Students Capture Sense of Place Through Audio

For the complete audio with media resources, visit:
http://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/recording-soundscapes/

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Above: *Columbia Heights is a neighborhood in Washington, D.C., within a few miles of the White House. It is part of the Rock Creek tributary, a waterway that runs into the Potomac River and eventually into the Chesapeake Bay.*

When you are asked to describe where you live, what do you say? Do you describe homes, shops, and businesses? Do you describe the people who live or work there? Maybe you describe landscape. All of these things help to define your sense of place, or what makes a certain place have its own distinctive character. One distinctive characteristic that helps to create a sense of place is sound. Every place has sounds that you might not notice, but those sounds help create a sense of place.

The students whose voices you’ll hear in these audio recordings collected sounds that defined their zip code's sense of place. Because sounds within a particular zip code change as its community does, these recordings serve as an acoustic archive of that place. These audio time capsules have also been
preserved in the Library of Congress for future generations to experience.

For each zip code in NatGeo Education’s sense of place collection, you'll find three types of sounds:

- **Most Distinctive:** This is the sound that best represents a place. For example, at the beach this might be the sound of waves crashing.

- **Humans and Environment Interacting:** These sounds demonstrate how people who live in that place interact with it. In the beach example, this might be the sound of kids shouting as the waves lap at their feet, or the sound of a motorboat zipping through the water.

- **Symbolic of Change:** These sounds give clues about how a place is changing. In the beach example, the sound of heavy construction behind the dunes might indicate the development of new hotels or shopping centers.

**Fast Facts**

- Legendary soul musician Marvin Gaye went to school in Columbia Heights.

- The Columbia Heights Day Festival is an annual neighborhood celebration featuring diverse activities, from reggae music performances to cupcake-eating contests to belly-dancing classes.

- Columbia Heights is home to the GALA Hispanic Theatre, the national center for Latino performing arts. GALA stands for Grupo de Artistas Latino Americanos.