‘The Word on the Street’ kicks off National Poetry Month
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Dismissing UConn is subtle sexism
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Potential registration policy worries students
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Delightfully Southern and creative in character, the city of Augusta, Georgia, lies near the border of South Carolina, just across the Savannah River.

Many know of Augusta because it is home to the Master's Golf Tournament, a highly popular and prestigious golfing competition that brings out visitors and locals alike.

However, Augusta is home to more than golf. Packed with unique restaurants, beautiful parks and a thriving nightlife, this city offers something for every interest.

Downtown Augusta offers original cuisine at restaurants such as The Bee's Knees, which has an international menu ranging from chicken and waffles to buffalo tempeh. Other spots, such as Rhinehart's and Beamie's, serve delicious down-home Southern seafood, are also located in the heart of downtown Augusta.

For music lovers, plenty of performances are held at The Country Club Dance Hall & Saloon and Jessye Norman School of the Arts. Artists with styles ranging from jazz to country to rock frequent this popular city. Visiting acts often include Cody Webb, Widespread Panic, Rascal Flatts, Sara Evans and Babyface with Tank.

There is also a music series at the Augusta Market called Saturday Morning Swing. Featuring jazz musicians and performing arts groups every week, this series allows the public to enjoy music while shopping at the market for locally grown produce and handmade goods.

For those who enjoy the outdoors, Augusta provides family-friendly parks and trails to take advantage of. A local favorite is the Augusta Riverwalk near the downtown area. The riverwalk features a paved path alongside the Savannah River with swings, play areas, beautiful landscaping and scenery that offers the ideal spot to unwind and relax in nature.

Phinizy Swamp Nature Park is another option for getting outside, with paths to view ponds around the park and the birds, fish and other creatures that frequent them. Stop by in the early morning for the sunrise, or later in the afternoon around dusk to catch a beautiful sunset reflected on the waters, a chorus of birds singing and maybe even an alligator among the reeds.

When it comes to nightlife, Augusta has options for those who enjoy sitting and sipping a nice drink or going out to dance. Blue Sky Kitchen and Bar in downtown Augusta is a quirky, fun place to sit with friends, enjoy a drink and perhaps hear some live music. The Loft, also downtown, is a bit more lively and includes pool tables, live music on weekends and karaoke weekdays.

No matter what the occasion, a trip to Augusta allows visitors the opportunity to explore a thriving city and enjoy the many attractions it has to offer.
A group of sisters from Epsilon Sigma Alpha heads to Memphis, Tennessee, this weekend to volunteer with the patients and staff at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

ESA is a service sorority on campus whose main philanthropy is St. Jude hospital. Because of St. Jude’s long bond with ESA, the hospital has a hall dedicated to the sorority.

Later this week, the ESA sisters will finally get a firsthand look at what their year-round fundraising for St. Jude does. The sisters will leave for Memphis on Thursday to serve on the hospital’s campus, talk to the doctors and explore the city.

Lauren Strzyzewski, third-year biology and psychology student and St. Jude co-chair for ESA, said it is important for her sorority sisters to experience this trip.

“I think it’s important and good for our girls to go and see what our work goes into,” Strzyzewski said. “I feel like any time you experience that tangible moment that you’re really doing something for them, I feel like that will motivate sisters more to have a better year next year.”

Strzyzewski said the sisters spend all year fundraising for St. Jude. This year, ESA put on a bingo tournament, numerous percent nights and a “Rock-athon” to raise money for the hospital.

Chelsie Caizzi, fourth-year public health student and marketing chair, said she is looking forward to seeing the direct impact the sorority’s fundraising has made on St. Jude. Having her sisters with her will be a great bonus.

“I’m looking most forward to meeting some of the patients that we help and seeing the hospital!” Caizzi said. “ESA owns a wing of the hospital so I’m especially excited to see that and spend some bonding time with the other sisters going on the trip, especially since it is my last semester.”

Caizzi said she hopes seeing the benefits that her and her sisters’ efforts go toward will motivate them to raise even more money in the future.

Katherine Heyward, fourth-year public relations student and vice president of ESA, said that during her past trips she enjoyed seeing how their fundraising efforts helped the patients and their families. Although she is unable to go to St. Jude this year, Heyward said she hopes her sorority sisters have an inspiring experience.

“I hope that the sisters going on this year’s trip will gain a better understanding of what these children and their families go through,” Heyward said. “I hope that they have the opportunity to see how much this hospital does and gives to them.”
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Coming into the Garnet and Black Game, there are some obvious questions. Will new head coach Will Muschamp and his coaching staff make an immediate positive impact come September? Who’s going to start at quarterback? Who’s going to be the main weapon on offense? But among these broader questions are more pressing and specific issues that could be addressed during the spring game.

Will the defense get more than 20 sacks this year? For the past two years since the departure of Jadeveon Clowney, the pass rush has been severely lacking. In 2014, the defense registered only 14 sacks, dead last in the SEC. Former head coach Steve Spurrier attempted to address the issue by recruiting top-tier defensive line talent, like junior college transfers Marquavius Lewis (a five-star by Scout.com) and Dante Sawyer and freshmen four-star prospects Shameik Blackshear and Dexter Wideman. However, the improvements were marginal. The Gamecocks only had 20 sacks all season, good for third-to-last in the SEC. South Carolina will have to pressure the quarterback in to win games next year. While we won’t see redshirt senior Darius English, who lead the team in sacks with 4.5 last year, junior Dante Sawyer and sophomore Blackshear on the line due to injury, there is still plenty of talent to watch out for. Lewis, senior Kelsey Griffin, junior Taylor Stallworth, sophomore Boosie Whitlow, Wideman and freshmen Kobe Smith and Keir Thomas will all play this spring. The Garnet and Black game will be a good way to determine the pass rush this upcoming season.

Who’s going to catch the ball? With departures of Pharoh Cooper and Jerell Adams to the NFL draft and D.J. Neal to transfer, there is a giant gap in the receiver position. Between the goblets of young talent at the receiver and tight end position, the obvious choice is redshirt sophomore Deebo Samuel. He reeled in 12 catches for 161 yards and a touchdown, but he was injured for most of the season and only played in five games. He showcased his talent against Clemson when he caught five passes for 104 yards and a touchdown. True freshman and in-state talent Bryan Edwards is expected to start, but like any other true freshman, nobody knows how his high school talent will transfer to the collegiate level. Behind him, redshirt senior Matrick Belton and redshirt sophomore Terry Googer could use their size to their advantage and potentially earn a spot in the starting lineup; however, they haven’t seen the field much, and Googer might not play in the game due to an ankle sprain. Redshirt freshman Christian Owens was a highly rated receiver coming out of high school and could use the Garnet and Black game to springboard himself into the rotation. Sophomore and former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Hayden Hurst will be running routes out of his tight end position and will be a big target for whomever slings the pigskin this fall.

Who steps up in the secondary? Right now, nobody has a clear lead in any of the secondary positions, and it seems as though coach Muschamp sees everyone as equal talent. On the first team, sophomore Rashad Fenton and redshirt senior Rico McWilliams will be the cornerbacks and redshirt juniors Jasper Sasser and Toure Boyd will man the safety spots. With that being said, those playing behind the expected starters are a mixture of experienced players and young talent. Junior D.J. Smith saw the field every game last year and recorded 22 tackles. Junior Chris Lammons has played in games since he was a true freshman and is the only returning member of the secondary with an interception. Redshirt senior Chaz Elder has logged downs in 26 games at safety. Throw in a couple of new guys in freshmen Chris Smith and Antoine Wilder, who was redshirted last year to help rehab his knee, and the field will be very competitive. One thing Muschamp will be looking for is someone who brings confidence and swagger to the field, a player who can play like their coach used to back in his safety days at Georgia.
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University of South Carolina students were treated to a free concert by indie pop artist BØRNS on Wednesday afternoon, courtesy of Carolina Productions.

The concert took place on Greene Street at 5:30 p.m., lasted about half an hour and featured performances of some of BØRNS’ most well-known tracks, such as the singer’s 2015 single “Electric Love.”

Second-year business student Luke Bartels found that attending the concert was a good way to get in the mindset for upcoming events. “I’ve got a hockey game later — [the concert] is a good way to prepare for it,” Bartels said.

A Michigan native, BØRNS now resides in Los Angeles to focus on his musical pursuits. BØRNS collaborated with Tommy English and Kennedy to release his “Candy” EP in 2014. This EP brought recognition for his catchy, indie pop sound, inspired by his newfound love for the West Coast. Since his first release, BØRNS’ career for some time, like Small, discovering that he was coming to USC was an exciting moment.

Carolina Productions was originally planning on bringing BØRNS to campus in the fall. However, they discovered that the radio station WARQ was planning on bringing BØRNS to Columbia in the spring, and that they were only lacking a venue. Carolina Productions took advantage of this opportunity and partnered with WARQ to bring the concert to campus in the spring rather than in fall, sparking this seemingly spontaneous concert.

Stephen Simmons, president of Carolina Productions and third-year advertising and media arts student, hopes that this concert will strengthen outside partnerships and increase student engagement with the organization.

“Well, what I hope this’ll do is show them that Carolina Productions is an organization that’s very willing to partner with outside groups,” Simmons said. “We’re very willing to work to put on spontaneous and really awesome events. And hopefully it’ll kind of get their interest as an organization that both that they can partner with and they can be a part of.”

Alondra De La Rosa contributed to the reporting for this article.
Columbia will be hosting its monthly First Thursday on Main event on Thursday featuring “The Word on the Street,” a free concert to celebrate National Poetry Month.

The concert, which will take place downtown on the 1100 block of Hampton Street in front of Boyd Plaza, kicks off at 6 p.m. and will include live music, art and poetry.

“We’ve got a stage that’s going to be out there with lots of music and then poetry readings by about six poets of varying styles,” said Lee Snelgrove, the executive director of One Columbia for Arts and History. “There will be some food and drink out there, and on the plaza we will have a few different groups.”

According to Snelgrove, Richland Library will be there for people to make their own poetry buttons; the Mini Maker Faire will be there for people to create works of art out of wires and other items; Izms of Art will exhibit the work of three different artists; and the Anastasia & Friends gallery in the Free Times lobby will display an Indie Grits art installation.

“I’m partial to the art,” Snelgrove said when asked his favorite part about First Thursday. “I think that it’s great to see artists come out and ... create things.”

The musical lineup for Thursday’s concert includes Jade Janay Blocker at 6:30 p.m., John the Revelator at 7:30 p.m. and Othello’s Delight at 8:30 p.m. Poets of the evening include Debra McQueen, Mason Dixon, Jennifer Bartell, Len Lawson, Cassie Premo Steele and Al Black.

One Columbia is presenting the event along with local dive bar The Whig, which will also be hosting its monthly tap takeover featuring “snacks, taps and hijinks.” Snelgrove said that in celebration of National Poetry Month, proceeds from sales by The Whig will benefit the annual Deckle Edge Literary Festival.

The concert is part of the city’s First Thursday on Main event, a festival celebrated on the first Thursday of each month featuring specials on dining, shopping and art from local businesses as well as live entertainment. This Thursday’s event will begin at 6 p.m. and will take place from the 1200 to 1700 blocks on Main Street — come April showers or sunshine.

“Typically First Thursdays are plagued with rainy weather,” Snelgrove said. “But it’s always a good time.”
When Bill Belichick and Tom Brady dominated the football in the early 2000s, they were celebrated. Michael Jordan’s three-peats in the NBA have been revered. The Braves’ streak of 14 consecutive division titles has been admired, and even the dominance of the Yankees, baseball’s villains, commands respect. Before his shocking drop-off, Tiger Woods’ run atop the leaderboards was the only reason people tuned in to watch golf.

Yet now that the Connecticut women’s basketball team was bathed in confetti for their fourth consecutive “Shining Moment,” debates have arisen regarding whether or not the Huskies are bad for the sport. Despite the beautiful display of basketball put on by the team’s trio of Breanna Stewart, Moriah Jefferson and Morgan Tuck; despite that professionalism of long-time coach Geno Auriemma; and despite a run unprecedented in any major sport, there are plenty of people out there willing to argue that this team has ruined the sport of women’s college basketball.

With Tuesday’s 82-51 win over Syracuse, the Huskies became the only women’s basketball team to raise the trophy four consecutive times. Auriemma’s squad has now won 73 consecutive games, a streak that pales in comparison to their 90-game streak from 2008 to 2010, the longest in any major sport. Led by Maya Moore, those UConn teams surpassed UCLA’s 88-game streak from 1971 to 1974, when legendary coach John Wooden was at the helm. The respect for Wooden is unquestionable, considering that the most prestigious award in college basketball is named after him.

The casual sports fan sees the absurd margins of victory the Huskies put up on a nightly basis and use them as excuses to write off the sport as a whole. Mississippi State was ranked 15th in the nation coming into the NCAA Tournament, but their season came to an end in a humiliating fashion, failing to score more than eight points in each of the first three quarters in a 98-38 rout. That Bulldogs team was one of the better teams in the country, featuring the SEC’s second-leading scorer, Victoria Vivians, and Morgan William, who ranked second in the conference in assists per game. Mississippi State also boasted two wins over Tennessee, who made an appearance in this season’s Elite Eight.

Even the best of the best in terms of competition were unable to stack up to the Huskies this season. Connecticut blew out Ohio State 100-56 in Columbus before defeating Notre Dame at home and South Carolina at Colonial Life Arena by 10 and 12 points, respectively. The Huskies won every game this season by double digits, including 25 victories of at least 40 points. This dominance is not just because of a lack of parity in women’s basketball; it’s simply because Connecticut is that good. The Huskies were the only number one seed in this year’s Final Four, as South Carolina and Notre Dame were upset in the Sweet Sixteen, and Baylor fell in the Elite Eight. The sport doesn’t just have a few teams that blow everyone else out of the water; UConn is so talented, and Auriemma is such a mastermind, that the team has reached a class of their own.

Every time the Huskies stepped onto the floor this season, there was potential for history to be made. The departing senior class lost just five games over the course of four seasons, four of which came in their first season. The team has lost just one game since over the last three seasons, going 116-1 over that span. In men’s sports, when teams or individuals reach that level of greatness, it prompts fans to pay closer attention, as was the case when the Golden State Warriors dominated the NBA in the early part of this regular season. However, with the UConn women, their incredible display of basketball dominance turns fans away, which begs the question: Why is this the case in women’s sports, but not men’s?

SB Nation’s Rodger Sherman offered his answer to that question with a headline last week following the Huskies’ dominant win over Mississippi State. It read, “Saying UConn hurts women’s basketball is misogyny disguised as legitimate sports opinion.” That is a pretty bold statement, but because of all of the revered sports dynasties I
mentioned earlier, it certainly has merit.

The opposing argument is easy to make, as Connecticut’s dominant victories don’t exactly resemble competitive basketball. The Huskies demolish almost every opponent that stands between them and the national title, and the lack of close games can be seen as dull by some. However, the pure basketball excellence that Auriemma and his girls have put on display over the course of, not only one season, but the last decade is a privilege to watch. The Huskies have won six of the last eight championships, and they haven’t missed the Final Four since the 2006-07 season. Stars like Diana Taurasi, Tina Charles and Sue Bird excelled in Storrs before anyone knew the names Stewart, Jefferson and Tuck. This season, the superstar trio combined for 45.7 points, 16.9 rebounds and 13 assists per game, and each shot at least 51 percent from the field. As a team, the Huskies shot 80 percent from the free throw line, which is nothing short of phenomenal. For comparison, the New York Knicks and San Antonio Spurs are the only NBA teams shooting a better clip from the line this season, and both teams are converting 80.6 percent.

With five players who can shoot, pass and drive, the latest team in the UConn dynasty turned basketball into an art form, which should be admired by all basketball fans. However, many still believe the Huskies are bad for the sport of women’s basketball. So, the next time you hear someone argue that Auriemma’s team is ruining the entire sport, think about how people would react if this was a men’s basketball team, dominating like Wooden’s clubs at UCLA. Consider how the UConn legacy would be written if the players didn’t wear their hair in ponytails, and their stars weren’t named Breanna, Morgan and Moriah.
Prized quarterback enrolls early

Will Muschamp’s program will add yet another talented young quarterback in 2016 to an already robust crop. The highly touted Jake Bentley, ranked the No. 2 pocket passer quarterback in the class of 2017 per ESPN, has announced that he will reclassify as a 2016 recruit and enroll at South Carolina this summer.

Bentley will graduate a year early from Opelika High School in Alabama and will forgo his senior season there. Bentley made his announcement on Twitter and said, “God has prepared me for this moment and I am ready for the next step in my life. Things happen for a reason and I am ready to join Gamecock Nation this summer.”

Bentley is the son of new running backs coach Bobby Bentley. South Carolina currently has four other quarterbacks who took snaps last season and remain on the roster: rising senior Perry Orth, rising junior Connor Mitch, rising sophomore Lorenzo Nunez and rising sophomore Michael Scarneceha. They also will have freshman Brandon McIlwain, who has been receiving a healthy share of snaps this spring and is considered to be one of the favorites to land the starting job.

How Bentley factors into the mix next season remains unclear. It has been speculated that South Carolina might try to redshirt him, but this is clearly a significant development for the program. Getting Bentley immersed in the program at such an early stage should allow the Gamecocks to speed up his development.

Bentley’s decision to enroll a full year ahead of schedule is essentially a nearly unprecedented move. The last time a quarterback prospect bypassed his senior high school season to enroll at a power-five program was back in 2003 when John David Booty went to the University of Southern California.

---

Getting to Know Jake Bentley

**Awards**

- Four-star prospect by ESPN and 247 Sports
- Ranked No. 33 prospect in 2017 by ESPN
- Ranked No. 2 pocket passer QB by ESPN
- Ranked No. 198 prospect by in 2017 by 247
- Ranked No. 10 pro-style QB by 247

**Stats**

- Height: 6-4
- Weight: 219
- Position: Pro-style quarterback
- Home: Opelika, Alabama
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- Primary Recruiter: Kurt Roper
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Column: Governments should respect history

If sipping a sangria in the remains of a former concentration camp is a dream of yours, it’s about to come true. The Montenegrin government has approved plans for an island that once imprisoned Holocaust victims to be transformed into a resort, and the locals are outraged.

The small island of Mamula is currently uninhabited, but during World War II, it was used as a concentration camp and was maintained by Italian troops under the rule of Mussolini. Nearly 2,300 local people were held captive here during the Holocaust, and about 130 of them died from killings or starvation.

Like several other former concentration camps in Europe, the island has been left to the elements of nature. It stands alone, crumbling in commemoration of its dark past. But rather than let it deteriorate completely, the Montenegrin government wants to bring people back onto it by turning it into a high-end resort. And by “resort,” they are not referring to a calm atmosphere to soak in the solemnity. No, this particular resort will feature DJs and nightclubs, spas, shopping and a marina-jetty. After all, would any concentration camp experience be complete without a place to show off your yacht?

The Montenegrin government believes it will be a huge economic boost and hopes the island will help bring business and tourism into the Adriatic Sea. However, to those truly affected, the decision feels like a slap in the face. Many locals have lost fathers and grandfathers in the history of this island, and knowing it will soon become a mere tourist hub is despicable. The only attempt made to help satisfy the locals was the agreement to feature a memorial room honoring the deceased. Surely tourists will visit it between daiquiris and truly understand the history behind the soil on which they stand.

After the Holocaust, mankind swore that it would never happen again. Yet the ignorance to history travels far beyond the island’s shores. If it truly does become a resort, what does that say to the world? U.S. students learn how Native Americans were mistreated throughout history, yet present ideas will still harm them. The border wall with Mexico, for example, has already divided Native American tribes. Now there is talk of expanding this wall, which will harm both wildlife and the local economy of towns near the border. Like Mamula, the government uses the possibility of small margins of growth at the large expense of those who live locally. It’s important that as citizens we acknowledge the stance of those harmed in the past and do not allow these abuses to repeat.

— Stephanie Woronko, first-year public relations student

“The Montenegrin government believes it will be a huge economic boost and hopes the island will help bring business and tourism into the Adriatic Sea. However, to those truly affected, the decision feels like a slap in the face.”
Model CASTING CALL

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Cayce Cove Student Housing is seeking attractive men and women ages 18-22 for a professional photo shoot.

Photos will be used in national advertising and marketing materials. Selected models will receive a $25 VISA gift card as compensation. The tentative date for the photo shoot is Tuesday, April 19 and talent must be available all day.

Photos may also be submitted for consideration to: caycecove@peshmgmt.com

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Potential registration policy threatens privacy

“I understand that the University may contact me at the telephone number(s) provided in SSC. By providing the telephone numbers, I understand, agree and give express consent that the University of South Carolina or anyone working on the University’s behalf, including third party vendors, may contact me at the number(s) provided by manually dialing the number or by using automated dialing technology.”

— Student Statement of Financial Responsibility,
Bursar’s Office

In the midst of registration season, a possible new university policy is cause for worry among students.

A Student Statement of Financial Responsibility has been drafted and issued by the Bursar’s Office and authorized by the vice president for finance and chief financial officer. This policy would have to be signed by students prior to course registration. Without signing, they could not register for classes.

The draft contains policies that are not yet in effect, but the outlined policies address procedures regarding student telephone numbers. What strikes students as disconcerting is the potential policy’s language.

It requires that students “give express consent” not just to the university, but to “third party vendors,” to access their phone numbers at any point.

Student phone numbers are already on file with the university. However, the idea of “third party vendors” having access to student phone numbers, with no explicitly written limitation, is the concerning part for several.

An additional concerning factor for students is that they had never seen or heard of the third party aspect of the policy. It is not listed in the USC Policies and Procedures Manual on the university website. If it goes into effect, even if students are aware of it, they can’t refuse to sign because they would not be able to register for classes until they agreed to it.

The prospective policy took first-year public health student Tara Suhs by surprise.

“It’s kind of unnerving to me that they’re just handing out contact information for just anybody … It just makes me nervous,” Suhs said. “I don’t understand what their benefit is from it.”

First-year biology student Jessica Suggs was not as taken aback.

“I’m not surprised, frankly,” she said. “You see this in every single thing you ever have to provide your phone number for.”

Suggs also suggested that third party vendors could possibly include potential internships, job interviews or other opportunities that students would choose for their ultimate benefit.

“But, frankly, anybody can get hold of your phone number. All they have to do is start dialing random numbers, so it really doesn’t do you any good regardless,” Suggs said. “All you’re saying is that if you start getting random phone calls, it’s legal.”

Another concerned student is third-year mass communications student Alexandra Bentzlin, who brought up the ambiguity of the policy.

“That doesn’t seem right if they don’t mention who [third party vendors] are,” Bentzlin said. “I don’t want people having my number that I don’t know about. I mean, it’s one thing if the university does, but if they don’t mention who these third parties are, that’s definitely concerning.”

The Daily Gamecock has reached out to the university for comment.
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Once upon a storyteller

Emily Barber
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Children love stories. Parents tell stories when children are scared or when it’s bedtime. And at some point, children outgrow stories.

For local actor and storyteller Darion McCloud, this is not the case. He tells stories professionally and regularly dresses up in a cape to perform as his super hero alter ego with his storytelling group, Story Squad.

As part of the Leadership and Service Center’s “Community Pathfinders” series, McCloud discussed his thoughts on the connection between stories and leadership.

One of McCloud’s goals through storytelling is to reduce illiteracy throughout South Carolina. He defines literacy not only as the ability to read, but also as the ability to understand and conceptualize the contents.

“For me, that’s what literature really is — the ideas, the concepts of what these words represent,” he said.

McCloud thinks that although social media has given people greater capacity to communicate, it has also made the communication shallow. It is tempting to not question online speakers’ claims, but achieving better things in life requires more understanding.

“The world kind of demands that we go deeper,” McCloud said. “So a lot of what I do is exploring the idea, the concept, of literacy in its different forms.”

Literacy is not limited to written or spoken word. According to McCloud any form of art is also a form of storytelling, whether it is digital or visual pieces or a physical performance, such as dance.

When discussing political campaigns, he asserted that they are nothing more than carefully told stories designed to convince people that a given candidate is the best.

McCloud took this argument further and said that everyone is always telling stories, whether by literally telling a friend something that happened or by presenting themselves in a certain way.

“We have been telling stories since before there was spoken language,” he said. “We have been telling stories forever. It’s in our DNA.”

A person’s ability to tell their own story is vital. When someone can’t speak for themselves, McCloud says, someone else ends up speaking for them, and this eventually leads to stereotyping. He describes stereotypes as “anti-storytelling,” an inaccurate, lazy way of telling a story that belongs to someone else. He discussed the many ways in which people had made assumptions about him because of his skin color, his voice or his clothes.

“They don’t know anything about me,” he said. “But they have melted me down to these stories that they are comfortable with to define me.”

While storytelling can be highly individual and self-declarative, McCloud loves it because it fosters such a sense of togetherness. He recounted a performance he gave nearly 20 years ago to a room packed so tightly that he had to step over children on his way to the stage.

“There are moments of it I can remember crystal clear, because we were such community,” he said. “It felt like magic because we were sharing ... All of us were sharing at the same time.”

McCloud discussed a phenomenon he had heard of called “mirroring,” in which, while a storyteller is performing, very particular parts of his brain are engaged, and when he is telling the story well, the viewers’ brains are activated in the same areas. To him, this is aspect of storytelling that makes it valuable.

Story Squad, the storytelling group of “superheroes” that he started in 2012, works to put this shared experience to use. They aim to engage families, from the youngest to the oldest members, and McCloud believes that involving parents in literacy will lead to more literate children.

“Basically, it’s a rock band for families,” he said, “that’ll take Mother Goose and smash her up with old-school funk to some newer hip-hop ... It’s all over the place.”

The group performs mainly at schools, festivals and larger libraries. As the founder and leader, McCloud performs as “The Captain” and wears a cape when he’s in character. He said that part of why he wears the cape is to represent the service aspect of their work. He encouraged students to add service to their lives, even amid the chaos of college life.

“If you are a leader, you are serving people, in the abstract and in the practical,” he said. “It’s never too early to serve ... It’s actually easy to just put it in your life. Think about what’s important to you.”

McCloud’s service is his storytelling, sometimes just to entertain people, but more often to connect people and to challenge them. Just as storytelling gives him joy, he thinks that different types of service could give joy to others.

“There have been times in my own life where things have been — whatever you want to call them, rough, dark, challenging, whatever — where sometimes service has really been the bright light for me,” he said.
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