who I was and what was I supposed to be doing? I wanted to give back to society and set an example for my children that life doesn’t end when your children leave the nest.

In 2016, life happened again. I relapsed from taking my medications, which resulted in a deep depression. This seriously affected my relationships with my children as well as the state of our household affairs. Not knowing how I was going to recover from this “upendedness” I shut down, and that wrought more havoc. I still had two children to rear and get off to college or life. My youngest daughter decided to go to college in another state and my high schooler decided he wanted to live with another family member. I felt alone, lost and without a purpose with no one in the house for me to raise and rear.

My therapist suggested, as he had done repeatedly, that I return to school. At first I laughed him off as I had done in the past. What would my old self look life going back to college? What would I even study if I did go back? Could I keep up with the youngins? Where would I go? So many questions and I still wasn’t convinced it was the right choice.

I finally decided why not? What did I have to lose? So, in January 2017 I enrolled at Wayne County Community College District – as it was now called. It was a full circle event in my life.

Twenty-eight years had passed since I had been in a college classroom. I had decided on a major of Accounting – since that is what my former profession was before my diagnosis – and with the help of a couple of advisors at the college I had mapped out a tentative plan. Initially I was a bit intimidated, even with all the preparation. I mean, here I was almost 30 years out of high school trying to get an education among these young people, most of them teenagers. I decided to just dive in with my whole body, mind and spirit and see where that took me.

I also decided to follow the advice I had given each of my children when I dropped them off at college – get involved. I was accepted into the TRiO program – a federally-funded program that provides services and assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds to help them thrive in college life. That was a boost for me as I navigated this new phase of life. Being involved with TRiO allowed me to attend impactful events, such as seeing Michelle Obama with other students and staff.

As I thrived in my new setting, I was accepted into Phi Theta Kappa, the National Honor Society for colleges. I applied for two scholarships and received one. I am considering studying abroad and getting a master’s degree after I complete my undergraduate degree.

Being active on campus has allowed me to experience things I would have missed sitting on my sofa, such as mentoring and encouraging young people to go forward in life no matter what the obstacles.

I am awed at the opportunities I have been afforded by returning to college, all because I chose to thrive not just survive.
About 12 years ago, 19-year-old Anike, who was born and raised in a polygamous home in Nigeria, confirmed what she had suspected — one of her older siblings hated her.

Stella, Anike’s half-sister, had returned from the United States to celebrate her brother’s wedding. Being the eldest daughter, everyone accorded her the respect and honor she didn’t deserve, simply due to her position in the family. Stella was a dictator of sorts. Whatever she decided was considered final, even when her decision made no sense.

On this morning, Anike was doing her daily housekeeping chores when she observed her sister seated in the living room, talking to another family member. True to her culture, Anike went to her knees as she said “Good morning.” She got up and was ready to continue cleaning in the living room when she heard Aunty Stella’s voice. “Yes ma, Yes ma,” Anike said, as she crawled on her knees back to her half-sister.

Aunty Stella stood up and emphatically renounced the country of Nigeria, just in case Anike had forgotten Stella was a U.S. citizen. Anike remained silent and confused, looking at the other family member for a clue as to what brought on this tirade. But the other family member, Aunty Shola, sat expressionless nearby.

Aunty Stella continued her show of pride: “Look at me very well, I know you might be thinking, ‘Why have I not taken any of you to America?’ I have intentions of doing that, but I do not honestly think I want to do such a huge favor for you Anike of all people.”

Anike was not offended, figuring Stella was only messing with her to see if she could get a reaction. Alas, Anike was wrong. Big sis continued ranting at the top of her voice, as if she needed to settle an unfinished score. Anike wondered if her sister was drunk, but there wasn’t any liquor near her.

Suddenly, the reason for the rant dawned on Anike. Her big sis meant every vile word she was saying because she hated Anike. Aunty Shola interrupted Stella when the tongue lashing became more and more vicious. “Has Anike offended you in any way?” Shola asked.

“She hasn’t done anything,” said Stella. “I just wanted her to know that if she is the only person on this earth that needs a favor, I won’t do it for her.” She mentioned that Anike’s immediate elder sister Olamide was the only one she had intention of taking to the United States with her, because Olamide was calmer and would dogmatically follow all her instructions.

“But this one kneeling right there,” Stella said, “I don’t see myself helping her no matter how little assistance she needs.”

continued on page 26
At that point, Aunty Shola told Anike to leave and continue her chores in some other corner of the house. Amid uncontrollable tears, Anike got up and went to the back of the house, searching her mind unsuccessfully for what could have prompted such vitriol.

Going down memory lane, Anike started having flashes of how wicked her sister had been to her through the years. She remembered when Tosin, the youngest of Aunty Stella’s children, celebrated her birthday, and how Anike had been mistreated for the five days she spent in their house during this celebration, and how Stella was strongly against her after someone had given Anike a peck in church. Anike called it a kiss because she was young and couldn’t find a better way to describe what the guy did when she was telling her father what had transpired. Though their father was not particularly happy with the role Aunty Stella played while they were trying to investigate the incident, Aunty Stella said Anike was only playing on people’s intelligence, as she didn’t have any evidence to her claim of someone kissing her. Anike’s father believed it was wrong to stay silent or blame a victim, especially when he/she is vulnerable and an elderly person is trying to take advantage of that. Anike concluded in her mind that day that no matter what life brought to her table, she would never seek her sister’s help. She celebrated her half-brother’s wedding ceremony in sadness, and for years she couldn’t forgive her sister for that.

Then there was the drama that occurred in December 2015, after their father had passed away. Aunty Stella came up with another episode of her drama. This time she was not the only cast member in the play. Stella influenced most of their siblings against Anike. They said she was a bastard, accused her of sleeping around with different men of different color and race. They also accused her of trying to divert their late father’s accumulated pension in their late father’s account to her personal account. But they knew nothing about the money until Anike told them about it, after the bank sent an alert to their late father’s phone, which Anike had possession of after his demise.

Anike’s siblings twisted the story around, disgraced her within the family and told the church of her dishonesty. Anike was summoned to a meeting by the church elders, when she was asked to explain her side of the story. Instead of saying anything, she cried. Her siblings used her tears as a sign of guilt. They said Anike only knew how to shed crocodile tears in hopes of starting a pity party. Anike finally pleaded guilty just for peace to reign. The church told them to resolve the issue amicably among themselves.

The reproach was too much for Anike to bear. In January 2016, she left her mother, immediate siblings, church and her work to relocate to another state in Nigeria where nobody could contact her. She became homeless and sick, begging for money to survive. She applied for both dignified and undignified jobs to make ends meet, but she couldn’t get help anywhere. She suffered like the Israelites suffered in the strange land of Egypt. She was sent packing without any good reason and was seeking shelter in the middle of the night. She felt all hope was lost and was waiting for death to take her home.

While she was wandering around, Anike met one of her old friends, Olaniyi, who barely recognized her due to her haggard physical appearance. She told Olaniyi about her falling out with her family and he vowed to help her. Anike didn’t believe him, having lost hope in family and friends. But Olaniyi proved her wrong. He showed her love and care and tried to stabilize her and save her from depression. Olaniyi contacted one of his brothers in the United States and convinced him to invite her to America so she could leave the hostile environment that had her contemplating suicide. The brother agreed and sent her an invitation letter to come visit the United States. Despite this, Anike was still not convinced Olaniyi and his brother were working in her favor.

She didn’t expect anything positive when she went for an interview at the U.S. Embassy in Lagos, Nigeria. However, luck smiled on her and she was given a two-year visa. Anike really didn’t understand what had happened. She wanted continued on page 27
Still I Rise!
continued

to use the passport immediately, so when the consulate explained that it would take three days to prepare the passport, she felt it was part of a hoax. She only believed her good fortune three days later, after Olaniyi took her back to receive her stamped passport.

Anike could now travel but life happened to her again. She became ill and was diagnosed with different ailments. Amid her health problems, Anike came in contact with one of her maternal aunties, who took her in and promised to abide by Anike’s wish to not say anything to any member of the family.

Gradually, Anike recovered from her ailments and was getting ready to leave Nigeria when misfortune struck again. Aunty Ola, her maternal aunty, collapsed at a bus stop on a beautiful Friday morning, on her way to work. Being a popular person in the neighborhood, Aunty Ola was recognized and taken home, where neighbors quickly took her to the hospital.

“Why does something bad happen every time I’m ready for a breakthrough in my life,” Anike wondered. She cancelled her travel plans and spent the next two weeks with her auntie in the hospital. On Sept. 15, 2016, Aunty Ola passed away, leaving Anike depressed and heartbroken.

Deciding that escaping the environment was best for her state of mind, she left her worries and sorrows behind and headed to America in November 2016.

In the U.S., Anike started living a normal life. During a visit to Detroit, she was told that she could study and build a good career there. Her first reaction was that she preferred to return to Nigeria. But after further thought, she changed her mind and called her mum back home to see if she would sponsor her as an international student. Her mum happily consented, and in January 2017 Anike relocated to Detroit and enrolled at Wayne County Community College District, with the assistance of the International Student Office.

While Anike was beginning her college education, her drama queen sister Stella was in Nigeria, trying to find out who had helped Anike get to America without family support. Stella told others it was one of the men Anike slept around with who took her to the U.S. But it was not true.

Anike had been helped by an old friend, Olaniyi, without sleeping with him. Despite the fact she lives in the same country with most of her siblings, Anike has never come in contact with any of them.

Slowly and steadily, Anike is progressing with her nursing prerequisites in college. She is not angry with any of her siblings, because everything they did orchestrated her from being hopeless to being hopeful, exhibiting her hidden potential. The experiences brought her from “grass to grace.” As she works towards realizing a dream and fulfilling her destiny, Anike’s favorite quote is:

She displays no envy, hatred or need for retaliation towards any of her siblings. She only wishes her maternal aunty could be alive to see her unfolding reality that God provided by using Olaniyi as a vessel. Finally, Anike is at peace to pursue success.
A Long And Winding Road From Homeless To College Graduate

By Usef Saleh Julien

The sunlight burned unusually bright in my eyes. I woke up outside in the dead of winter and all I wanted to do was close my eyes again. The crisp white snow reflected the light so that it was unbearable. The people who passed by called me a lowlife and a bum.

Physically, I looked the part. The bald spot on my scalp was as large as a silver dollar. My shoes had holes in the soles that allowed the skin of my feet to rub the concrete as I walked. My clothing was torn and ragged. And the stench that was my "scent" offended those around me.

Was living in the streets where I really belonged? What was my purpose for living like this? How did I get here? Where was living like this going to lead me?

So many questions. But self-pity or reflection take a back seat to survival when you don't know where your next meal will come from or how you will stay warm at night.

Please take a moment to consider what homelessness feels like. The emotional, physical and psychological suffering can overwhelm a person. Society can make a homeless person feel like a burden to the world.

Having been homeless for a short time, I question whether being homeless causes a person to be a burden to society, or a gift. A woman once told me that seeing the homeless made her more aware of how difficult life can be. She said she was inspired to do good deeds for others after observing the homeless. When I was homeless I felt as if I was judged on my condition and predicament. My poor physical appearance and lack of good hygiene, combined with my social status, caused people to look at me awkwardly — or even with disgust or hatred.

Is any person truly meant to be homeless, even for a little while? The experiences were one of a kind because the average person doesn’t get the life lessons that come from living without and still managing to stay alive. I can recall one of my lowest moments. I was young and very disrespectful to my parents. My negative behavior was out of control and unbearable for my family, so I was removed from the house by my elders. I was forced out at the age of 12. I found refuge with people who were known for living in the streets. By becoming a part of this new peer group, I began to learn different methods of gaining and surviving. I began panhandling, squatting in abandoned houses, trading and selling what possessions I did have, scavenging goods from any place I could, being dishonest and even attempting to cheat good people. My life was spiraling uncontrollably, almost to the point of no return. I began committing crimes such as petty theft, breaking and entering, grand theft auto and even fleeing and eluding police. At a young age I began to use drugs such as marijuana, alcohol and tobacco. This lifestyle started to alter my personality, thinking, ego and perception of reality. Most of the people I encountered are just a blur; I barely recall their faces, and don’t know their names. My memories faded fast and these new behaviors became habits and a part of my identity.

After almost a year of being away from home, I was allowed to return to the comforts of having a warm, cozy and loving environment. This chance made no difference in my behaviors. What was once behavior acted on out of ignorance was now my behavior by choice. My criminal behavior developed quickly. My grandpa had taught me continued on page 29
A Long And Winding Road From Homeless To College Graduate
continued

automotive mechanics and I misused my ability to steal and disassemble automobiles. I developed an attitude that desired chaos and disorder, thrill-seeking and negative attention. As time passed, I became more arrogant, naive, selfish, greedy and thoughtless. My pride, combined with the know-it-all mindset and wanting to be my own authority caused me to become My Own Worst Enemy. Once again I became a great burden to my family. I began stealing money from my grandmother and was verbally abusive toward my grandpa. Even when I disappointed my parents the most, they still offered me unconditional love. Acting out of pure ignorance, thinking that I had enough know-how and experience to survive on my own, I decided to run away from home. Little did I know that this time I would meet the wrath of karma.

After making it my own choice to leave, I found that the peer group I sought refuge with during my first experience away from home was nowhere to be found. Most of the people that I had become familiar with were either in a more unstable situation, incarcerated or deceased. My reputation for disrespecting my parents gained me no respect. I found myself facing difficult and unforeseen challenges. There was no longer an abandoned house to squat in, no access to a shower, no kind people to beg from, no tools that could be used for stealing or stripping cars and no easy money. I had no way to buy food, wash clothes, or even make a phone call. I was not able to support my addiction to marijuana, alcohol, or cigarettes, so I began experiencing withdrawals. Time went by quickly. The winter season came and it showed no mercy. I experienced the bitter chill of winter for the first time in my life. I had nowhere to go and no person to turn to. I had burned my bridges and bit the hands that fed me. In a desperate attempt to stay warm, I laid over a manhole with steam coming from it.

This situation paved the way for my next dumb idea. I decided to case a house thinking I would be able to take shelter there for a short time. Not knowing that the house was being watched, I calmly found an entry and let myself in without concern for who or what was to come. After gaining entry I enjoyed the privileges of taking a shower, doing my laundry, raiding the refrigerator, watching television and resting in a warm space away from the cold bite of winter. What I did not know is I had been seen inside the house because of the light from the television, and so the police had been called. I was awakened by the pounding on the door and the call of the Detroit Police Department. I attempted to flee and was quickly caught. I was hastily taken to the Wayne County Jail and appeared in front of a judge and jury within a week. I was found guilty of home invasion and sentenced to 18 months in a maximum-security detention facility for young men.

This would begin my behavioral reformation. I was 16 years of age and sentenced to remain incarcerated until my 18th birthday. I had not attended public school long enough to complete the sixth grade but my behavior and experiences were comparable to a 20-year-old. The courts mandated that while incarcerated I was to complete a high school education and participate in behavioral and chemical dependence therapies. During the creation of an individual education plan, I took a competency placement exam that determined I was only able to perform reading and math at a third grade level. Learning these results motivated me to build a fierce attachment to reading. I quickly learned how to function in a positive peer group. I was taught about volunteerism and work ethic.

I was encouraged to use my talents for good purpose.

During the beginning of my incarceration I was not allowed the privilege of visitation. I was only allowed to communicate with my family via telephone. I remember talking with my grandmother and grandpa over the telephone about the decisions I had made and the situation I was in. My grandmother spent a lot of the time crying and I spent a lot of the time feeling guilt. My grandpa used to offer many encouraging sayings but one that stuck with me was: “You will not realize what you have until it is already gone, so take the time to be thankful for what you have right now.” Eventually I earned the privilege of visitations and was able to receive a visit from my grandmother and grandpa. I remember very well how my dear grandmother looked at me.

continued on page 30
Just that look alone made me want to be a better person. Unfortunately, I would never see my grandmother again after that visit. Shortly afterwards she passed away and I was left with feelings of guilt and regret that lasted well into my adult life. I recalled the significance of that quote from my grandpa -- I had been too ignorant to realize what I already had.

In the detention facility, I received the proper treatment, gained the appropriate educational levels and met the requirements for volunteerism. I became a productive group member and was commended on my positive behavior. On my 18th birthday, I was released to the custody of my grandpa and began a new journey as a young man. Soon after I came home, I met a young lady and by my 19th birthday my first child was born.

Then, probably the most significant event in my life occurred. I became very busy providing as much as possible for the family that I started. I remember getting my daughter from school and while walking home with her we talked about her school assignments and her day. She explained to me about how she liked to plant flowers and watch them grow. She explained that she had been given homework and when she got home she was going to start studying. After we reached our house, I told my daughter that I was going to continue working on an automobile because it was my job for the day. As I went into the house I heard my daughter crying. I went to her and she looked at me for help with her school work. Wanting to be a good dad I attempted to help her, but she and I both realized I was not able to help. Of course, we relied on Google and were able to complete her assignment. But I still felt as if I was useless to her as a dad. About four days later I enrolled in the GED program. In one month I had successfully completed the GED. I remember the date — it was January 5, 2017.

My daughter and I both felt so proud that I took her advice and decided to continue my education. On January 17, 2017 I enrolled at Wayne County Community College District. I earned the opportunity to become a member of Phi Theta Kappa, a National Honor Society, and made the Dean’s List in the fall 2018 semester. I’ve been nominated to receive the All-USA Academic Scholarship and have been named a member of the All-Michigan Academic team, presented by the Michigan Community College Association, the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation and Phi Theta Kappa. I will graduate at the end of the spring 2019 semester with an Associate of Science degree with honors and hopefully special recognitions. I’ve been accepted to attend Wayne State University and have been granted a transfer scholarship. It is my goal to continue my education.

I have written this short story of my life experiences to encourage others who have faced similar challenges. The message I hope to deliver is that bad decisions can bring very good learning lessons. Being without something does not mean you are not able to have something. A lot of the time that person, thing or event we search for to gain satisfaction is already within reach. If at times you feel like you can’t learn, remember that you can learn what you like. Just because we have many talents does not mean we are smart and just because we are intelligent does not mean we are wise.

A homeless person I met during my journey told me “What God gave you two of, use more, and what God gave you one of use less.” I didn’t understand this until I was nearly 30 years of age. If I had to explain I would say, we have two eyes, two ears, and technically two brains, but we only have one mouth. Until we learn how to properly use our eyes, ears and brain, it may be wise to use our mouth less.

Finally, I would like to thank my higher power for delivering my first child. It is because of her that I have changed the most; she is proof that God can change the world through children.
My Conversion to Christianity

By Dafe David

It was during the dry season, and the Nigerian Civil War had just ended when my mother and I set out for a journey to our village, Otutuama, located at Ughelli South local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, to see the chief priest of “Ohoro,” the river goddess. My mother, Madam Pipa Odumu, also called Yanyon, was the link that brought about my romance with the goddess of Ohoro.

Yanyon was a petty trader who dealt with the sale of smoked fish, also known as Bonga fish (or “Akaka” in my local dialect) or Urhobo at the Warri Main market. The city of Warri, which is referred to as the oil city of Nigeria, is located in the Niger Delta. My mother had 10 children, seven girls and three boys, and I was the baby of the house, known as the last-born child in Nigeria. My mother was the sweetest woman who ever walked on the surface of the earth. She was kind-hearted, non-violent, charming, very religious, a chronic giver and someone who hated oppression. Her philosophy was that it was through the eyes a mother disciplined her children, not with the rod, so she hardly used the rod.

Yanyon’s ancestors (forefathers) were great fishermen who traversed the length and breadth of the great River Niger into the Atlantic Ocean catching fish. Oral tradition has it that there was this particular period when my forefathers, who were also the founders of Otutuama village, went on a fishing expedition far into the Atlantic Ocean, and could not trace their way back home.

It was in the midst of this desperation and travail that they saw a big fish come towards them wagging its tail and beckoning with its head. Their instinct told them that help had finally come. “Ohoro” acted as a compass and guided them all the way back home to the Otutuama shore, where there was mass jubilation by the villagers who had thought they would never see their leaders again.

During this rescue by Ohoro the founder entered into a covenant with the goddess that his succeeding generations would not kill that species of fish (intentionally or accidentally), they would worship and reverence it, and they would not associate with those that killed and ate it. The consequence of violating or breaking the covenant was that the violator would be afflicted with bodily harm that could eventually lead to death. The only antidote was for the violator to show him/herself immediately to the chief priest who would perform some rituals for the violator to be cleansed and saved from the clutches of death.

In the Warri Main market, located at the bank of one of the tributaries of the River Niger, my mother practiced her petty trading. There was a particular section in the market that was meant just for the sale of all kinds of fish, including Ohoro fish.

My mother always tried to avoid the section of the market that sold Ohoro fish. Even if she accidentally found herself in that section she was very careful not to stare at Ohoro. However, if she mistakenly or accidentally stared at it and forgot to make the necessary incantations, there would be trouble. If a neighbor bought the fish and used my mother’s firewood to cook it, she would have to discard the wood or the charcoal used. And if my mother’s cooking pot was used to cook the fish, she had to discard the pot, or else she would be afflicted by Ohoro.

What was the nature of the affliction? My mother’s hands and legs would turn into the scales of the fish. In a case like this, my mother and I would quickly travel to the village to seek cleansing from the chief priest.

To arrange for travel to Otutuama for cleansing took about two days. My mother cooked the food for our trip, especially the snacks. My mother woke me up on the day of the journey as early as four in the morning. In the chilling early morning dew, she bathed me in the open, ignoring my protests because of the cold. Then we trekked for about five minutes. I carried a mat on my head from our home at 21 Omatshola Crescent to the junction of Ginuwa Street to board a taxi to Enerhen waterside, in the city of Warri.

continued on page 32
At this time the popular Udu Bridge had not been built across the tributaries of the River Niger and in order to cross the river, one had to use a canoe usually paddled by muscular men, with an assistant who helped in clearing water from their ever-leaking canoes. The crossing took about 15 minutes. The rest of the about 30-kilometer journey after the crossing was done by foot through narrow paths in rubber plantations, passing through several villages whose names I cannot remember. Sometimes we came across persons along the way who exchanged greetings with my mother. As a little boy, I got tired and hungry after trekking but my mother Yanyon only stopped to eat when we got to a little stream along our route. She spread her wrapper on the grass at the bank of the river where we ate and refreshed ourselves. After we finished, she shouted with an echo that crossed the stream for the canoe man to paddle across and carry us across. We paid a token for the service.

On getting to the village, we went straight to the shrine of the chief priest of Ohoro. My mother and I spent the rest of seven days in this shrine. She only dressed with white clothing and tied only white bedsheets downward from her breasts and ate only white food like white soup, pap or pudding or “Ogi”, white yam. My mother’s body was rubbed with local white chalk.

There were three major prayer sessions in the day. The chief priest made various incantations, communicating with Ohoro that it should have mercy upon my mom, heal her and also protect her children, especially me — the last born who was there with them. In the process, I was covenanted with Ohoro, the beginning of a romance or relationship that spanned about two decades. At the end of the seven days, the skin of my mother could return to normal and we returned home. In most cases, I would be reluctant to go back home because I made some friends among the locals playing soccer in the open field of the village.

Growing up, I started to notice that most of the girls that came my way were programmed from Ohoro because some did not eat fish at all and some wouldn’t even touch a meat soup if a little fish had been added. The girls also did not want to go to beaches because they feared they would be swept and carried away by the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, they did not want to walk on the road on a hot, sunny day because of the mirage that usually formed on the road. For my part, I discovered that whenever I passed through from the mainland to Lagos Island, Nigeria, especially on a sunny day, the urge to stop the car by the side of the Carter or Third Mainland bridges and plunge myself into Lagos Lagoon was always too tempting.

On this particular day, I was at a strip club drinking and smoking, with a lot of call girls around and disco music blasting from the speakers. In the midst of this I heard a voice very clearly, despite my state of drunkenness and the loud music, asking me how long I was going to live this type of reckless life of alcoholism, womanizing and fraternizing with the lesser gods. I heard the voice say that He is the one that created me, He gave His life as a ransom. Like a prodigal son, I should come back and He is ready to forgive all my sins.

I felt very sober and made a firm commitment that very moment that enough is enough. I never looked back. However, the release from Ohoro was not as easy because of the various covenants entered with Ohoro — not just with my mother’s ancestors, but with Yanyon, my mother, when she and I frequently visited the shrine. It took a serious deliverance session of prayers and fasting without food for seven days, led by a pastor of my local church in Lagos, for me to be set free from a romance of over two decades with Ohoro, the river goddess. By the Grace of God, I am now a pastor for more than 20 years, and I am romancing Jesus Christ and also deeply in love with my beautiful wife, Sheila. The union is blessed with Ogheneyoma (God is Good) and Ejiroghene (Praise God).
My Gender and Identity

By Ifeoma Princess Maduewesi

I still remember how much noise woke me up that day. It was November 8, 2016, the day everyone had long waited for. I was already awake at 6:30 a.m. I watched and waited for the announcement. I wasn’t bothered about breakfast, nor was I ready to take a shower. I was more concerned and interested in the long-awaited news. Finally! I paid close attention to the television, with the remote held tightly in my right hand.

Yes, I still remember each and every action that day. Sometimes I wonder if it was out of curiosity. Yet I laugh and become breathless when I remember every word my best friend said to me. I couldn’t get over the fact that she lost. While paying close attention to the television, the remote dropped from my right hand the moment Trump was announced as the president. I needed someone to comfort me, I needed someone to tell me “Everything will be okay.” Not long afterwards my best friend Jordan walked in my room. I was surprised at his big smile and wondered if he had won a jackpot. Well everyone deserves to smile so I didn’t bother questioning him, even though I was curious to know the reason behind it.

He asked me why I looked like someone who had just lost a dear one and I told him I didn’t lose anyone. I was just concerned because Hillary lost the presidential election. He laughed so hard that I felt foolish for a minute. I asked him what was funny, and he said, “Girl grow up, who the hell votes for a female as a president?”

Did he just say that? For a moment I felt unconscious. I looked in his face and clearly remember his look of disgust. He proceeded and said with his eyes wide open, like someone whose bag of rice was stolen: “It’s not about Trump becoming the president, it’s about allowing a female on the seat… nobody does that.”

At this point, I left my comfort zone and asked: “You mean if I decide to run for the presidency, you wouldn’t vote for me — simply because I’m a female?”

He replied, but this time with a very calm voice, like someone who had chilled water in his mouth: “Princess darling, choose to be successful by other means, but not by becoming the president.”

I was confused for a second. Maybe my best friend thought I’d chosen this route for fame and success. “Yes, I know it is the highest position that can be attained in the world, but that does not mean I chose it to be successful,” I replied.

In a rush to end the conversation he said, “Princess please go to the kitchen and cook, learn how to fix hair, learn how to sort and fold laundry. There are a lot of things you could do with your life instead of running a race you cannot win.”

I interrupted: “Okay you are not funny any longer.” He realized my tone of voice and expression had changed.

“I meant you could be a bank manager, gynecologist, pilot or even a nurse,” he said.

I was a little pissed but at least he mentioned a few professions that were better than sorting and folding laundry. I never knew my best friend was practicing being a psychic. I could picture him in that profession. “I think you should be a psychic,” I said.

“Well, I would look better being a president instead,” he replied. I knew my best friend was mad at me for calling him a psychic. I knew he was trying to get back at me when he said he looked better being a president. I did not respond, but my mind was racing.

I was unimpressed by my best friend’s point of view, although he opened a whole new aspect of society which I pretended to ignore. I interrupted: “Yes, I knew you would say that…”

I was unimpressed by my best friend’s point of view, although he opened a whole new aspect of society which I pretended to ignore. I interrupted: “Yes, I knew you would say that…”

continued on page 34
never really had contemplated. Before this moment, I had never considered the societal expectations related to one’s gender. I was me, I still had my dreams and yes, I was a girl. However, I was capable. But my best friend believed I was stepping into a role he was not accustomed to seeing a female in.

“Princess, are you okay?” he asked.

“Yes, professor, I’m fine. Just thinking about how dismissive some people can actually be.”

“OH really! Now you think I’m dismissive because I tried to help your career,” he said.

I felt like punching him hard in his teeth; maybe if he loses a tooth, he wouldn’t be able to pronounce some words, nor would he make annoying statements.

“I’m hungry, could you please make me some food?” he asked.

I rolled my eyes at him and said, “I see, this is the reason I cannot become the president, so I could make you some food while you stretch your legs on the couch.”

“On the bed, not the couch,” he quickly responded.

I wanted to know why he had asked me if I was okay.

“That was a mistake, you know, so don’t take it personal,” he said.

I know my best friend likes to make stupid jokes even in public, but thank God this time we were alone in my dorm, so I wasn’t bothered.

“Well, whatever, and mind you, next time you come over, be sure to bring your own food,” I said. I had told him that before he never came with his own food. Maybe next time he would, because I was speaking seriously.

He responded: “Noted! And please watch the quantity of salt and spice you put in the food, because the food you gave me last night was too spicy and salty. I think you might want to learn how to measure spice and salt instead of running for presidency.”

I laughed inside because I knew the food was a little bit salty and spicy, but my best friend didn’t have to exaggerate it the way he did. “I thought we were done talking about the presidency?”

“Oh yeah, my bad, I’m sorry,” he said. I realized it was pointless discussing it further, because he would never understand it from my point of view.

On second thought, I wouldn’t really judge my best friend’s point of view. Because as one looks through society, one starts to see double standards — where what applies to men doesn’t apply to women. This is a standard that places unfair social expectations both on men and women.

Finally, I asked myself, what is gender? Where does it come from? How long has it existed? We live in a sexually repressive society, but in order to break out of these binds, people must define their sexuality on their own terms and not be manipulated and dominated by cultural “norms.”

So, I finally made up my mind that my race for whatever I choose to do will be worth it. When I left, they would remember my name.

REFERENCE
A Life-Altering Experience in Nigeria

By Ezinne Confidence Marizu

Life was good in northern Nigeria. My siblings and I had everything we needed as kids and attended the best private school. Daddy’s motor parts importation business was doing well and mum’s food-stuff business had grown so large that it was supplying retailers.

It was a normal Friday morning in September 2001 as our family left home for a routine day. My dad would drop my sisters and me at school, take mum and my nine-month-old brother to her store at Terminus Market and then proceed to his business. We would come home together at night.

But halfway to school, the car broke down. Daddy tried fixing the problem but finally had to take a taxi to get a mechanic. We waited in the car for an hour before he returned with a mechanic. It took four hours to finish the repair, leaving all of us exhausted. My parents decided it was best to just go back home. At home, mummy asked daddy to take me to her store to get some grocery supplies for that night and the next morning. Daddy parked outside the store as I got the supplies.

When I was about to lock up the shop, gunshots suddenly rang out from every direction. Mummy Isaiah, my mummy’s friend, ran towards me, grabbed my hand and asked: “Who did you come with?”

“Let me go lock mummy’s store,” I replied, with a bag of food in my arms.

She paid no attention, grabbed me and we kept running. Suddenly my daddy ran to us, carried me and my bag as he ran off, thanking Mummy Isaiah. We luckily got to the car safely and zoomed off. That was the last time I saw my mummy’s store. Terminus Market was set on fire and completely destroyed. As we arrived home, my mum was crying, afraid something bad had happened to us.

A few hours later, we learned that fires also had been set in the Faringada area where dad’s business was located. His shop had been destroyed. Around midnight, mum and daddy woke us and dressed us in our sweaters and shoes because we were about to run in the dark. We lived on Rukuba Road, not far from the army barracks. Dad drove us there for safety. Terrorists were killing people and burning houses that night. Everyone was on the run. It was the last time I saw many of our neighbors and friends.

The country was in the midst of a religious crisis. Mukhtar Muhammad, a Muslim man, had been appointed a “poverty eradication coordinator.” Christians opposed his appointment and protested, threatening his life and office. This led to killings and destruction of homes and businesses.

The barracks were nearly full and only accepting women and children. The men were told to go and defend themselves. The pain my family experienced that night was indescribable. I felt that was the last time I would ever see my dad. Being

continued on page 36
eight years old and the eldest, I understood the dangers. I cried my heart out and my sisters cried along but I’m not sure they knew why they were crying.

My mum did not knock on heaven’s door that night. She banged on heaven’s door throughout that night and days afterwards, praying for my daddy’s safety. For five days we slept and woke up in an open field with the same clothes we wore when we fled our house.

In the early morning of the sixth day, daddy showed up, escorted by a military officer. We were ecstatic to see dad alive but still fearful of what would happen to us. We drove straight to the bus park hoping to travel to the east together. Daddy did not have enough money for all of us to travel so he insisted mummy and the kids would go first. Mummy did not want to leave him. They argued, but after much tears, she gave in and we left daddy alone.

It was an extremely trying period for my family. Being the first child, I shared a lot of the pain. Mummy never stopped fasting and praying for her family. We had arrived in the east without a cent, so life was difficult on many levels. With the change of weather and environment, we became sick at the same time and had to be hospitalized. My two sisters had blood transfusions.

Worst of all, no one knew if daddy was still alive. There were no cell phones. We had no way of communicating with him. Occasionally family members would visit and we would ask if they had seen daddy. But everyone was on the run and had no time to keep check on anyone.

I don’t know how mummy was able to keep it together, knowing her husband could have been among the casualties. Eighteen months later, daddy showed up one sunny Sunday afternoon. We could barely recognize him. Our chubby daddy was so very thin. But that didn’t matter—he was alive and safe. That’s what mattered.
Weep not, for though you are blind you have inherited great sight.
Think not, for that what troubles you I take it as my own
Be unafraid, for that what you fear shall be conquered
Feel no worry, for that which burdens you will be lifted
Give not into sorrow, for joy will be your inheritance everlasting
Love you thy self to prove your love for others and love others to prove your love for me
Look unto the most high as the most high looks on to you.
Joyous is the song of your heart, which you do not know for it is planted in you
sturdy are you those who have faith in love as your foundation
Know the light within you can overcome the darkness without you
Feed not the darkness within you for the light guides your way
 Desire you to have a purpose and surely a purpose will find you
Take heed to what you hear, take heed to what you see, take heed to what you think, be cautious of what you speak
His flesh is my flesh and my flesh is his, his blood is my blood and my blood is his
You who are loyal to Him are loyal to me and you who are loyal to me are loyal to Him, treat you one another according to this for I am loyal to you
Know you that are weak a great strength dwells within you ready to be awakened
You who are filled with strength be you kind and gentle, loving and compassionate
Be overly protective of the infant and the elder for they are a gift for you and I
Know your days and mind your time for every moment is counted
Know your path has been paved, be sure to fulfill your duties and be mindful of that you are called for
Tarry you not for idle time serves no good for the spirit, it is the workshop of bad deeds.
You who know guilt rest easy for you are not shamed
You who know regret be still for you are clean and judgment knows you not
Know you all who are deaf that I listen for you, with you and of you.
You who are called lame, know that I keep you with me and afford all works for you
Remember these things as it has been promised to you and do these works for it will nourish you.
Scabs  
By Lindsey Hoper

When applying for college I wanted to pursue music, but nothing was adding up.
I went on many auditions and things never turned out the way I thought they should have.
Maybe it was all wrong.
Maybe I was ignoring the signs in which GOD set before me.
What are your afraid of, don’t you know your worth?
Think of the odds. If you had gotten into the music program would your illness impact or disrupt you getting you degree.
You assumed that path you thought was yours was the only one.
If you have you live your life by maybes and what ifs. What are you really accomplishing?
One day at time they say. If you plan your life in one moment you are not leaving room for change or even for your goals to become your reality.
Just because you want something for yourself doesn’t mean that it is for you.
Great things come to those who wait patiently.

Friendship  
By Victor Usman

If your vision is for a year, plant wheat.
If your vision is for ten years, plant trees.
If your vision is for a lifetime, plant people.
Plant people by making friends with them, because;
Friends are gold, they don’t fade easily.
Friends are silver, they are always beautiful.
Friends are diamond, they don’t stop glittering.
Friends are like the stars in the midst of the dark, they add beauty to sight.
Friends are like the appearing sun in the of the Sun in the cool of the day; they add warmth to the cool that exists.
Friends are Memories, they last FOREVER.
I need YOU to SURVIVE.
Thanks for being my FRIEND.

What Do You Crave?  
By Shawnta P. Ward

Living life to the fullest
Enriching your brain
Achieving your goals
Reaching new heights
Never giving up
Inciting excellence
Now is the time
Greatness achieved
Wonderfully and Fearfully Made  
By Deborah Oni

How am I better than the birds that fly above the Earth across the vault of the sky?
These great creatures of the sea with which the water seems beautiful
the creatures that move along the ground,
the wild animals in the thick forest cannot also be underestimated as clever, beautiful and ambitious when striving for their preys just as it is in some humans.
They have the five sense organs just as in humans,
Some of these animals can sense trouble and fly away to their rest place,
Just as humans flee evil with their legs.
Have you noticed how beautiful our hairs flow to the rhythm of the waves?
Our inviting eyes like that of the beautiful dove,
our matching twin set of teeth as white as snow, because of the frequent and fresh wash simultaneously,
our flawless ironic smile,
our scarlet inviting hurting lips;
our rosy cheeks with pretense dimples on them,
our mischievous six pack body,
our well-shaped figure eight full of deceit,
our beautiful spotless evil covering skin,
and other body accessories that stand out.
Tell me who can underestimate the fact that we are beautiful?
Possessing these God given features doesn’t make us superior and better.
If as beautiful as we are on the outside is how beautiful we are inside, then we are undoubtfully, wonderfully and fearfully made.

However, we have one thing in common which is the breath of life.
Without this neither the animals nor we humans will live.
We do not only stop at taking the life of some of these games for pleasure and our stomach infrastructures,
We also break our fellow human through our actions, speech and give them the option of going early to their final resting abode.
Do you still call yourself fearfully and wonderfully made?
Be fair in your ordeals because you are not better of anyone or anything.
Don’t live your life as thus you owe no one explanation,
You are only privileged to be where you are and what you.
Life is like a two-sided coin,
and what goes around sometimes comes around depending on how we throw our coin.

Flower Love  
By Shantrell L. Trammel

As I am walking outside, I can smell the natural aroma of the beautiful flowers.
It reminds me of the love, how sweet love can be.
Love allows the heart to heal.
Flower love expresses the love we endure in our lives and how love can conquer all.
Poems
By Betty L. Daniels

An Eagle, My Son

An eagle you were, my son.
At your first presence
you looked around and
said not a word.
Just scanned your new horizon.
Faced outward as if sensing an unseen current.

Many times later, your wings
stretched expanded upward and out
Then settled backed for another time
No space ever quite held
the full essence, the energy
of the Eagle, my son.

Unyielding, the next horizon
my eagle sought.
To scale and soar
For the ride, the challenge
to feel the breeze.

Nothing Wrong

What did I do
Causes your stare of enmity?
Was it something said
Or do you know?

Seems like it began at birth
Check with my Parents and God
But don’t blame me.

Long I queried the cause
the pain
It’s time to move on
Or get lost in life’s pause
Never really understanding the cause
Heard an answer in the inner me
By being born
I’ve done Nothing Wrong.
Weekend

It was on the weekend gathered together I thought she will need someone after the crowd has gone and lights are out.

She has no children to come and see.

I’ll visit to comfort Give her a little more than sympathy.

So began our weekends just a shared visit, nice conversation and sharing. It’s not clear who was helped more you or me.

As your goddaughter you welcomed me. My godmother became my friend. Attended confidences and growing pains. Saw boyfriends found and lost. Shared expectations not realized mistakes and their cost. Inner struggles you understood and championed and assailed. Then helped me later to attend the wounds and pain.

Now on this final weekend, I must say goodbye. Even now I realize that our weekends were for healing both you and I.

I Didn’t Protect You

I didn’t protect you
When they used that Word as an adjective of blame.
I didn’t speak out and say Black is not your name.

I didn’t protect you with the truth of pride.
When wondrous joy was fulfilled with your ebony beauty ushered in at birth’s cry.

You my affirmation Blackness is Beautiful Yet that is how it happened.

I too didn’t get the message that your pigmentation was not a reflection of pride made meager

I didn’t protect you with all this truth to steel you with love your rich deep hue. Because you my love my heart I couldn’t protect you So precious a part of me. I never learned to cherish and love me.
Mom & Dad
By Yesmin Rahman

Mom has taught me to smile.
She taught me to fight for what’s right.
Dad has taught me to be kind,
He taught me to move on in life.
They had taught me to be bright,
They taught me to be polite.
They told me life would be tough,
but never to give up.
Thank you, Mom,
Thank you, Dad,
for being there all the time.
Thank you is not enough
to appreciate your love.
“I love you” also seem too few
to express my love and respect for you.

Undone
By Afeez Babalola

There are stories untold
songs unsung.
There are heroes unknown
stars that never rose.
There are thoughts unexpressed
voices never heard.
There are paths not followed
forests never trailed.
There are rivers that never flowed
seeds that never grew.
There are dreams never dreamed.
Lives never lived.
NOW is all we got.
NOW is to get the undone done.
Do what you are here to do while you are here.
Never leave, leaving the undone, undone because
soon you will be gone.
And, the undone be left undone.
Photography By Winston Lightfoot

The Old Man and His Bongo

I was in an area of Detroit called Greektown. Usually you’ll hear someone playing an instrument of some type. On this particular day, I heard the distant sound of bongos start and stop. It was like a homing signal, drawing me closer and closer. When I finally arrived, I found this old homeless man, switching between painting and playing bongos. I approached, and asked him if I paid him if he would let me take his photo, which he agreed to. I waited until he started to play, stooped down and took the shot.

World Upside Down

I went out shooting with some camera club members and we decided to go to The RiverWalk, where you get a spectacular view of Canada at night, with the city lit up. A member had a crystal ball that she offered me, and let me borrow (I eventually bought my own). As the night drew closer, the lights slowly but quickly lit up, and to see the reflection against the water was a beautiful sight, and it was the ideal photo.

Reflections

This was taken before the crystal ball photo. As the sun set in Detroit, a nearby fountain had calm water that perfectly reflected the city line and a nearby unused carousel. The clarity of the reflection was a must take photo.

Colorful Night

Shortly after the photo of the old man and his bongo, night drew. This is the time that the night life begins, and Greektown swarms with color and light. As I waited to meet up with a group I was with, I happened to look down the street at the mixture of color and signs that lined the street. They all stood out for different reasons, either seamlessly blending with the background or standing out based on brightness.
Life Reflections

Photography By Yesmin Rehman

Have you ever realized that our lives change colors like the sky? Sometimes it’s bright; sometimes it seems night.

Sometimes it’s not night, but there is also no light.

I guess this is the way of life.
Photography By Lindsey Hoper

“You can do the impossible because you have been through the unimaginable.”

-Christina Rasmussen

REFLECTIVE ARTWORK
Life’s Reflections
Photography By Betty L. Daniels

Bend in the River View of River Rouge from Henry Ford Campus

Waves on Belle Isle Beach

Underground River Exhibit facing Canada River Walk
REFLECTIVE ARTWORK

Cathedral at W. Fort

View of Hall window reflection Downtown WCCCD

Night Scape at Music Hall Harmony Park Dist.

View from Skylight- Downtown WCCCD

Twilight airplane formation
Journalist, writer and media personality Charlie LeDuff provided a special workshop for the writers contributing to the award-winning WCCCD Reflections student literary magazine. The session focused on the rules of journalism, the steps to make a documentary, the importance of research and interviewing techniques.
Board of Trustees

Mary Ellen Stempfle
Chairperson
District 1

Vernon C. Allen, Jr.
Vice Chairperson
District 3

Denise Wellons-Glover
Secretary
District 5

Sharon P. Scott
Treasurer
District 9

David Roehrig
Member
District 2

Scott T. Holiday
Member
District 4

Marla J. Edwards-Wheeler
Member
District 6

Dr. Patrick M. Kelley
Member
District 7

Charles Paddock
Member
District 8

Dr. Curtis L. Ivery, Chancellor

Curtis L. Ivery Downtown Campus
1001 W. Fort
Detroit, MI 48226

Downriver Campus
21000 Northline
Taylor, MI 48180

Eastern Campus
5901 Conner
Detroit, MI 48213

Northwest Campus
8200 West Outer Drive
Detroit, MI 48219

Ted Scott Campus
9555 Haggerty
Belleville, MI 48111

Mary Ellen Stempfle University Center/
Center for Learning Technology
19305 Vernier Road
Harper Woods, MI 48225

www.wcccd.edu • 313-496-2600

Follow us!