### PART 1 IS THE FRAMING

**I interpret the resolution through the lens of Science Fiction. Under my framing, the choice of whether to embrace or reject the use of speech restrictions on college campuses emerges in the context of Octavia Butler’s 1984 Science Fiction story, “Speech Sounds.” The norm for LD debate is that we consider resolutions as if they were current congressional policies and that the judge votes for the debater who proves which policy would be better. However, my AFF shifts the paradigm for the debate. Instead of considering the resolution merely in the status-quo, we gain insight from the futuristic world of “Speech Sounds”—ultimately to inform our current policy-making. Thus, I defend that public colleges and universities in the United States ought not restrict constitutionally protected free speech. Though futuristic, this world is not so far away; right now, free speech restrictions are expanding to the point of no return. It’s a question of whether we want to communicate at all. Wizner.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Such repellent speech would be illegal in many countries – and **calls to impose limits on** offensive **speech** here **in the U**nited **S**tates **have come from all sides of the political spectrum.** Some have advocated restrictions on speech that demeans vulnerable minority groups. Others have advocated restrictions on speech by minority groups that calls for violence against the majority. But **virtually every proposal to limit offensive speech shares a common attribute**: its proponents are **confiden[ce] that** if we give the government the authority to prohibit the speech they disfavor, **the government will use that authority in the manner [as] the proponents intended**. They are almost certainly wrong. The truth is that **when the government gets to decide which speech is permissible, its exercise of that authority is almost always driven by political considerations, not principled distinctions.** And those who proposed the restrictions often come to regret it. **Would-be government censors have sought to prohibit speech hostile to gays and lesbians** – and **speech supportive of gay rights**. They have sought to interfere with speech promoting religion – **and speech attacking religion**. **They have barred anti-abortion protests** near abortion clinics – and barred doctors from providing patients with information about legal abortion. **They have prosecuted citizens for burning flags** – and for displaying flags. Indeed, the only thing predictable about giving the government the power to censor speech is that it will use that power unpredictably. The founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, Roger Baldwin, put it well when he said, “In order to defend the people you like, you have to defend the people you hate.” It would be dishonest to deny that permitting grossly offensive speech can exact a high cost. As Georgetown Law School Professor David Cole has written, “free speech is not free.” When, as in the case of Rushdie, that cost includes the death of innocents, it’s understandable that some people question the price. But the alternative – **empowering the government to suppress speech** because of its potential to provoke violent reactions – **is** far more **dangerous.** **A society in which provocative speech could be punished would be a society without controversial politics, or art, or ideas. It would be a society in which citizens feared expressing dissident thoughts.** In short, it would be a society wholly alien to America’s founders who, after all, had some pretty provocative ideas of their own.

**Accordingly, the dystopian – but not so far off – society in “Speech Sounds” is the perfect location for an analysis of speech restrictions on college campuses. Thus, the affirmative burden is to prove that public colleges and universities ought not restrict constitutionally protected free speech. The negative burden is to prove the converse. The way we determine whether there should be free speech or not is by whoever best methodologically challenges dominant power structures. The debate space has failed in breaking down the structures of race by excluding discussion-now. Reid-Brinkley[[2]](#footnote-2)**

**Lack of community discussion is neither random nor power-neutral. We have tried to have discussions.  These** **discussions have been regularly derailed—in “wrong forum” arguments, in the demand for “evidence,” in the unfair burdens placed on the aggrieved as a pre-requisite for engagement.** Read the last ten years of these discussions on edebate archives: Ede Warner on edebate and move forward to Rashad Evans diversity discussion from 2010 to Deven Cooper to Amber Kelsie’s discussion on CEDA Forums and the NDT CEDA Traditions page. We have been talking for over a decade, we have been reaching out for years, we have been listening to the liberal, moderate refrain of “we agree with your goals but not with your method.” **We will no longer wait for the community to respond, to relinquish privilege, to engage in authentic discussion, since largely the community seems incapable of producing a consensus for responding to what “we all agree” is blatant structural inequity**. It seems that meta-debates/discussions about debate are generally met with denial, hostility and—more often—silence.  This silence is in fact a focused silence.  It is not people in the Resistance Facebook group that comprise these silent figures—it is (as has been described) “the old boys club.”  **We have been quite vocal—and we believe that it is this very vocalness (and the development of a diversity of tactics in response to status quo stalling tactics) that has provoked response when response was given.** Sarah Spring’s cedadebate post is a case in point.  The decision to change our speaker point scale is not in order to produce a “judging doomsday apparatus**” (this kind of apocalyptic rhetoric might more aptly be applied to the current racist/sexist/classist state of affairs in this community), though we must admit that we are flattered that our efforts have affected the community enough to result in such a hyberbolic labeling.  It indicates that civil disobedience is still an effective tactic; the debate community should take it as an indication that our calls for change are serious.** We will continue to innovate and collaborate on tactics of resistance. This “crisis” in debate has no end in sight. The rationale for changing the point scale was not simply to “reward” people for preferring the unpreferred critic.  We recognize that MPJ produces effects, and we hoped that changing our point scale was a small but significant tactic that was available to the disenfranchised in this community.  MPJ: A)   Limits judging opportunities for blacks, browns, and womyn B)   Limits opportunities for debaters who are (and are not) black, brown, and womyn to be judged by such critics. The effect is:  A)   That the evaluations of these categorically marginalized critics are deemed not valuable or costly. B)   That the debate efforts of categorically marginalized debaters are deemed not valuable. We believe that debaters deserve to have black, brown, and womyn critics (in general debaters should be judged by multiply situated critics across varying social locations). We think the community deserves to know what we have to say.  Therefore, it seemed appropriate in this context to play the discriminative logics at work against themselves by demonstrating just what “value” or “cost” our evaluations could have.  We worked with the limited options available to us. **It seems this system works as long as it is comfortable for the majority or the major powerbrokers.  The community pays lip service to, or simply ignores, the concerns of those for whom this system is not working.** Now it is everyone’s concern. To be clear: we did not alter our point scale because we believe we are not preferred for unjust reasons (we know we are not preferred for unjust reasons), but because the system produces the effect of magnifying and enforcing on a social scale the delegitimation of blacks, browns, and womyn.  We think **this is a question** of ethics and a question **of pedagogy**; it is something that stunts the growth of all members of this community regardless of identity or social positioning.

### PART 2 IS SPEECH SOUNDS[[3]](#footnote-3):

**There was trouble aboard the Washington Boulevard bus.** **Rye had expected trouble sooner or later in her journey.** She had put off going until loneliness and hopelessness drove her out. She believed she might have one group of relatives left alive—a brother and his two children twenty miles away in Pasadena. That was a day’s journey one-way, if she were lucky. The unexpected arrival of the bus as she left her Virginia Road home had seemed to be a piece of luck—until the trouble began. **Two young men were involved in a disagreement** of some kind, **or, more likely, a misunderstanding.** They stood in the aisle, grunting and gesturing at each other, each in his own uncertain T stance as the bus lurched over the potholes. The driver seemed to be putting some effort into keeping them off balance. Still, **their gestures stopped just short of contact**—mock punches, hand games of intimidation to replace lost curses. People watched the pair, then looked at one another and made small anxious sounds. Two children whimpered. **Rye sat a few feet behind the disputants** and across from the back door. She watched the two carefully, **knowing the fight would begin when** someone’s nerve broke or someone’s hand slipped or **someone came to the end of his limited ability to communicate**. These things could happen anytime. One of them happened as **the bus hit an especially large pothole and one man, tall, thin, and sneering, was thrown into his shorter opponent. Instantly, the shorter man drove his left fist into the disintegrating sneer.** He hammered his larger opponent as though he neither had nor needed any weapon other than his left fist. He hit quickly enough, hard enough to batter his opponent down before the taller man could regain his balance or hit back even once. People screamed or squawked in fear. Those nearby scrambled to get out of the way. **Three more young men roared in excitement and gestured wildly. Then, somehow, a second dispute broke out between two of these three—probably because one inadvertently touched or hit the other**. As the second fight scattered frightened passengers, a woman shook the driver’s shoulder and grunted as she gestured toward the fighting. The driver grunted back through bared teeth. Frightened, the woman drew away. Speech Sounds—2 **Rye, knowing the methods of bus drivers, braced herself and held on to the crossbar of the seat in front of her.** **When the driver hit the brakes, she was ready and the combatants were not. They fell over seats and onto screaming passengers, creating even more confusion. At least one more fight started.** The instant the bus came to a full stop, **Rye was on her feet, pushing the back door. At the second push, it opened and she jumped out**, holding her pack in one arm. Several other passengers followed, but some stayed on the bus. Buses were so rare and irregular now, people rode when they could, no matter what. There might not be another bus today—or tomorrow. People started walking, and if they saw a bus they flagged it down. People making intercity trips like Rye’s from Los Angeles to Pasadena made plans to camp out, or risked seeking shelter with locals who might rob or murder them. The bus did not move, but Rye moved away from it. She intended to wait until the trouble was over and get on again, but if there was shooting, she wanted the protection of a tree.Thus, **she was near the curb when a battered blue Ford on the other side of the street made a U-turn and pulled up in front of the bus.** Cars were rare these days—as rare as a severe shortage of fuel and of relatively unimpaired mechanics could make them. **Cars that still ran were as likely to be used as weapons as they were to serve as transportation.** Thus, **when the driver of the Ford beckoned to Rye, she moved away warily**. **The driver got out—a big man, young, neatly bearded with dark, thick hair.** He wore a long overcoat and a look of wariness that matched Rye’s. She stood several feet from him, waiting to see what he would do. He looked at the bus, now rocking with the combat inside, then at the small cluster of passengers who had gotten off. Finally **he looked at Rye again. She returned his gaze, very much aware of the old forty-five automatic her jacket concealed**. She watched his hands. **He pointed with his left hand toward the bus.** The dark-tinted windows prevented him from seeing what was happening inside. His use of the left hand interested Rye more than his obvious question. **Lefthanded people tended to be less impaired, more reasonable and comprehending, less driven by frustration, confusion, and anger.** She imitated his gesture, pointing toward the bus with her own left hand, then punching the air with both fists. **The man took off his coat revealing a Los Angeles Police Department uniform complete with baton and service revolver. Rye took another step back from him. There was no more LAPD, no more any large organization, governmental or private. There were neighborhood patrols and armed individuals. That was all.** Speech Sounds—3 The man took something from his coat pocket, then threw the coat into the car. Then he gestured Rye back, back, toward the rear of the bus. He had something made of plastic; in his hand. Rye did not understand what he wanted until he went to the rear door of the bus and beckoned her to stand there. She obeyed mainly out of curiosity. Cop or not, maybe he could do something to stop the stupid fighting. **He walked around the front of the bus, to the street side where the driver’s window was open.** There, **she** thought she **saw him throw** something into the bus. **She was still trying to peer through the tinted glass when people began stumbling out the rear door, choking and weeping. Gas.** Rye caught an old woman who would have fallen, lifted two little children down when they were in danger of being knocked down and trampled. She could see the bearded man helping people at the front door. She caught a thin old man shoved out by one of the combatants. Staggered by the old man’s weight, she was barely able to get out of the way as the last of the young men pushed his way out. This one, bleeding from nose and mouth, stumbled into another, and they grappled blindly, still sobbing from the gas. The bearded man helped the bus driver out through the front door, though the driver did not seem to appreciate his help. For a moment, Rye thought there would be another fight. **The bearded man stepped back and watched the driver gesture threateningly, watched him shout in wordless anger.** **The bearded man stood still, made no sound, refused to respond to clearly obscene gestures.** **The least impaired people tended to do this**—stand back unless they were physically threatened and let those with less control scream and jump around. It was as though they felt it beneath them to be as touchy as the less comprehending. This was an attitude of superiority, and that was the way people like the bus driver perceived it. Such “superiority” was frequently punished by beatings, even by death. Rye had had close calls of her own. As a result, she never went unarmed. And **in this world where the only likely common language was body language, being armed was often enough**. She had rarely had to draw her gun or even display it. The bearded man’s revolver was on constant display. Apparently that was enough for the bus driver. **The driver spat in disgust, glared at the bearded man for a moment longer, then strode back to his gas-filled bus.** He stared at it for a moment, clearly wanting to get in, but the gas was still too strong. Of the windows, only his tiny driver’s window actually opened. The front door was open, but the rear door would not stay open unless someone held it. Of course, the air conditioning had failed long ago. **The bus would take some time to clear. It was the driver’s property, his livelihood.** He had pasted old magazine pictures of items he would accept as fare on its sides. Then he would use what he collected to feed his family or to trade. **If his bus did not run, he did not eat. On the other hand, if the inside of his bus was torn apart by senseless fighting, he would not** Speech Sounds—4 **eat very well either**. He was apparently unable to perceive this. All he could see was that it would be some time before he could use his bus again. **He shook his fist at the bearded man and shouted**. There seemed to be words in his shout, but **Rye** could not understand them. She **did not know whether this was his fault or hers. She had heard so little coherent human speech for the past three years, she was no longer certain how well she recognized it, no longer certain of the degree of her own impairment.** The bearded man sighed. He glanced toward his car, then beckoned to Rye. He was ready to leave, but he wanted something from her first. No. No, he wanted her to leave with him. Risk getting into his car when, in spite of his uniform, **law and order were nothing—not even words any longer.** She shook her head in a universally understood negative, but the man continued to beckon. She waved him away. He was doing what the less impaired rarely did—drawing potentially negative attention to another of his kind. People from the bus had begun to look at her. **One of the men who had been fighting** tapped another on the arm, then pointed from the bearded man to. Rye, and finally held up the first two fingers of his right hand as though giving two-thirds of a Boy Scout salute. The gesture was very quick, its meaning obvious even at a distance. She had been grouped with the bearded man. Now what? The man who had made the gesture **started toward her**. She had no idea what he intended, but she stood her ground. The man was half a foot taller than she was and perhaps ten years younger. **She did not imagine she could outrun him. Nor did she expect anyone to help her if she needed help.** The people around her were all strangers. She gestured once—a clear indication to the man to stop. She did not intend to repeat the gesture. **Fortunately, the man obeyed. He gestured obscenely and several other men laughed. Loss of verbal language had spawned a whole new set of obscene gestures. The man**, with stark simplicity, **had accused her of sex with the bearded man and had suggested she accommodate the other men present—beginning with him.** Rye watched him wearily. **People might very well stand by and watch if he tried to rape her. They would also stand and watch her shoot him**. Would he push things that far? He did not. After a series of obscene gestures that brought him no closer to her, **he turned contemptuously and walked away.** Speech Sounds—5 And the bearded man still waited. He had removed his service revolver, holster and all. He beckoned again, both hands empty. No doubt his gun was in the car and within easy reach, but his taking it off impressed her. Maybe he was all right. Maybe he was just alone. **She had been alone herself for three years.** The illness had stripped her, killing her children one by one, killing her husband, her sister, her parents… The illness, if it was an illness, had cut even the living off from one another. As it swept over the country, **people hardly had time to lay blame** on the Soviets (though they were falling silent along with the rest of the world), on a new virus, a new pollutant, radiation, divine retribution… **The illness was stroke-swift in the way it cut people down and stroke-like in some of its effects**. But it was highly specific. **Language was always lost or severely impaired. It was never regained. Often there was also paralysis, intellectual impairment, death.** Rye walked toward the bearded man, ignoring the whistling and applauding of two of the young men and their thumbs-up signs to the bearded man. If he had smiled at them or acknowledged them in any way, she would almost certainly have changed her mind. If she had let herself think of the possible deadly consequences of getting into a stranger’s car, she would have changed her mind. Instead, she thought of the man who lived across the street from her. He rarely washed since his bout with the illness. And he had gotten into the habit of urinating wherever he happened to be. He had two women already—one tending each of his large gardens. They put up with him in exchangyhtgyhgtyhgtyhhtgyhgtyhgtyhtyyyyyyyyguuuuhiiike for his protection. He had made it clear that he wanted Rye to become his third woman. **She got into the car and the bearded man shut the door.** She watched as he walked around to the driver’s door—watched for his sake because his gun was on the seat beside her. And **the bus driver and a pair of young men had come a few steps closer**. They did nothing, though, until the bearded man was in the car. **Then one of them threw a rock**. Others followed his example, and **as the car drove away, several rocks bounced off harmlessly.** When the bus was some distance behind them, **Rye wiped sweat from her forehead and longed to relax. The bus would have taken her more than halfway to Pasadena. She would have had only ten miles to walk. She wondered how far she would have to walk now**—**and wondered if walking a long distance would be her only problem.** **At Figuroa and Washington** where the bus normally made a left turn, **the bearded man** stopped, looked at her, and **indicated that she should choose a direction. When she directed him left and he actually turned left, she began to relax.** If he was willing to go where she directed, perhaps he was safe. **As they passed blocks of burned, abandoned buildings, empty lots, and wrecked or stripped cars, he slipped a gold chain over his head and handed it to her. The pendant attached to it was a smooth, glassy, black rock. Obsidian. His name** Speech Sounds—6 **might be Rock or Peter or Black, but she decided to think of him as Obsidian**. Even her sometimes useless memory would retain a name like Obsidian. **She handed him her own name symbol—a pin in the shape of a large golden stalk of wheat.** She had bought it long before the illness and the silence began. **Now she wore it, thinking it was as close as she was likely to come to Rye.** People like Obsidian who had not known her before probably thought of her as Wheat. Not that it mattered. She would never hear her name spoken again. Obsidian handed her pin back to her. He caught her hand as she reached for it and rubbed his thumb over her calluses. He stopped at First Street and asked which way again. Then, after turning right as she had indicated, he parked near the Music Center. There, **he took a folded paper from the dashboard and unfolded** it. Rye recognized it as **a street map**, though the writing on it meant nothing to her. **He** flattened the map, took her hand again, and **put her index finger on one spot. He touched her, touched himself, pointed toward the floor. In effect, “We are here.”** She knew **he wanted to know where she was going.** **She wanted to tell him, but she shook her head sadly. She had lost reading and writing**. That was her most serious impairment and her most painful. **She had taught history at UCLA. She had done freelance writing. Now she could not even read her own manuscripts. She had a houseful of books that she could neither read nor bring herself to use as fuel.** And she had a memory that would not bring back to her much of what she had read before.. She stared at the map, trying to calculate. She had been born in Pasadena, had lived for fifteen years in Los Angeles. Now she was near L.A. Civic Center. She knew the relative positions of the two cities, knew streets, directions, even knew to stay away from freeways, which might be blocked by wrecked cars and destroyed overpasses. She ought to know how to point out Pasadena even though she could not recognize the word. **Hesitantly, she placed her hand over a pale orange patch in the upper right corner of the map**. That should be right. Pasadena. **Obsidian lifted her hand and looked under it, then folded the map and put it back on the dashboard.** **He could read, she realized belatedly**. He could probably write, too. **Abruptly, she hated him—deep, bitter hatred**. What did literacy mean to him—a grown man who played cops and robbers? But he was literate and she was not. She never would be. **She felt sick to her stomach** with hatred, frustration, and jealousy. **And only a few inches from her hand was a loaded gun.** She held herself still, staring at him, almost seeing his blood. **But her rage crested and ebbed and she did nothing.** Obsidian reached for her hand with hesitant familiarity.’ She looked at him. **Her face had already revealed too much. No person still living in what was left of human society could fail to recognize that expression, that jealousy**. Speech Sounds—7 She closed her eyes wearily, drew a deep breath. **She had experienced longing for the past, hatred of the present, growing hopelessness, purposelessness, but she had never experienced such a powerful urge to kill another person.** **She had left her home, finally, because she had come near to killing herself.** She had found no reason to stay alive. **Perhaps that was why she had gotten into Obsidian’s car. She had never before done such a thing. He touched her mouth and made chatter motions with thumb and fingers. Could she speak? She nodded and watched his milder envy come and go. Now both had admitted what it was not safe to admit, and there had been no violence.** He tapped his mouth and forehead and shook his head. He did not speak or comprehend spoken language. The illness had played with them, taking away, she suspected, what each valued most. She plucked at his sleeve, wondering why he had decided on his own to keep the LAPD alive with what he had left. He was sane enough otherwise. Why wasn’t he at home raising corn, rabbits, and children? But she did not know how to ask. **Then he put his hand on her thigh and she had another question to deal with.** She shook her head. **Disease, pregnancy, helpless, solitary agony ... no.** He massaged her thigh gently and smiled in obvious disbelief. **No one had touched her for three years.** She had not wanted anyone to touch her. **What kind of world was this to chance bringing a child into** even if the father were willing to stay and help raise it? It was too bad, though. Obsidian could not know how attractive he was to her—young, probably younger than she was, clean, asking for what he wanted rather than demanding it. But none of that mattered. **What were a few moments of pleasure measured against a lifetime of consequences?** He pulled her closer to him and for a moment she let herself enjoy the closeness. He smelled good—male and good. **She pulled away reluctantly**. **He sighed, reached toward the glove compartment. She stiffened, not knowing what to expect, but all he took out was a small box.** The writing on it meant nothing to her. **She did not understand until he** broke the seal, **opened the box, and took out a condom.** He looked at her, and she first looked away in surprise. **Then she giggled. She could not remember when she had last giggled**. He grinned, gestured toward the backseat, and she laughed aloud. Even in her teens, she had disliked backseats of cars. But she looked around at the empty streets and ruined buildings, then she got out and into the backseat. **He let her put the condom on him, then seemed surprised at her eagerness.** Speech Sounds—8 Sometime later, they sat together, covered by his coat, unwilling to become clothed near strangers again just yet. He made rock-the-baby gestures and looked questioningly at her. She swallowed, shook her head. She did not know how to tell him her children were dead. He took her hand and drew a cross in it with his index finger, then made his baby-rocking gesture again. She nodded, held up three fingers, then turned away, trying to shut out a sudden flood of memories. She had told herself that the children growing up now were to be pitied. They would run through the downtown canyons with no real memory of what the buildings had been or even how they had come to be. Today’s children gathered books as well as wood to be burned as fuel. They ran through the streets chasing one another and hooting like chimpanzees. **They had no future. They were now all they would ever be.** He put his hand on her shoulder, and **she turned suddenly, fumbling for his small box, then urging him to make love to her again. He could give her forgetfulness and pleasure.** Until now, nothing had been able to do that. **Until now, every day had brought her closer to** the time when she would do what she had left home to avoid doing: **putting her gun in her mouth and pulling the trigger.** She asked Obsidian if he would come home with her, stay with her. He looked surprised and pleased once he understood. But he did not answer at once. Finally, he shook his head as she had feared he might. He was probably having too much fun playing cops and robbers and picking up women. She dressed in silent disappointment, unable to feel any anger toward him. Perhaps he already had a wife and a home. That was likely. The illness had been harder on men than on women—had killed more men, had left male survivors more severely impaired. **Men like Obsidian were rare. Women either settled for less or stayed alone. If they found an Obsidian, they did what they could to keep him.** Rye suspected he had someone younger, prettier keeping him. He touched her while she was strapping her gun on and asked with a complicated series of gestures whether it was loaded. She nodded grimly. He patted her arm. **She asked once more if he would come home with her**, this time using a different series of gestures. He had seemed hesitant. Perhaps he could be courted. He got out and into the front seat without responding. Speech Sounds—9 She took her place in front again, watching him. Now he plucked at his uniform and looked at her. She thought she was being asked something but did not know what it was. He took off his badge, tapped it with one finger, then tapped his chest. Of course**. She took the badge from his hand and pinned her wheat stalk to it**. If playing cops and robbers was his only insanity, let him play. She would take him, uniform and all. **It occurred to her that she might eventually lose him to someone he would meet as he had met her. But she would have him for a while.** He took the street map down again, tapped it, pointed vaguely northeast toward Pasadena, then looked at her. She shrugged, tapped his shoulder, then her own, and held up her index and second fingers tight together, just to be sure. He grasped the two fingers and nodded. **He was with her.** **She took the map from him and threw it onto the dashboard. She pointed back southwest—back toward home. Now she did not have to go to Pasadena.** Now she could go on having a brother there and two nephews—three right-handed males. Now she did not have to find out for certain whether she was as alone as she feared. **Now she was not alone**. Obsidian took Hill Street south, then Washington west, and she leaned back, wondering what it would be like to have someone again. With what she had scavenged, what she had preserved, and what she grew, there was easily enough food for them. There was certainly room enough in a four-bedroom house. He could move his possessions in. Best of all, the animal across the street would pull back and possibly not force her to kill him. **Obsidian** had drawn her closer to him, and she had put her head on his shoulder when suddenly he **braked hard**, almost throwing her off the seat. **Out of the corner of her eye, she saw that someone had run across the street in front of the car**. One car on the street and someone had to run in front of it. Straightening up, **Rye saw that the runner was a woman, fleeing from an old frame house to a boarded-up storefront**. She ran silently, but **the man who followed her a moment later shouted** what sounded like garbled words as he ran. **He had** something in his hand. Not a gun. **A knife**, perhaps. **The woman** tried a door, found it locked, looked around desperately, finally **snatched up a fragment of glass broken from the storefront window**. With this she turned to face her pursuer. Rye thought she would be more likely to cut her own hand than to hurt anyone else with the glass. Speech Sounds—10 **Obsidian jumped from the car, shouting. It was** the first time Rye had heard his voice—**deep and hoarse from disuse.** He made the same sound over and over the way some speechless people did, “Da, da, da!” Rye got out of the car as Obsidian ran toward the couple. He had drawn his gun. Fearful, she drew her own and released the safety. She looked around to see who else might be attracted to the scene. **She saw the man glance at Obsidian, then suddenly lunge at the woman. The woman jabbed his face with her glass, but he caught her arm and managed to stab her twice before Obsidian shot him**. The man doubled, then toppled, clutching his abdomen. Obsidian shouted, then gestured Rye over to help the woman. **Rye** moved to the woman’s side, remembering that she had little more than bandages and antiseptic in her pack. But the woman was beyond help. She had been stabbed with a long, slender boning knife. She **touched Obsidian to let him know the woman was dead.** **He had bent to check the wounded man who lay still and also seemed dead. But as Obsidian looked around to see what Rye wanted, the man opened his eyes. Face contorted, he seized Obsidian’s just-holstered revolver and fired. The bullet caught Obsidian in the temple and he collapsed**. It happened just that simply, just that fast. **An instant later, Rye shot the wounded man as he was turning the gun on her. And Rye was alone—with three corpses.** She knelt beside Obsidian, dry-eyed, frowning, trying to understand why everything had suddenly changed. **Obsidian was gone. He had died and left her—like everyone else.** **Two very small children came out of the house from which the man and woman had run**—**a boy and girl perhaps three years old**. Holding hands, **they crossed the street toward Rye.** **They** stared at her, then **edged past her and went to the dead woman. The girl shook the woman’s arm as though trying to wake her. This was too much. Rye got up, feeling sick to her stomach with grief and anger. If the children began to cry, she thought she would vomit.** They were on their own, those two kids. They were old enough to scavenge. She did not need any more grief. **She did not need a stranger’s children who would grow up to be hairless chimps**. She went back to the car. She could drive home, at least. She remembered how to drive. Speech Sounds—11 The thought that Obsidian should be buried occurred to her before she reached the car, and she did vomit. She had found and lost the man so quickly. **It was as though she had been snatched from comfort and security and given a sudden, inexplicable beating**. Her head would not clear. She could not think. Somehow, she made herself go back to him, look at him. **She found herself on her knees beside him with no memory of having knelt**. She stroked his face, his beard. **One of the children made a noise and she looked at them, at the woman who was probably their mother.** The children looked back at her, obviously frightened. Perhaps it was their fear that reached her finally. She had been about to drive away and leave them. She had almost done it, almost left two toddlers to die. Surely there had been enough dying. **She would have to take the children home with her. She would not be able to live with any other decision.** She looked around for a place to bury three bodies. Or two. She wondered if the murderer were the children’s father. Before the silence, the police had always said some of the most dangerous calls they went out on were domestic disturbance calls. Obsidian should have known that—not that the knowledge would have kept him in the car. It would not have held her back either. She could not have watched the woman murdered and done nothing. She dragged Obsidian toward the car. She had nothing to dig with her, and no one to guard for eher while she dug. Better to take the bodies with her and bury them next to her husband and her children. Obsidian would come home with her after all. When she had gotten him onto the floor in the back, she returned for the woman. **The little girl, thin, dirty, solemn, stood up and unknowingly gave Rye a gift. As Rye began to drag the woman by her arms, the little girl screamed, “No!” Rye dropped the woman and stared at the girl. “No!” the girl repeated. She came to stand beside the woman. “Go away!” she told Rye. “Don’t talk,” the little boy said to her. There was no blurring or confusing of sounds. Both children had spoken and Rye had understood.** The boy looked at the dead murderer and moved further from him. He took the girl’s hand. “Be quiet,” he whispered. **Fluent speech!** Had the woman died because she could talk and had taught her children to talk? Had she been killed by a husband’s festering anger or by a stranger’s jealous rage? And the children . . . they must have been born after the silence. **Had the disease run its course, then? Or were these children simply immune?** Certainly they had had time to fall sick and silent. Rye’s mind leaped Speech Sounds—12 ahead. **What if children of three or fewer years were safe and able to learn language?** **What if all they needed were teachers? Teachers and protectors.** Rye glanced at the dead murderer. To her shame, she thought she could understand some of the passions that must have driven him, whomever he was. Anger, frustration, hopelessness, insane jealousy . . . how many more of him were there—people willing to destroy what they could not have? Obsidian had been the protector, had chosen that role for who knew what reason. Perhaps putting on an obsolete uniform and patrolling the empty streets had been what he did instead of putting a gun into his mouth. And now that there was something worth protecting, he was gone. She had been a teacher. A good one. She had been a protector, too, though only of herself. She had kept herself alive when she had no reason to live. **If the illness let these children alone, she could keep them alive.** Somehow she lifted the dead woman into her arms and placed her on the backseat of the car. The children began to cry, but she knelt on the broken pavement and whispered to them, fearful of frightening them with the harshness of her long unused voice. “It’s all right,” she told them. “You’re going with us, too. Come on.” She lifted them both, one in each arm. They were so light. Had they been getting enough to eat? The boy covered her mouth with his hand, but she moved her face away. “It’s all right for me to talk,” she told him. “As long as no one’s around, it’s all right.” She put the boy down on the front seat of the car and he moved over without being told to, to make room for the girl. When they were both in the car, Rye leaned against the window, looking at them, seeing that they were less afraid now, that they watched her with at least as much curiosity as fear**. “I’m Valerie Rye,” she said, savoring the words. “It’s all right for you to talk to me.”**

**“Speech Sounds” is the fictional story of Rye and her journey to visit her relatives in Pasadena. When she gets on the bus, it becomes evident how deprived this society is of effective communication. In fact, the unique spin to this story is that a disease called Aphasia has swept through society, depriving people of their ability to speak, read, and write.**

**After witnessing this violence, Rye jumps out of the bus and finds her way into Obsidian’s car. Although she mistrusts him at first, she soon falls in love with Obsidian. In a world of agony, Rye has now found hope.**

**However, Obsidian, as one of the only good people in this violent society, tries to stop a man with a knife from killing a woman. While the woman retaliates and hurts this man, she ultimately dies from stab wounds. Because of his guardianship, Obsidian also falls pray as the man fatally shoots him in the temple. All hope for Rye is now gone.**

**She sees two children run out towards their dead mother. Although Rye wants to vomit after seeing them because of their newly empty future, she learns that these children have the ability to speak, restoring her optimism. With her new knowledge that the communication epidemic isn’t inevitable, she decides to take care of the children.**

**In the end, Rye’s story is precisely why I choose to evaluate this topic through the lens of Science Fiction. While it may seem abstract, our society becomes more polarized every single day. Instead of communicating, we shield ourselves off from discourse and sweep important issues under the rug. Beyond violence, the bigger problem is believing that we can effectively communicate despite this epidemic, much as Rye did when she learned to love Obsidian. In this way, incremental legislation such as restricting hate speech may give the outward appearance of a more tolerant society, but it does nothing to change underlying racist ideology. For this reason, I interpret Butler’s use of aphasia as a metaphor for speech restrictions on college campuses. Of course there are many causes of the aphasia epidemic, but removing speech restrictions on college campuses is critical. It’s key to radically shifting our ideological paradigm since colleges and universities are uniquely positioned as places for individuals to trade ideas and develop advocacy skills.**

### PART 3 IS THE SOLVENCY

#### First, “Speech Sounds” is uniquely good:

#### It’s a powerful method of confronting power structures through feminism. Riley 2[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Giving Rye the ability to speak is a**nother **way that Butler inserts feminism into “Speech Sounds.”** As seen in most societies, language holds power. **Those who are heard most often traditionally have the power. The ruling class is the group of people with the loudest voice**. This can be seen all throughout history, especially **in the United States.** **The people with the ability to vote, and to have their voice heard, were the upper class white men. African Americans and women were not given this** **option, this power.** **Their forced silence was a way for the ruling class to remain dominant.** There are many other examples like this but they all lead to the same thing, the group that has the biggest and loudest voice, possess the power. **Rye embodies this in the story. When she comes across the two abandoned children that have the ability to speak, she, as one of the few who can also use language, [Rye] finds herself with more power than she ever thought she would have again.**  Rye must now become a teacher and a protector (Butler 380). **Because she can speak**, Rye has a responsibility to **these children**

to teach them how to also use this skill. **They now look to her as an authoritative figure.** Had she been more impaired and mute, these children would have never viewed her as someone to listen to, to follow. Rye has become powerful in their eyes. **Rye is aware of this power she now has when she declares that “if the illness let these children alone, she could keep them alive”** (Butler 380). After previously wanting to take her life because she had no reason to live, Rye has become endowed because of these children with a new lease to life. She will keep them safe and teach them how to use the language that they have been blessed with. **Rye is, in a sense, the pioneer of the coming world. She is teaching the future leaders the language, how to speak, and the power that comes with it.**

#### On a meta-level, the very writing of “Speech Sounds” serves to breakdown traditional patriarchal and anti-black power structures in the Science Fiction genre through intersectional feminism. Riley 2[[5]](#footnote-5)

**When people think of the sci**ence **fi**ction genre, **the first thing that** usually **comes to mind is a** nerdy middle aged **white male** with little to no social skills, **they do not think of an African American female author.** **And they certainly do not imagine that sci**ence **fi**ction **can be used to write about feminist thoughts** or ideas. **However, this is exactly what Octavia Butler does in** her short story **“Speech Sounds.”** Many scholars believe that feminist science fiction writers write toward a utopian society. Butler, however, tends to write more along the lines of dystopia. A dystopian society, or anti-utopia, is a society characterized by misery, violence, and disorder, which is exactly what is seen in “Speech Sounds.” In a society that has been torn apart by the breakdown of communication, Rye, a female with the ability to speak, asserts a dominant female presence that would have otherwise been absent. Science fiction is a genre of literature that utilizes fiction to engage the political realities of its time. This genre has been largely considered to be dominated by white male authors, “whose visions were usually about war and conquest” (S. Smith 387). However, science fiction started to change in the 1950s and 1960s with the rise of identity politics (S. Smith 387). Non-white female authors, like Butler, came into this genre and brought with them new topics and concerns with which to write about. As scholar Stephanie Smith points out, “these concerns had more to do with experiments in social justice than with planetary conquest” (387). As more and more females started writing science fiction, a new subgenre of feminist science fiction emerged that dealt with issues that were of particular concern to feminism. Feminist science fiction entails “engaging questions about gender . . . family and the social structures, individual autonomy, and the individual’s ability to control her body and sexuality” (S. Smith 386). Octavia Butler expertly encompasses each of these points in “Speech Sounds.” Stephanie Smith views **Butler [is]** as being **“the only prominent, popular, female African American and decidedly feminist voice in a historically white male domain called science fiction”** (385). Through her writing and female characters, Butler introduced a more female oriented side of science fiction into mainstream society. “Speech Sounds” is a prime example of how Octavia Butler is taking the genre of science fiction and turning it on its’ head. Not only is she a non white female author, she manages to integrate feminist views into a previously male dominated domain. She uses her strong female protagonist, Rye, as a female agent throughout the story. **Rye becomes a dominate force in a society that has been ravaged by the loss of speech and the subsequent breakdown of social order.** This force is the very basis of what feminism represents.

#### Second, Science Fiction is a powerful genre.

#### Current U.S. policy is oriented towards redressing imminent harms. Sci-fi is key to addressing future risks in public policy and increasing civic engagement. Miller and Bennett '03[[6]](#footnote-6)

Over time, **the most important project may be to** try to **identify mechanisms through which sci**ence **fi**ction **could be** meaningfully **integrated into society’s practices and institutions for public engagement** and technology assessment. This will not be easy. **American political culture is deeply oriented toward the present**, especially with regard to the framing of its regulatory gaze. As highlighted by the dissenting opinions to the recent Supreme Court ruling forcing the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, US **regulatory culture is founded on the axiom that only harms that are** actual or **imminent are** generally **subject to** regulation and **redress.** Thinking prospectively about the kinds of technological risks we may face in the future is, at best, not central to the framing of US risk assessment or technology assessment enterprises. And yet, it would seem that **finding ways to be more future-oriented would add substantial value to our assessment processes**. In some cases, growing attention is being given within assessments to the practice of scenario-building — which in many ways is a form of science fiction writing. Judicious **mixing of sci**ence **fi**ction writing sensibilities **into scenario writing practices could substantially enhance the public engagement possibilities** associated with scenarios. This fact was recognized by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a major international scientific assessment, which used drama to communicate scenarios to a range of publics in Africa. We should learn from this experience. But science fiction can be more than just a communication tool. Citizens could be given new opportunities to contribute creatively to assessments through science fiction writing exercises, perhaps working with scenarios, perhaps in other ways. **Experiments with citizens writing scenarios in an ecological assessment conducted by the University of Wisconsin showed that these methods have considerable power in** **facilitating** citizen buy-in to the **assessment process, results, and policy recommendations**. They also shaped the scenarios in directions unexpected by the expert participants. Likewise, as a forerunner to a formal assessment process — such as the UK GM Nation exercise, where citizens were asked to meet and dialogue about their preferences with regard to genetically modified organisms — writers might be asked to develop multiple stories and dialogues that could be shared with the public alongside more technical reports.

#### Science fiction completely inverts preconceived notions of black identity by radically re-imagining new possibilities of black empowerment. Womack

Womack, Ytasha. Afrofuturism: the world of Black sci-fi and fantasy culture. Chicago Review Press, 2013.

This blossoming culture is unique. Unlike previous eras, today’s artists can wield the power of digital media, social platforms, digital video, graphic arts, gaming technology, and more to tell their stories, share their stories, and connect with audiences inexpensively—a gift from the sci-fi gods, so to speak, that was unthinkable at the turn of the century. The storytelling gatekeepers vanished with the high-speed modem, and for the first time in history, people of color have a greater ability to project their own stories. This tug-and-pull debate over black people controlling their image shifts considerably when a fledgling filmmaker can shoot his sci-fi web series on a $500 DV cam, post it on YouTube, and promote it on Instagram and Twitter. While technology empowers creators, this intrigue with **scifi and fantasy** itself **inverts** **conventional thinking about black identity and holds the imagination supreme. Black identity does not have to be a negotiation with awful stereotypes, a dystopian view of the race** (remember those black-man-as-endangeredspecies stories or the constant “Why are black women single?” reports?), **an abysmal sense of powerlessness**Fiat is science fiction – the process of imagining

1. Ben Wizner [director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s Speech, Privacy, & Technology Project], “Should There be Limits on Freedom of Speech.” 2013. <http://www.pbs.org/tpt/constitution-usa-peter-sagal/rights/limits-free-speech/#.WPlhE1Pyt8d> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Brinkley ’12 (Dr. Shanara Reed-Brinkley, An Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh, where she also serves as the Director of Debate for the William Pitt Debating Union. She is a national award winner for her published work on critical theory, black feminist theory, gender, black culture and history, and hip hop culture and theory, Resistance and Debate, “[An Open Letter to Sarah Spring](http://resistanceanddebate.wordpress.com/2012/11/12/an-open-letter-to-sarah-spring/)” http://resistanceanddebate.wordpress.com/2012/11/12/an-open-letter-to-sarah-spring/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Butler, Octavia E. "Speech Sounds." *Bloodchild and Other Stories* (1983): 87-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cecily Riley, “’Feminism in “Speech Sounds.”’ 10/31/2011. https://sites.google.com/site/writ102cec1/home [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cecily Riley, “’Feminism in “Speech Sounds.”’ 10/31/2011. https://sites.google.com/site/writ102cec1/home [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **MILLER AND BENNETT 2008**  - Associate Director of the Consortium for Science, Policy and Outcomes, Associate Director and CoPI of the Center for Nanotechnology in Society, and Chair of the PhD Program in Human and Social Dimensions of Science and Technology at Arizona State University. He is also a Senior Fellow in the Center for World Affairs and the Global Economy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He holds a PhD in electrical engineering from Cornell University AND PhD in biochemistry from Arizona State University in 2003 and today is an Assistant Research Professor in the Consortium for Science, Policy and Outcomes and the Center for Nanotechnology in Society at Arizona State University (October, Clark A. and Ira, “ Thinking longer term about technology: is there value in science fiction-inspired approaches to constructing futures? ” Science and Public Policy, 35(8), Ebsco) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)