

# ATHENA

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## Senior Editor's Note

Florencia V. Cornet, Ph.D.

This second volume of the *OSP Research and Literary Journal* has been reviewed by fifteen student editors. These student editors come primarily from the *OSP Math, Intensive Writing, and Interactive Language Center*. Most of the papers in this second volume come from the 7<sup>th</sup> *Annual OSP Research and Literary Conference* held in April of 2017. Included in this volume is also the Conference paper produced and presented by our OSP students at the Allen University Hip Hop Studies Conference held in April 2018.

We hope that you enjoy this second volume of the *OSP Research and Literary Journal*, as we continue this archival project of the work produced by our Opportunity Scholars at the University of South Carolina-Columbia.

*TRiO* and the *Opportunity Scholars Program* would like to acknowledge our partner, The *Institute for African American Research* and Dr. Kimberly Simmons for joining us in producing this online version of the Journal. The Institute for African American Research has been our partner ever since we started the OSP Conference back in 2011. This collaboration has only grown over the years.

Florencia V. Cornet, Ph.D.

Senior Editor

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## **Starving to Be Heard**

by

Taylor Outler

*It's not about finding your voice. It's about giving yourself permission to use your voice.*

Kris Carr

When you take the time to look at me there is already one obstacle in my way, I am black. The struggle to fight these stereotypes associated with my race or gender is detrimental and life altering. This automatic set back in my ability to thrive however does not involve a fist or a weapon to set it straight. My weapon of choice is my voice, my words, and my knowledge. Instead of pulling triggers, I am unlocking my truth by allowing myself to not only be seen but also to be heard. An individual with a voice is strong. A black woman with a voice is a force to be reckoned with, exuding power, potency and ferociousness. Frankly, I am a black woman with many voices and desires. I speak as a woman, a child, a song bird, someone who is black, Indian, and white, and someone who is starving. I am no easy read or elementary subject ready to be pegged by one quick glance. I am an onion, ready to be peeled back layer by layer, and to enunciate my views every step of the way. I am not fully black, neither are you. We all are mixed with “race” that helps to put a defining mark on our lives.

When you look my way, I am beyond confident you would not guess I am Indian or white. Nor would you think I am a child. In my opinion, you are never done being a child, there is always going to be someone there to make you feel younger or pass down that wisdom that

you so desperately need but don't want, the passing down of song. Frankly, I am a songbird that rumbles with my voice not only with the incredible crackle of a keyboard or a speech but with the "truth music" that soars from my mouth as I sing my story my way. I am starving to share my story and be heard in the world. I have been starving for so long, in so much pain and yet never noticed. I refuse to be ashamed of my existence and vow to break the chains of silence and submission. I am Taylor, hear me roar loud and clear, you will not tame my wild tongue. A woman who always embodies the philosophy of never backing down or taming your tongue is Gloria Anzaldúa. "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue- my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence" (Anzaldúa 31). Anzaldúa is substantiating the idea that respectively every person's declaration deserves to be heard. No one is unsophisticated or should be smashed into a box.

Imagine growing up in a place, where all around there are different ways of "being". Of course, there are different cultures and ways to interpret these cultures, but within a culture there are so many different varieties. In culture, there appears to be a way to conduct yourself so that even though these different codes of behavior are not written in a book, they are understood. The phenomenon of it all, is that it is never questioned or challenged. This alone can appear to be conforming but imagine this on a greater scale and with a linguistic twist. This is in fact where Gloria Anzaldúa "resides," in this triangular space.

Anzaldúa describes where she grew up as "*una herida abierta*" – an open wound. This place was her home and was a lot closer than most would imagine. Anzaldúa grew up in southwest Texas, on the border between the United States and Mexico. She articulates this space as a region where cultures constantly clashed, to ultimately form differences that can confuse one

as they are trying to develop into the person they are growing up to be. After analyzing her life and understanding her barriers she discovers the complexity and ability to transform languages, causing her to experience a dual identity. They are all a variation of English and Spanish, based on her borderland experiences. However, this did not only affect Anzaldúa's linguistic variations but also her way of thinking and perceiving of the world around her. Hence her views were constantly being re-shaped by her fluid environment.

The way that Anzaldúa attacks this is through her use of transculturation and auto ethnographic texts. In laments terms, and based on this context she describes herself as others may see her, and she invents herself from the culture that has dominated her life. She analyzes her differences from the people that surround her in this borderland. She states that she is lesbian, a part of her that many would not notice at first glance but if you look deep enough you find her truth.

What is the truth you hide from the world? The part of the onion that is so deep you would only share with a select few. Beyond the pigment of my skin there are layers to me not perceived by many and known by less. The struggle for existence has been my hardest battle, one I have failed to reveal.

They'll check your wrist, but not your thighs,

They'll check your smile, but not your eyes,

They'll avoid the truth, believe the lies. (G.A)

Through my eyes you will see parts of me I have never told. Six years ago, I was the “fat” girl everyone picked on. Little did they know how hard I worked out to be the size two girl. The name-calling that never seemed to end, and the glaring looks that could follow you to your death bed. When you're twelve it seems like the end of the world, so I stopped eating. I had the biggest smile on my face, you would never have been able to tell I was starving. The feeling of inadequacy eats away at your soul until you reach your absolute worst, and I was there. I could see myself getting smaller, and yet, I had this seeping hole inside me. These chains that were dragging me down to be a size two model was slowly killing me. Pushing me to be and do something that I am not. I was a twelve-year-old girl who watched TV and read magazines. I was not “perfect” and I felt that had to be. I have been starving to share my story for so long. I had not eaten and had been mentally preparing myself for the outcome of the world knowing the true Taylor Simone Dolly Outler, besides the little black girl that made it to the University of South Carolina.

When you fast forward 151 years to a predominantly white college you find me. A “nigger” attending a university while making a name for herself. Who would have thought after these unbreakable chains have been removed, well at least tangibly, that the voice is as powerful as these chains? Yet, your free spirit and well-being are still in the custody of someone other than yourself. Explain to me how are you ever free? The twist of it all would be the fact that I am part Caucasian and Indian. A heritage I am barely able to claim. A part of me lost within the stereotypes of being “black”. Beyond my heavily melanin filled skin I can embark a new layer not known by many. By doing so, I am embracing the phenomenon practiced by Anzaldúa, the concept of embracing yourself and not questioning that for anyone. As if she was my personal mentor, I have learned more about myself than I ever would have without reading the chapters



from her book entitled *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) in *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers* (2011).

I have come to affirm that the grapple continues, or as Anzaldúa notes: “Yet the struggle of identities continues, the struggle of borders is our reality still. One day the inner struggle will cease and a true integration will take place” (Anzaldúa 34). In my opinion, she is stating the “truth music” of the fact that your borders, whether they are physical or internal, are a reality but if you accept them into who you are, you can accept your *truth*. So, I guess it is safe to assume, I am no longer starving to be heard and my wild tongue has been set free.

References:

Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." In *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. Eds. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petroski. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2014, 24-34.

## Nostalgia

by

Kiersten Chiles

In Richard Rodriguez's "The Achievement of Desire," he discusses how he struggled with cultural assimilation within his household due to the challenge he faced trying to balance his growing education and his stagnant family life. Rodriguez does this by sharing explicit details about how he tried to include both his family and his education in a balanced manner. After failing at this attempt, even after approaching the situation in multiple different ways, Rodriguez eventually stopped sharing his newfound learnings with his family once he realized that they just wouldn't be able to understand. This change and new realization caused Rodriguez to lose a sense of who he was, and reached a point that he would have never been able to see while it was happening, a point where he completely disassociated from his family and his culture (Rodriguez 336-355). Despite his loss of identity, Rodriguez went on to make numerous academic achievements. After he finished Catholic school, he went on to Stanford University, Columbia University, the Warburg Institute in London, and the University of California at Berkeley, where he pursued his PhD in English Renaissance literature. A couple of his essays have been published in *Saturday Review*, *The American Scholar*, *Change*, and other places (Rodriguez 336-337). These are only some of the many things that Rodriguez was able to achieve before he reached what he described as the end of education. We know that one does not ever stop learning, so, according to Rodriguez, the "end of education" can be inferred as when one has achieved what they believe to be ultimate academic education, but they lose themselves

along the way. This idea eventually leads to the strong desire to be in the past, where you now want to remember all the things your brain wanted you to forget so that you could achieve greater things.

My essay relates Rodriguez's educational journey with the path that I have created so far with my own education. Unlike Rodriguez, my journey is not so much about assimilation, but acculturation. Though there were struggles within my brain and my culture, including the types of people who were around me, I was still able to maintain a wall between school and my personal life without feeling so alone like Rodriguez did.

Like some American kids, I was a military kid. I moved to multiple different elementary schools and never really gained stable relationships with people, especially when it came to making friends, because I was always moving. I realized that due to my unsettled living situation, it was pointless for me to make friends and get attached to people—I would focus more on school. School, for me, was my happy place. If there were things wrong at home, I could escape those problems at school. If I was worried about anything in my personal life, I would discard the feeling once I got onto my school's campus. At school, I was the "smart girl" who always knew all the answers and I read a large amount of books, just because I felt like books could teach me things I didn't know about writing structures, grammatical pathways, and how to express ideas about certain topics in multiple different ways. After school, whether it was my mom or my dad, someone always asked me, "How was school?" My answer was always basically the same, "Good." I didn't really take it too personally like Rodriguez did, because I didn't really care to share my experiences at school with the people at home. This wasn't really because I didn't think they would understand or that I was ashamed of them, but I seemed to just always keep my education separate from my personal life, for the most part.

Like Rodriguez, throughout school, I did accomplish a great amount of academic achievements from the time I was in kindergarten to my senior year of high school, and now throughout college. These accomplishments, of course, involved too many award ceremonies to name, and a mass amount of certificates, medals, plaques, and recognition letters that are still, to this day, in a big box under my bed. My parents always made their best effort to attend any ceremony that I was a part of, but eventually, similar to Rodriguez, I stopped telling my parents about every single one. This wasn't because I was ashamed of my parents like he was, it was more because I started to feel like my award ceremonies became a routine. Personally, I started to feel like they meant less and less because of how often I seemed to be in attendance or have been invited to attend. This, in a way, led to what I believe was the end of education for myself.

Of course, now I am a college student, and there are a lot more things to learn. However, when high school was getting closer and closer to ending, I started to not have the same passion I once had for learning. Now in college, I started trying to recreate the feeling that I once had when I would step on a school campus, the motivation I had to be the best, and the ambition that always drove me to learn more, but it started to seem unreachable the more I tried. So, in response, I tried something new. I thought that dismissing these ideas would help me just figure things out on my own, by not acknowledging the fact that I had ever lost any of those things that once drove me, but, like Rodriguez says, "...one does not forget by trying to forget. One only remembers" (Rodriguez 342).

References:

Rodriguez, Richard. "The Achievement of Desire." In *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. Eds. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petroski. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2014, 336-355.

## **Becoming a Cultural Moderator**

by

Conor Wagner

In “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Mary Louise Pratt defines a contact zone as “a place where cultures meet and clash, especially in situations of highly asymmetrical power” (Pratt 319). These contact zones, per Pratt, can help us become cultural moderators and help bridge the gap between communities that would normally not interact. Pratt uses the work of Guaman Poma de Ayala as an example of being a cultural moderator. He was part Incan and part Spaniard, which gave him the tools to write a 1200-page chronicle depicting what life was like for both cultures in that contact zone. This letter never ended up being sent to the ruler of Spain, but still it served its purpose, which is to depict what a cultural mediator should do; bridge the gap between cultural that normally would not mesh together (Pratt 317-325). I agree with Pratt in that cultural moderators can be a huge help in tense communities, and that, to become one, we need to become involved in a variety of cultures and assimilate into multiple contact zones to gain a better understanding of different cultures from our own.

Our classroom was a contact zone. Last week, some of us opened about our experiences and how we got to where we are today. It helped me not only get to know who people are in the class, but also how they think and operate. It allowed me to get to know people and start to break down the power structures that were present in the classroom. In that moment, all of us were equals, sharing deep stories that shook me to my core. I also shared about my story. My story involved how I have grown up for almost six years without a father. This has changed my

outlook on family and how important it is for me. While I know, his absence was not voluntary, I know that I need to make sure that I am there as much as I can be for my future children. It has also garnered a new contact zone that was not previously known to me. It has helped me become more self-reliant and has challenged me with tough choices. Overall, it has helped me become a better person.

This lifestyle has allowed me to have an abnormal experience that exposed me to a variety of different contact zones, and therefore allows me to be an effective cultural moderator. An effective cultural moderator, as described by Pratt, is one that bridges the gap between two cultures (Pratt 327-329), and I believe that I can do that, mostly because of my many experiences with different cultures. When I was younger, I went to a soup kitchen for Thanksgiving to volunteer with my family. This kitchen fed the homeless who had nowhere else to go during this time, and it helped me realize the importance of community and acceptance. Even though these people were homeless, I realized that they were still people, and should be treated as such. I now value the basics even more, because I know that there are people out there who do not have access to certain commodities.

Contact zones, however, are not always so cut and dry. I concede that many scenarios could only occur in utopian societies and not all cultures will be peaceful with one another. In fact, some cultures will never become peaceful, and will be in conflict for many years to come. These zones have also been very tense, especially here in the U.S with the ongoing racial tension that still exists between Whites and African-Americans. Cultural moderators play a critical role in being the facilitators for change when it comes to breaking down these barriers, but I am afraid it will be a long and grueling process for this day to finally come.



Being a cultural moderator allows for us to gain more out of contact zones and the communities in which they exist. These contact zones also facilitate the introduction of new ideals into a culture that would not have had these originally. These new ideals can come in the form of religion, food, music, or anything else that would differ from the norm of the community. Contact zones exist everywhere. However, I believe that a people does not create contact zones, but instead they happen naturally because of human behavior. Some of these interactions can be positive, like when I entered the soup kitchen, but others can be negative like Guaman Poma de Ayala's interactions. Therefore, the creation of safe houses, or "social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities" (Pratt 329) are necessary for the development of healthy cultural interactions. These places allow for negative communities to form into positive ones.

As cultural moderators, we can stop negative interactions from occurring by instead focusing on bringing people together. Pratt defines this mediation as "communication across lines of difference and hierarchy that go beyond politeness but maintain mutual respect" (Pratt 329). I believe that allowing oneself to be exposed to this style of interpretation can make one a better person. Obviously, everyone is entitled to their own interpretation of what exactly is and is not a contact zone or what a cultural moderator is, but this is what makes these things unique; it brings people from a variety of backgrounds together and allows one to gain new insight on ways of thought or reasoning behind certain actions that may have confused one before. Allowing yourself to become a cultural moderator allows you to get the most out of all your experiences and can help you grow and mature as a person.

References:

Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." In *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. Eds. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petroski. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2014, 315-330.

## **My Life and Its Contact Zone**

by

Zaria Coachman

In Mary Louise Pratt's text, "Arts of the Contact Zone," she describes the contact zone as "social spaces where cultures, meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world" (Pratt 319). One example she uses to describe the contact zone is a letter written to King Phillip III of Spain from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in 1613. Poma de Ayala lived during the time when the Incan empire fell to the Spanish. In his letter he describes the European and Incan ways of living by using two languages and two parts. Pratt calls Poma de Ayala's text an auto-ethnographic text, in other words, "a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (Pratt 319). She also asserts that Poma de Ayala's letter is an example of transculturation, a term coined by Fernando Ortiz (Pratt 319). In making that statement, Pratt wants readers to understand that even though a dominant culture takes over a subordinate culture, the subordinate culture can choose, to a certain point, what they want to adapt and how they want to insert other social ways into their own culture.

After reading Pratt's text, I am now able to view my world in an altered way. I agree with Pratt about the concept of the contact zone and all that occurs inside and outside of the contact zone. I like the definition of the contact zone Pratt gives because it opened up my mind to the people and places around me. I think of my experiences growing up in my hometown as a perfect

example. I never saw myself as being part of a contact zone, but only as an individual who was just there. I am now able to look back and see that my small town consisted of people who had many different attitudes and ways of doing things. Most people in my community are natives to my hometown, but often times new families would move to my hometown to live. They bring their cultures and traditions with them. Sometimes what they do will clash with what the native people do. Despite the differences of the people within my hometown, we all form a community where we understand each other.

I reference the term auto-ethnographic text earlier in this paper because, like Poma de Ayala, I too explain myself while also explaining what others may have interpreted about me. Most of the people in my hometown saw me as “the smart girl.” They had no idea of who I really was or what I loved to do. They saw me as the brainy kid, and that is all. I am not just the girl who does well in school. I am someone’s daughter, granddaughter, sister, cousin, aunt, niece, and best friend. I am a Christian who enjoys going to church to give praise to the Creator. I am outgoing, loving, helpful, and visionary. The people in my town and school did not take the time to get to know the real me. They automatically assumed that I was somebody with just one character trait. My fellow classmates thought that I did three things every day; sleep, go to school, and study. “She doesn’t go to parties,” he said. “She doesn’t do anything fun,” she said. “All she knows how to do is study and make good grades,” they said. If only they knew that I actually had to work hard to get the grades that I received. Being “smart” did not come naturally to me. Yes, I studied a lot, but that was because I had to. No, I did not attend any of their parties on the weekends. It was not because I did not know how to have “fun”. It was because I was not interested in doing what they considered to be “fun”. If they had taken the time to get to know

more about me and my background, then they would understand why I strived to do my best and nothing less.

One process that Pratt believes is part of the contact zone that stood out to me is transculturation. According to Fernando Oritz, a Cuban sociologist who originally coined this term, transculturation is the act of a dominant culture taking over a subordinate culture, but the subordinate culture usually decides which new ideals get used and which ideals do not get used (Pratt 323). As I re-read the part of Pratt's essay on Poma de Ayala's letter being written in two different languages, it makes me think about one of my best friends who is Latino. She was born in Mexico and moved to the United States of America when she was very young. At the time she was only speaking Spanish but had to learn English so that she could start attending pre-school. She told me that it was not hard to learn the English language, but it took her awhile to learn all the different rules of grammar.

Being that she spoke Spanish, she was forced, in a sense, to learn to speak English. She may have felt like she was losing a part of herself. She battled with trying to keep her Latino background, while assimilating to her new American culture. One day at school, we were writing an essay for our English class. She started to write in English, but all of a sudden, she switched over and began writing in Spanish. She did not notice what she was doing until I called her name and broke her concentration. Even though she did not notice, it made me wonder if she was fighting to understand who she really was. Somehow I believe that this is the exact same feeling that Poma de Ayala had for the Spanish and Quechua languages and cultures. Just like Poma de Ayala who had to assimilate into the Spanish way of doing things, my friend had to assimilate to the USA culture and traditions. Although she accepted some aspects, like language and clothing

style, she continued to celebrate Latino holidays and cook Latino dishes. In this way, I find my friend to be an excellent example of transculturation.

In conclusion, Mary Louise Pratt's work entitled, "Arts of the Contact Zone," allowed me to see my world in a very different way. The contact zone exists in every community that we enter into today. Within the community you may experience and see how the different languages and cultures have a way of existing simultaneously. Sometimes transculturation will occur, and the subordinate culture will be influenced by the dominant cultures' styles and traditions. Fortunately for me, I did not allow the traditions and practices of my hometown to limit my cultural growth and expansion. Instead of staying home, I decided to do something with my life. A contact zone is a way for you to learn more about other people and yourself, even if that means learning what not to do.

References:

Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." In *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. Eds. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petroski. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2014, 315-330.

# **The Unbalanced Student**

by

Tiffany Banks

## **Introduction**

Deep inside the body of a twelve year old boy named Tommy, lies a balance scale. On one side of the scale, it is steadily moving downward, gaining so much weight that in the matter of seconds it can snap off. As for the other side, it is light, with hardly anything on it. The two things that are balanced on this scale are education and child values. What makes this balance scale so unique is that it controls the way the young boy functions. The only way for poor Tommy to function properly is if there's a balance between the two sides. The heavier side of the scale measures education, demonstrating the overload of academic pressures being enforced on students. The lighter side of the scale demonstrates values, illustrating the lack of consideration given to what the child desires.

In this paper, I argue that parents, teachers, and society should not break the balance between education and children' values because it leads to detrimental psychological and behavioral factors. The elements of society cover their mouths, preventing students from expressing their inner voices and values. We live in a society where the system teaches students that good grades are the most important entity along with a college degree. I use scholarly sources to illustrate how students are being overpressured into joining the academic world with no input of their own values and voice. I also provide statistics and case studies that will present grounds to support the idea that these students who are overpressured into academia suffer



detrimental psychological and behavioral factors. Finally, I conclude my paper by discussing the possible solutions we can take to create a balance between education and children' values.

### **Explaining Academic Overpressure**

In today's society children are being overpressured into academia. This enormous amount of pressure is not only coming from teachers and members of the educational system but also from parents and society. Many parents in upper - and middle - class communities have gone senseless when it comes to academic achievement. Parents are now going to extreme measures to train the mental machines of infants and toddlers. For example, one-third of U.S. children have seen a "Baby Einstein" video. Some parents not only become aggressive when it comes to securing selective preschool slots, but also procure tutors for their preschool children (Weissbourd 23).

This early pressure gives students no time to develop and learn how to actually live. The elements of society take children when their brains are fresh and vulnerable and train their minds to believe that the most important thing in life is education. They create a system that turns students into robots that only know one way to live life and that's through getting good grades. Students have ropes tied around their necks that pulls them in a straight line. When they begin to lure off to actually learn how to live, these elements of society pull and tug, affirming an intense amount of pressure to get the student back to his/her robotic non-living self. This pressure is asserted onto these students in numerous ways, some by punishment, some through humiliation and embarrassment, and some even through neglect. However, there is one thing that they use to pressure students more successfully than them all, and that is through *poverty*. What

makes this system of academic pressure so successful is not that parents are punishing their kids for not meeting their expectations, or that teachers are loading students with tons of work that will be labeled by a letter to determine how smart they are. Rather, it is that it trains students at the earliest age to believe that without this higher education, they will be poor. It teaches those who do not strive and get the highest grades that they will work at their local McDonalds that pays them minimum wage and force them to work and rely on the government for the rest of their lives. This intense pressure only works and turn into a calamity when those who are pressuring students become blind from the trained vision of success embedded in their minds. So blind to the point that they don't recognize that they are undervaluing the student or their own child.

A person's values are what makes up who they are and what they believe is important to them. To take away one's value is to strip away their voice, and that is exactly what's happening to students in today's society. Richard Weissbourd, an American child and family psychologist states,

“When parents treat children like performance machines or place their children's academic achievement above other values—for example, regularly pressing their children to take courses and participate in extracurricular activities in which they have no interest because it will help them get into good colleges, constantly arranging achievement-boosting activities, or pushing them to apply to prestigious colleges where they are unlikely to fit in and thrive—children not only are stressed but also may feel that their best personal qualities are not valued by others” (Weissbourd 26).

Each child has a different personality and enjoys doing different things. One child may be charismatic, extremely loyal, kind, imaginative, and have a good sense of humor but may never

come to value the interest in a prestigious college or see it as a part of who he/she is. One of the most common ways that we pressure and undervalue children today is by forcing them into college. Yes, college is a great place and can teach people many things that they never thought was possible but it is not meant for everyone.

### **Education, Personal Choice, and Happiness**

Many people mistakenly believe that going to college and obtaining a higher education will automatically earn you more money and a higher standard of living than someone with a high school diploma, but in fact that is not true. Many factors play a role into how much money you will make by obtaining a bachelor's degree, such as school selectivity, field of study, and career. With that being said, a person with only a high school diploma working in a STEM job can expect to make more over a lifetime than someone with a bachelor's degree working in education, community service and arts, sales and office work, health support, blue collar jobs, or personnel services (Owen & Sawhill 5). So, why are we as human beings training children to be someone who God has not created them to be? The elements of society are taking away a constitutional right that our founding fathers have given us many years ago and that is freedom of speech. We as students are free people and should not have tape around our mouths nor be scared to step out of line to be who we want to be over who society tries to create us to be. Be mindful that what a parent or teacher may think is best and important to the student may not be what the student wants or actually needs. Achievement has, in multiple cases, become the principal goal of raising children, and this extreme focus threatens to make children both less happy and less moral.

Children are suffering from detrimental psychological and behavior factors due to the overpressure of academia and devaluation of their beliefs. Frank C. Mayer's research explains the psychological diagnoses of an eighth-grade student. The psychologist states: "This is a young girl who is almost paralyzed by anxiety" (Mayer 328). After the parents received notice that the child cannot achieve at the level they set for her, the child is forced to study harder, but gets poor results (Mayer 328). This observation supports the idea that students are being put under too much pressure and that the more pressure you put on the student, the less beneficial it is for the student, and in fact, the more dangerous it becomes for him/her. The ultimate fate of this intensified pressure is death. A 13-year-old named Cayman Naib killed himself after receiving an email from his private school that he was behind on his homework. The sad part is that Cayman is only one of many. Just two years ago there was a series of suicides that many parents attributed to an academic culture based on high achievement and high stress of competing to get into an elite college in Newton, Massachusetts (Bergland).

Andrew S. Quach and other colleagues conducted research on Chinese adolescents, a place known for having the smartest people. The research show that Chinese adolescents have a high number of students who face depression and anxiety and that there is a positive correlation with parental pressure (Quach et al 109). Behavioral factors also add on to these depressing psychological factors. Edwin Farrell's research on high school dropouts exemplifies that pressures from outside of school system affect students negatively and lead to the students being bored and tired of school (Farrell 489). These students who drop out tend to fall into that pressure of poverty, where they make little money, leading most to convicting crimes and getting into trouble. It all is starting from that intense amount of academic pressure and not valuing the child's beliefs and wants. The student agonizes both a debilitated sense of others and a

debilitated sense of their own being. It turns that child into a lost puppy who no longer knows who he/she is or what to do with his/her life but struggle till death.

### **Conclusion: Creating Balance**

In conclusion, we as a society must seek to change this issue of over-pressuring and devaluing students. My argument is not to stop pressuring and pushing students to become great scholars but instead to not break the balance between education and children's values. Parents, I ask you to take the time to get to know what your child is really passionate about and want to do with their lives. Learn to accept their values even if it is not the expectations that you have in place for them. As for teachers and other members of the school system, I ask you to limit competition with students in school, making it less about obtaining the highest GPA's and enrolling in the most AP courses. Focus more on what the students value by creating more programs and trade schools to prepare those students who have no interest in higher education to still be able to live a happy and successful life doing what it is that they love and are passionate about. Lastly, for students, I urge you to remove the tape from your mouths that society has tightly placed and express the way you feel. Do not feel obligated to live and stay within the thin lines of the poorly structured system of education because that is not truly living. Spread your wings and fly, follow your dreams and passions. Be the person God created you to be, and don't let society create you. Finally, to all, next time you choose to overpressure or undervalue a student think about it; is it really worth that child's life?

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## **Security vs. Freedom: Abolishing the NSA's Data Collection Program**

by

Bryan Hall

Ever since our humble beginnings as a nation in 1776, our founding fathers have always been skeptical of big government and tried to create a system that would protect the freedoms of the people. Patrick Henry, an American Revolutionary, passionately uttered the words, "Give me liberty or give me death," in a speech at the Virginia convention in 1775. Those passionate words were the song of the American Revolution and gave rise to the United States as a nation. The founding fathers gave their lives to make sure that the nation they created would be free from the abuse of a tyrannical government. The American colonies were secure under the reign of Great Britain, but the founding fathers didn't feel free. Even to this day, our nation is faced with the very same question: do we want to be a secure society or a free society? The founding fathers answered that question very boldly: we want to be free. It is for this very same reason that I believe that it is time to get rid of the National Security Agency's data collection program. The United States government should abolish the National Security Agency's (NSA) data collection program because it is unconstitutional, illegal, and an infringement on personal liberty.

Before there can be any argumentation for the dismantling of the National Security Agency's data collection program, one has to understand the history behind the agency. The agency was originally founded in 1917 to serve as an intelligence organization that would be able to decipher German telegraph signals during World War I. Through several decades of war: World War I and II, the Cold War, Korean War, and the Vietnam war, the agency continued to

grow and serve as an intelligence organization to keep our nation secure from foreign surveillance. After the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks on the United States, legislators in congress wanted to do whatever necessary to ensure that ensure that America would be safe from future attacks. Thus, Congress passed the Patriot Act of 2001, which would eventually be signed into law by President George W. Bush. The patriot act created the Department of Homeland Security and expanded many of the National Security Agency's powers to include foreign surveillance of suspected terrorists. "First, on September 14, 2001, NSA Director General Michael Hayden approved targeted surveillance of specific, preapproved telephone numbers generating communications between the United States and foreign countries with known terrorist activities." (Ombres 29). Hence, the expanded surveillance was beginning to be used as an approved international spy-system of sorts.

The NSA was not originally founded to be used as a means to spy on millions of Americans. The original purpose of the agency was to protect our country from the surveillance and technological capabilities of other countries. The push for domestic data collection came later from Vice President Dick Cheney. "The NSA initially pushed back at Vice President Dick Cheney's Office's suggestion that Executive Order ("EO") 12333 permitted the data collection program to apply toward intercepting domestic communications" (Ombres 29). As shown by Ombres, the original purpose of the NSA was to protect Americans. However, the fear from the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the capability to collect data from everyone in America seemed to be a very tempting tool. Attorney General John Ashcroft signed an order beginning the implementation of the NSA's domestic surveillance and on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the National Security Agency began collecting the phone records and email records of millions of Americans.



As seen in the case of many American laws, the question posed with the passage of any new law is whether the law is constitutional or not. The founding fathers were terrified at the idea of a government too large that it could not be stopped. With this in mind, they drafted the Constitution, which they believed would be strictly-constructed and clear enough to stop the federal government from becoming too powerful and corrupt. Fearing that even the creation of the Constitution of government wasn't enough, they added the Bill of Rights to incorporate more protection from a potentially tyrannical government. In accordance to the Bill of Rights, the NSA directly violates the Fourth Amendment which states:

“The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

Based on this amendment, the government and law enforcement must obtain a detailed warrant before they can search the physical body, personal property, writings, or products of a person. The government and its agents must have probable cause to believe that the person being searched has committed a crime. Without a clearly defined warrant, it is illegal for the government to search an individual's belongings.

The Constitution states that it is the right of the people to be secure in their persons, meaning anything in their immediate possession. They have the right to be secure in their homes, meaning the privacy and items in the possession of their homes. There is also the right to be secure in their papers. “Papers,” as mentioned in the Fourth Amendment includes letters, essays, notes, text messages, phone records, and all other written documents. It is the right of the people

to freely write, produce, exchange speech and other words without the government unlawfully searching these items. The Constitution states that the government must obtain a warrant before they can search a person's written documents. To obtain a warrant, the government must have "probable cause" to believe that a crime has been committed, and that the person being searched had something to do with the crime. Probable cause is not suspicion, but facts. The National Security Agency collects data from the phone records of millions of Americans without probable cause or a warrant.

"The Fourth Amendment consists of two clauses joined by the conjunction 'and.' The first clause is a prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures, and the second clause deals with requirements for a warrant" (Bloom and Dunn 189). The NSA violates the unreasonable search and seizure clause of the Fourth amendment by searching the documents of millions of people without any justification. They don't have probable cause that the people being searched are involved with any crime. A "seizure," as mentioned in the amendment, simply refers to the taking or capturing of something. By collecting and storing the phone data of every American, the NSA violates the search and seizure clause. The NSA collects everyone's phone records in the name of terrorism prevention. The next clause of the amendment that the NSA violates is the warrant clause. According to the amendment, the NSA is supposed to obtain a warrant for every single person that they intend to search before they can go through their documents. The National Security Agency does not have warrants on every single American, and therefore is conducting warrantless searches. By violating the Constitution, the NSA's program is unconstitutional, and therefore, should be illegal.

The data collection program is not only unconstitutional, but it is fundamentally wrong. The idea that a government would spy on its citizens unjustly is an unsettling thought. I believe

personally that everyone has a right to privacy. Everyone deserves the right to send messages and communicate ideas with others without the government monitoring their communications. I also believe that the constitution gives citizens the right to privacy through the Tenth Amendment, which states, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.” Therefore, unless the constitution gives the government the power to unilaterally take away the privacy of millions of people, the right to privacy is reserved to the people. A majority of Americans agree with this idea. According to a Pew Research Poll, released in May 2015, 54% of Americans disapprove of the government collecting data as part of anti-terrorism efforts. Another Pew Research Poll showed that 74% of Americans would not give up their privacy for security (Gao 2015).

People want to feel a sense of privacy when communicating with others and the National Security Agency takes this right away from all of us. In May of 2015, Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky gave a passionate speech on the senate floor in opposition to the NSA’s data collection program. In the words of Senator Paul, “This is a debate over the bill of rights, this is a debate over the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment, and this is a debate over your right to be left alone. The right to be left alone is the most cherished of rights” (Rand Paul 2015).

Some people are ignorant to the fact that the NSA is collecting our cell phone data and others are aware that it is occurring but are indifferent. However, I believe that the right to privacy is one of our most valuable rights and must be protected not exploited by the government. People who support the NSA’s data collection practices are more likely to be critics of this argument. Many of those people will say that if someone doesn’t have anything to hide, what’s the problem? The point is not whether or not someone has something to hide; the point is that what we choose to say behind the privacy of our phone screens and message threads should

be free from government monitoring. If we live in the freest nation in the world, we should have a right to feel secure from government encroachment of our daily communications.

Other critics will look to other means for justification of the NSA program. Historically, the NSA's practices are not unprecedented, and critics will cite this as support for the program's continuation. President Franklin Roosevelt is believed to have used a similar program during World War II to collect data from millions of Americans. Neal Katyal and Richard Caplan of the Stanford Law Review propose the idea that the NSA's past practices could be used as justifications for its current practices. They note that "the ways in which past presidents have acted will often be a more useful guide in assessing the legality of a particular program, as presidents face pressures on security unimaginable to any other actor outside or inside government" (Katyal and Caplan 1024). I still contend that even though the past practices of presidents influence the actions of future presidents, the NSA's practices are still wrong. Just as President Roosevelt's actions and policies on this issue was wrong in the past, those same practices should be illegal now.

It would take a Supreme Court ruling or Congressional Act to stop or restrict the agency's practice. Unfortunately, both Democrats and Republicans are on the wrong side of history with this issue. Dating back to the days of Roosevelt, both parties have used their power to monitor the communications of the American public. Instead of dismantling or searching for ways to conduct the program in the least intrusive way possible, each administration has expanded the power of the program. Regardless of political party or ideology, everyone deserves to have a right to privacy in their conversations.

Those who are concerned with the national security interests that come with dismantling the data collection program might ask: "how will we know how to protect ourselves if we can't

tell who is engaging in terror activity?” Though a valid question, the truth is that there is not a way to know an individual’s mindset, thoughts, and intentions. If communication and data monitoring is the most effective way for countering terrorism, then the National Security Agency should do so in a way that is constitutionally sound. The NSA should obtain warrants, and only search and collect the documents of Americans believed to be engaged in terrorist activity. With the implementation of this solution, the NSA would be protecting our national security interests in a constitutionally sound, and legally fair manner. I contend that if the NSA cannot find a way to legally search documents of terror suspects, then the program should be dismantled, and other means should be implemented to combat terrorism. In addition to these solutions, the United States government would also benefit from investing resources in countering terrorist propaganda and recruitment rather than solely monitoring the communications of millions of its own citizens.

Freedom, liberty, and rights of the individual should not be compromised in the name of security without due process. The right to privacy is the most cherished right. It’s time to abolish the National Security Agency’s data collection practices.

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# Rap and Storytelling in the Classroom

by

Kiersten Chiles, Crystal Stevens, Destiny Stewart

## Abstract:

As noted by Adam Bradley in *Book of Rhymes the Poetics of Hip Hop* (2009) “storytelling distinguishes rap from other forms of popular music” (157). In fact, rap music in Hip Hop culture tells stories and narratives that relate to the personal life of the artist in his/her community. Artists “keep it real” by providing gritty, factual, and at times, fantastical stories that don’t fit the truth of dominant normalcy. The power of these stories centers the marginal character and his/her geographical space. Once invisible she/he is now visible and heard. This paper addresses the limitless possibilities of using rap music and Hip Hop culture as modes of teaching the marginal side of difference in the classroom. Kiersten Chiles, Destiny Stewart, and Crystal Stevens, present stories about the ways in which hip hop lyrics and rap music have shaped their educational *ways of knowing* and critical thinking. Kiersten Chiles presents on “Six Times Eight is Forty-Eight: Using Rhythm and Rhymes to Learn my Tables.” She is followed by Destiny Stewart who presents on “Rap as a Tool for Learning and Fluid Verbalization.” Finally, Crystal Stevens closes the panel with her presentation on “Rap and Storytelling: Fostering Cross-culturalism and Social Methods in the Classroom.”

## I. Six Times Eight is Forty-Eight: Using Rhythm and Rhymes to Learn my Tables

Even though I’m quite young, I feel it is necessary for me to say that back in MY day, learning things wasn’t nearly as much about memorization as it is today, in 2018. Most people have a better grasp on concepts they learned when they were younger, like simple multiplication tables, naming the colors in a rainbow, or being able to explain why a water spill will eventually dry on its own. Growing up, I always was told the phrase, “children are like sponges,” being that they take in all the information around them. The scientific reasoning behind this is dragged out with larger words, but I’ll tell you about it anyway as fast and as simply put as possible.

Basically, the part of your brain that controls your cognitive and social behavior, personality



expression, decision making, and stores your memories (the prefrontal cortex) is much less complex when you are a child than it is when you become an adult. Due to this fact, children statistically learn and retain things easier than adults. Aside from this fact, we also know that children, especially immediately out of the womb, are given toys to learn simple things like the alphabet and numbers. These toys are usually requested to have sound, because “that’s just what kids like.” But, if we think about this academically, and we combine all the things we know about how children learn—like with Leap Pads that help them learn words through sounds, music, and graphics—we can conclude that at least a piece of this consumption of memories and learning can be credited to music and sound.

I’ll use myself as an example. When I was younger, my parents always used rhythms, beats, and music to help me learn things. In the fourth grade, my class had to answer 100 multiplication tables in five minutes, and whoever won received ice cream sundaes at the end of the semester. Being the competitive person that I am and being that I always strived for excellence in the classroom, I wanted to make sure I was the top candidate for this prize. Like most kids, I struggled with a few of these problems, which included six times eight. I remember going through my multiplication tables at home, and each time I got to this specific one, I always got it wrong. It was like the numbers didn’t make sense, and I was getting frustrated more and more with time. It wasn’t until my parents taught me how to fashion things to make more sense, using beats and rhythm, that this specific problem became a breeze for me. Six times eight became more of a song in my head than two numbers on paper. That was something I learned when I was about eight years old. I’m nineteen now, taking business calculus, and any time I come across six and eight with a multiplication sign, I still sound out that same song in my head. I haven’t gotten the problem wrong, or even stumbled across it since then. This method of

learning has also been implemented into all of my studies since I learned how to do it on my own, especially in my weaker areas. Creating rhythms and hearing sounds play out in your head, while identifying those things with difficult concepts, make them a lot easier to break down and keep track of. For younger children who aren't taking business calculus, for example, a common tool most kids use are songs to learn the alphabet. My favorite alphabet song being broadcast on Sesame Street, when India Arie joined Elmo to sing the alphabet with him in order to help children learn the order of these letters while having a melody and rhythm to go along with it. According to a Bisk article entitled, "Music in the Classroom Proves Beneficial for Learning," posted through the University of Scranton, incorporating song lyrics into a lesson can be a great way to encourage students to engage and think critically about language. Playing and approaching songs from analytical perspectives helps students connect artistic works they may have heard in passing and use them to decipher things like metaphors and symbols in the songs (University of Scranton).

As we all know, hip-hop is a form of music surrounded by the artistry of poetry and a complex arrangement of beats and rhythms. According to the *National Association for Music Education*, music inside of the classroom has tons of benefits that include but are not limited to: helping develop language and reasoning, consistent engagement, learning pattern recognition, and even better SAT scores (NAfME). The rhythms and beats that contributed to my understanding that six times eight was forty-eight did come from my parents, but my parents couldn't have come up with the idea if hip-hop didn't exist—being that they are from the earlier generation of hip-hop culture. I'm sure that the rhythm itself, from the baseline to the tone and even the thought process behind the idea, had to have come from their prior knowledge of some sort of song, rhythm, or beat that they were familiar with. Hip-hop is more than just rap music.

It's a culture, which can be used to change lives both inside and outside of the classroom. It has certainly offered alternatives for our next presenter, Destiny Stewart, for whom rap is more of a liberatory style, allowing her to speak fluidly, in times when normative speaking strategies have failed her.

## **II. Rap as a Tool for Learning and Fluid Verbalization**

Having a disability that isn't as socially acceptable as others has always left me feeling like an outsider. Not being able to use my words as effectively as my peers pushed me to give up the only voice that I had. Many people are unaware of what speech impediments are, or the different types that exist. The most common being stuttering is defined by *the National Institute of Deafness and other Communication Disorders* as a communication disorder in which the flow of speech is broken by repetitions, prolongations, or abnormal stopping. Even though the root causes of stuttering aren't clear, it is evident that the disorder deals with one's ability to speak in fluent patterns. Fluency deals with the ways in which sounds, syllables, and words are able to flow together. As a person who stutters, the fluency of my speech is often disrupted due to many contributing factors. However, throughout the years I've discovered that the only time the fluency of my speech isn't disrupted is when I'm rapping. Rhythm is the essence of rap music. The rhythmic flow and fluency of hip-hop is what ultimately distinguishes it from other genres of music. According to MusicMelter.com, in hip hop there's a cyclic pattern that allows the rapper to flow on the beat. Because of this, the delivery of the speech is fluent.

In my experience, fluency has always been the main focus of speech therapy. I've undergone numerous tests and exercises that reinforced patterns believed to help me speak much more fluently despite my stutter. Unfortunately, many of these patterns have proven to be

ineffective which lead me to seek other ways in which I could improve the fluency of my speech, and possibly the speech of others. For decades speech therapists have sought out ways to help people with different forms of speech impediments. One new way that has been discovered is the incorporation of music therapy in speech therapy. In a study conducted in 2015 by Torry Farnell at the University of Arkansas, it was found that music and language are connected by their use of cognitive functions and subsystems such as memory, attention, and categorization. This connection makes it beneficial for some speech pathologists to incorporate music in their sessions. Unfortunately, this form of therapy has only been used in cases that dealt with a delay of speech in children or neurological speech disorders in adults. As I previously mentioned, stuttering has always been an issue for me unless I'm singing or rapping a song. Because of this, I believe that speech therapists should begin using elements of music therapy with patients who stutter. The metric and fluency functions that are introduced in rap, in my opinion, can be used in speech therapy as well. If patients like myself are taught to apply the same techniques that are used when reciting the lyrics to a rap song in our everyday speech, I believe that we will begin to see an improvement.

I will proceed now by providing an example of my fluent speech through what has traditionally been considered the restrictive and degenerative nature of rapping. The following is a rap verse by Q-Tip of A Tribe Called Quest from the rap song titled "Definition of a Fool." In my performance of this song, I will offer a sing along.

(Destiny Stewart had to modify her song of choice due to technical issues. She performed Will Smith's "Prince of Bell Air").

### **III. Rap and Storytelling: Fostering Cross-culturalism and Social Methods in the Classroom**

Thank you Destiny for that illuminating and liberatory performance. Much like an artist, Destiny was able to convey portions of her personal story through rap. She has invited you, the audience, to become a part of her vernacular and linguistic story. In a sense you have managed to cross over into her linguistic world with empathy and understanding, hopefully broadening your own perspective and ways of knowing. My portion of the panel touches upon this cultural cross-over of sorts.

Hip Hop has survived the tests of time and remains relevant even decades later. The key to this success can be attributed to Hip Hop's ability to teach several lessons, including the dangers of street life, historical accounts, even the struggles of being a minority, impoverished and in some cases, both. Various Hip Hop artists have worked to encapsulate these issues within their music, such as Slick Rick, Ice T, Tupac Shakur, OutKast, Common, and many more.

Storytelling in Hip Hop is one way that rappers can influence listeners; the idea of meeting them in the spaces that they are presently in, to feel more relatable. On a smaller scale, Hip Hop has been a tool incorporated in the classroom to deliver messages to students and help students to learn. Hip Hop spans from small lessons without much depth to sociopolitical issues that impact their communities and subsequently, the world. Hip Hop messages are sometimes considered to be harsh, and even exaggerated, this is done in order to convey the importance of their messages.

Because Hip Hop discusses the hardships endured and addresses the struggles of the space that they are in, artists can appeal to their audience. Artists transcend into a space that exposes listeners to the struggles and difficulties that they may endure. Ultimately, this helps listeners to

understand the space that the artist is in, even if it is not relatable to the listener directly. It helps to promote well rounded individuals.

To create well-rounded and empathetic individuals, who can relate in every aspect of others' lives, Hip Hop must be a tool that is added to the classroom. For years, Hip Hop's aim has been to educate and expose the realities of street life, giving lessons on the importance of obtaining education, social education (discussing classism and other social realities), financial literacy, political education, and several other lessons. Artists have used this tool to present their listeners with a wake-up call, a message for change, and even the inspiration to change. By using their platform, artists can educate listeners, and this is a way to inspire change within the classroom.

In Slick Rick's "Children's Story" (1989), there is an exposition on a wayward youth who had his life taken because he was on the wrong path:

*He was only seventeen, in a madman's dream*

*The cops shot the kid, I still hear him scream*

These lines are still relevant today as these are stories that need to be conveyed within the classroom, as there are youth today being gunned down on the streets for various reasons. Lessons within the classroom should shift from the basic education of concepts and ideas towards an education on how to live.

In Jay Z's "The Story of O.J.", there is a clear focus on fiscal education and financial literacy. Shawn Carter's goal in this record is to teach the importance of investing to his audience. This is done through the method of storytelling. Jay Z emphasizes the importance of financial responsibility while telling a story. "You wanna know what's more important than throwin' away

money at a strip club? Credit” and with an explanation to follow “I bought some artwork for one million/Two years later, that [art] worth two million/Few years later, that [art] worth eight million”.

Most importantly is the emphasis on real life applications taught through Hip Hop. With storytelling being the method of delivery, we are able to make a space for Hip Hop within the classroom, creating a way to present it to those unfamiliar to it. In fact, considering the multiple styles of Hip Hop, and the messages delivered, it seems the lessons in the rap lyrics can be used across multiple disciplines to teach life skills and social methods. Ultimately, this will allow Hip Hop to thrive. Being able to compile the ideas of learning with artistry is a surefire way to keep Hip Hop alive, allowing it to grow and reach the masses.

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**About OSP**

The TRiO-Opportunity Scholars Program (OSP) provides academic support and services to encourage student success at the University of South Carolina by creating a small college atmosphere, allowing students to take core freshman-level classes from faculty and staff especially prepared to meet the needs and concerns of our OSP students. The program provides tutoring assistance, academic advising, and guidance on undergraduate research and study abroad opportunities, mentoring, workshops, and cultural enrichment opportunities. Additionally, freshmen taking three or more OSP courses receive significant tuition reduction.

**OSP Website &  
Contact Info.**

<http://www.sc.edu/trio/OSP.html>

1400 Wheat Street | Columbia, SC 29208| Phone: (803)777-5125|  
Fax: (803)777-7380

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