

2-2024

The Pacific Sentinel, February 2024

Portland State University. Student Publications Board

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The cover of 'The Pacific Sentinel' magazine features a low-angle photograph of a bronze statue of a man, likely a historical figure, set against a clear blue sky. An American flag is flying on a pole behind the statue, its colors vibrant. The magazine's title is printed in a large, black, serif font across the upper portion of the image. The overall composition is patriotic and evokes a sense of history and national identity.

The Pacific Sentinel.

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WHO WE ARE

The Pacific Sentinel is a student-run magazine that seeks to uplift the diverse cast of voices here at Portland State.

We offer a space for writers and artists of all skill levels to hone their craft, gain professional experience, and express themselves. We are inspired by publications such as The New Yorker and The Atlantic. We advocate for the underrepresented and the marginalized.

We are always looking for new students to join our contributor team as we can't do it without your help. If you're interested in working with us, visit our website at pacsentinel.com or contact our Executive Editor at editor@pacsentinel.com.

FEAT

ENTR

FEATURED THIS ISSUE

will boechler is an author from Fargo, North Dakota. He currently lives in Portland, Oregon, pursuing his MFA in Creative Writing and watching the rain fall by his window.

julianne dalope is a lover of silly little trinkets and any silly little prints to put up on her wall. Originally from southern california, they moved to portland to pursue a degree in graphic design in hopes of a career in all sorts of creative projects.

courtney jeffs is from Coos Bay Oregon and moved to Portland to finish her bachelor's degree in business advertising and marketing at Portland State University. She enjoys illustrating, story writing, and design.

grace lnu is from Jakarta, Indonesia currently finishing her last year at PSU as a psychology major. During her free time, you will find her taking a walk, reading her favorite webtoons, and spending time with her special ones.

yomari lobo is a creative originally from Las Vegas, NV and now lives in Portland, OR studying book publishing at Portland State University. You can find her staring out her window waiting for the rain and inspiration to strike for her future best seller.

ann mcbride is from Eugene Oregon and attends PSU as a graphic design major and psychology minor. She enjoys page layout, illustrating things, and playing bass.

becky phillips is originally from Rochester, NY but has lived in Portland, OR for seven years. She studies nonfiction creative writing and is currently pursuing a career in music journalism.

laura renckens is a publishing student and book designer compelled by work that connects art, ideas, and community. Hailing from the chilly lands of Minneapolis, Minnesota, she is a constant provider of midwestern energy and an avid road-tripper.

eva sheehan grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and moved to Portland to study book publishing. She loves poetry and exploring new coffee shops around the city.

shaelee singer grew up in Salem, Oregon and graduated from Mckay High School in 2021. She is pursuing a BA in Applied Linguistics and working towards her TESL Certificate as well. Shaelee is extremely passionate about spreading social awareness regarding language bias, linguistic diversity, and to help others learn more about applied linguistics. When she is not in school she travels the country to see her favorite bands and artists on tour throughout the year.

peyten woodruff grew up in Meridian, Idaho. She is currently a freshman majoring in Graphic Design. When she is not drawing, she enjoys running for the PSU track/cross country team, reading and watching horror movies.

emily zito was born and raised in San Diego, California. She moved to Portland two years ago to attend PSU to pursue English and Film Studies. Her interests include music journalism, film criticism, and arts/culture. When she's not writing or reading she's teaching dance or DJing for KPSU.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR **eva sheehan** | ASSOCIATE EDITOR **will boechler**
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PRODUCTION EDITOR **courtney jeffs** | MULTIMEDIA EDITOR **laura renckens**

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Happy Black History Month!

In honor of this imperative month for our country, we dedicated this month's issue to highlighting and spotlighting Black voices. Like many other holidays and designated months for underrepresented groups, it can be seen as a limited time in the spotlight. Stores roll out their Black History t-shirts and organizations give their one ode to Black voices. However, Black History Month is much more than that—it is a reminder of what Black people have endured in our country and to keep fighting for diversity, anti-racism, freedom, and equality in spite of that. To quote one of my favorite Black authors, Ralph Ellison, "The act of writing requires a constant plunging back into the shadow of the past where time hovers ghostlike". We must bring the past to the forefront of our minds in order to move forward—in order to enact change.

Our writers have produced some lovely pieces that I am so excited to share with you. Starting off, our Associate Editor, Will Boechler reviews the film "Earth Mama"—a film that showcases the struggles of black motherhood. Boechler makes note of the artistry and cinematography that adds to this heartbreaking reality. Emily Zito then takes us through an assortment of film, art, literature, and photography to spotlight black artists.

Moving onto our opinion section, Becky Phillips writes about another awe-inspiring show performed by The Dresden Dolls—a band made for the stage. Our next opinion piece is by Shaelee Singer who sheds light on the seasonal struggles many students face during the holidays.

Our featured piece this month is an interview with Black Studies Professor Dr. Bright Alozie. Dr. Alozie shares his knowledge, his wisdom, and a little bit of his poetry in this interview to highlight the Black Studies program and the philosophies he holds as an educator.

Lastly, Courtney Jeffs shares an important piece about the effects of Artificial Intelligence and the possible path it could be leading.



Writing is a source of documentation in order to keep the past alive. This month and every month, our goal is to remind readers and ourselves of the progress that has been made presently and the progress that has yet to be made. Our writers, our designers, and our artists create this magazine with care and passion and I am so proud to share their work with you each month, but especially during Black History Month.

As always, thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you in March!

Eva Sheehan



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M

arts & culture

ARTH IAMA

**A beautiful, challenging portrait
of black motherhood**

BY WILL BOECHLER

ILLUSTRATION BY COURTNEY JEFFS

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“They try to take our culture, they try to take our homes, try to take our freedom, and you know they’ll try to take our babies too. That’s exactly why we can’t stop fighting for our kids, G,” Trina says, her arms crossed around her chest.

“Earth Mama”, written and directed by Savannah Leaf, explores black motherhood in an ever-unstable world with emotional vulnerability and quiet, tense realism that brings the film to a heightened level of craft, storytelling, and theme.

The film follows Gia (played expertly by Tia Nomore), who is a pregnant single mother in Oakland. Gia struggles with day-to-day life as a single mother; Between seeing her two kids in foster care only for an hour while trying to improve their strained relationship, trying to work extra hours at her job at a mall photography studio to make child support payments, and having a cell phone that constantly reminds her she’s almost out of minutes, it seems Gia’s life is on the verge of collapse. However, this undertone of tension never feels taken too seriously. Leaf takes great care to never depict Gia or her struggles as a single black mother as stereotypical or unrealistic, and instead chooses to show that Gia is human and is flawed, but has the best intentions in mind when she makes mistakes throughout the story.

One of the best parts of the film is the cinematography and the music. Every scene looks amazing, the film being shot on 16mm with vintage lenses by cinematographer Jody Lee Lipes and utilizing soft, muted color. The film has a vintage, just-before-our-time look and feel to it that invites the viewer to experience Gia’s journey with her in an almost surreal like setting. The soundtrack by Kelsey Lu adds an echoed, distant, spiritual sound to the film. It lingers in the background, drenched in reverb, and the lack of music at times also adds to tension of certain moments, letting sound design guide the viewer through the scene. Moments without music result in elevated

tension at times but also ease the viewer into a relaxed state of being, like a deep meditation, in others. Bettye Swann’s version of “Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye” is a recurring song throughout the film as well, serving as one of Gia’s theme songs.

Savannah Leaf wrote and directed this film but the concept is based off of a short documentary Leaf co-directed with Taylor Russell (“Bones & All”) called “The Heart Still Hums”. It follows five women as they fight for their children through the cycle of homelessness, drug addictions and neglect from their own parents. The throughline of mothers struggling over their children and the meaning of black motherhood isn’t something unfamiliar to Leaf, either, as Leaf drew from her own lived experience to bring Gia’s story to life. Leaf was the elder sibling of an adopted child and drew from her memories growing up with that sibling as well as the child’s birth mother in order to craft Gia. “I wrote the first draft of this script before making *The Heart Still Hums*,” Leaf said in a Letterboxd interview. “That was inspired by so many different mothers in my life, not only my own mother but also my friends’ mothers, friends who were like older siblings, coaches, teachers—all these people who helped raise me and inspired me. [*The Heart Still Hums*] was a documentary that focused on some mothers who’d given their children up for adoption, some who were dealing with the CPS taking their kids away from them, some who were kids of the foster-care system and now mothers themselves.” Leaf discussed.

A combination of scenes that brought “Earth Mama” to a much more vulnerable place were the scenes at the mandatory testimony course that Gia has to take in order to satisfy her uptight caseworker. Several women who have lost custody of their children stand center frame and give traumatic, but therapeutic descriptions and recountings of their children being taken from them. These stories are painful and ring with an emotional hollowness that comes from the horror of losing a child to the foster care system, their frameworks drawn from “*The Heart Still Hums*”.

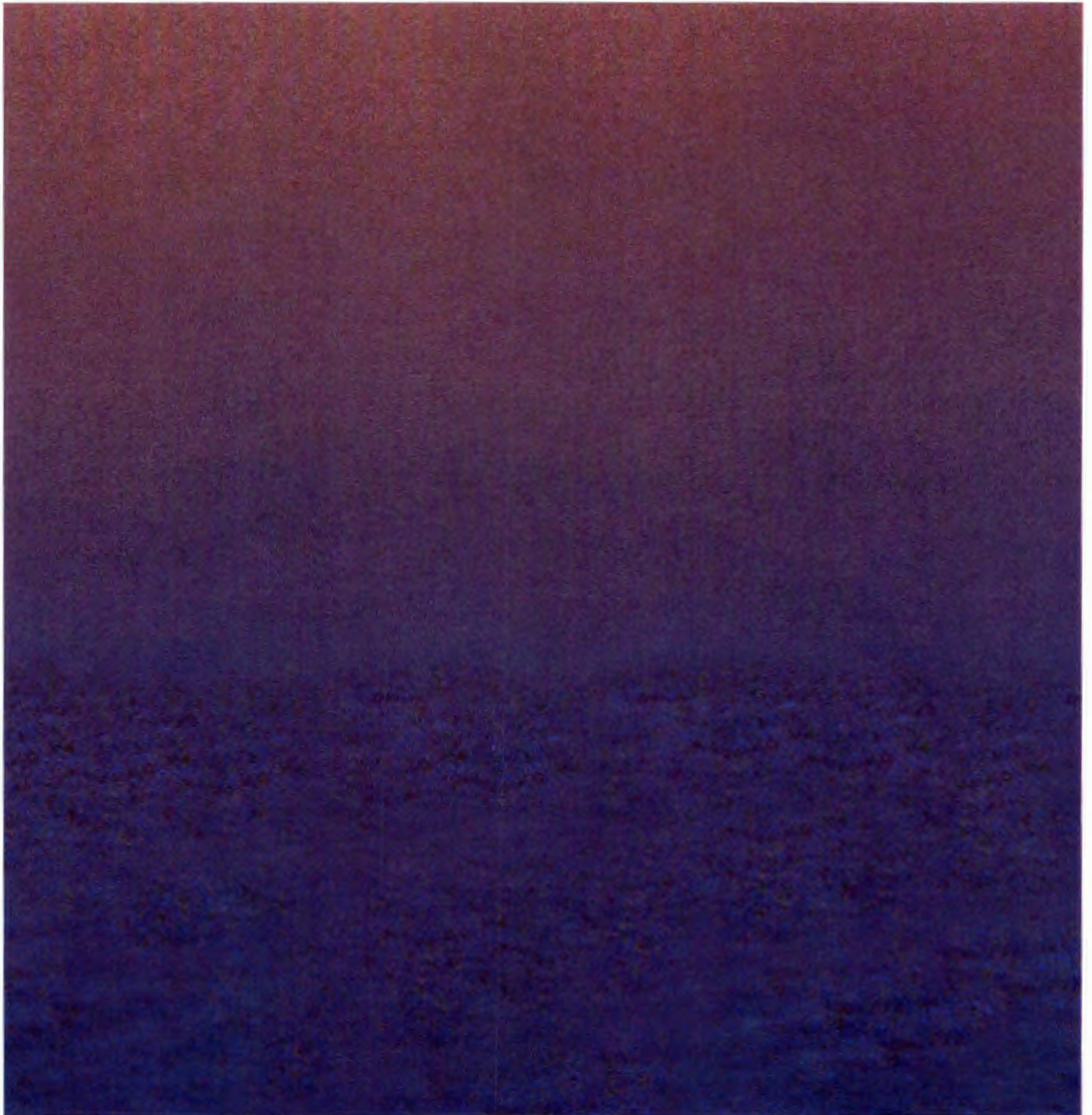
Leaf digs further into this by also showing a scene where Gia interviews some of the men who linger outside her house when she comes home at the end of the day about what it was like being children in the foster care system themselves, and how being swept up into the system can feel utterly destructive for the lives of the children, let alone the mothers. These scenes are quiet and fragile, like glass. “I remember it like it was yesterday.” One of the young men says, his voice hushed and vulnerable. “My mom was holding me and this car just pulled up. They had suits on. They just grabbed me out of my mom’s arms. Didn’t say what’s going on. Just, like, snatched me up like I’m being, like, abducted or something. From that day

forward, my life ain't been the same. In and out of foster care, different ones, you know, and just wondering what's going on, what's happening. How'd it go from me being with my mom to total strangers?"

"Earth Mama" is a film that pays meticulous attention to the little things that operate in a struggling single mother's life; a declined card, the anxiety over asking for a payment advance at work, and again, the detail of her phone slowly running out of minutes. These details bring us closer to Gia's struggle and make us feel what she feels, the anxiety, the uncertainty, the need for everyone to just leave her alone so she can do what she knows is right.

Tia Nomore and Savannah Leaf bring Gia and her story to life with clarity, poise, truth, and vulnerability that rings almost like a new genre of film; a Black Expressionist film, wherein the black experience is embodied through sight, sound, story, and color. Nomore plays not only Gia but many other black mothers in the foster care system that struggle with the same problems that she does to this very day. Nomore and Leaf bring a shard of blackness itself to the screen, laid bare to us for an hour and thirty-seven minutes.

"Earth Mama" is now available for VOD rent or purchase.



Spotlighting Black Artists Through a Mix of Mediums

A Compilation of Creativity

BY EMILY ZITO



Film

Rom-Com

Love Jones, Theodore Witcher, New Line Cinema, 1997.
Brown Sugar, Rick Famuyiwa, Searchlight Pictures/20th Century Studios, 2002.

While there exists a range of feel-good flicks showcasing Black love, these two stand at the top of my list. I adore (and am so nostalgic for) the fashion and music in these films. Leather jackets are a staple of the 90s-early 2000s style, and these movies have their characters stunting' on us with their steeze. The hip hop references and plot lines in *Brown Sugar* make for a sweet dedication to the genre/culture. As for *Love Jones*, the chemistry between Larenz Tate's character Darius, and Nia Long's Nina is such a good, tease-type flirtation. Love the effortlessness of these films.

Art House/Independent

If Beale Street Could Talk, Barry Jenkins, Annapurna Pictures, 2018.

The Last Black Man in San Francisco, Joe Talbot, A24, 2019.

These films are high on my recommendation list because they are simply stunning to watch. *If Beale Street Could Talk* has one of my favorite opening sequences of all time—thanks to the beautiful score (which I think, in itself, is a character in this film) by Nicholas Britell and cinematography by James Laxton. Jenkins timelessly

ILLUSTRATION BY COURTNEY JEFFS

adapts James Baldwin's 1974 novel of the same name. His adaptation is a representation of what continuing legacy looks like.

The actors in *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*, Jimmie Fails and Jonathan Majors, give performances that perfectly balance silence/stillness with fun/liveliness. Cinematographer, Adam Newport-Berra captures the city and characters in such a charismatic way. A wonderful film to watch if you at all have a special place in your heart for California.

Horror/Sci-Fi (Western, Adventure, Comedy, Drama)

Nope, Jordan Peele, Universal Pictures, 2022.

Many will probably still say that *Get Out* is his best or their favorite film, but after I saw *Nope* it instantly became one of my all time favorite movies. As you can see listed above I have a variety of genres to categorize this film, and that is because Peele successfully creates a movie that does it all. His ability to break the genre barriers and boundaries (especially that of a Black creative in the industry) is so commendable. I know genre-blending is not groundbreaking, but this IMAX film about Black cowboys that comments on spectatorship within the Hollywood system through the use of horror and comedy... I mean, wow. Peele jam-packed this film with so much substance and I loved every minute of it. One of my favorite aspects

of the movie was how it included the (uncommonly known) story of the first motion picture—which was of a Black man riding a horse. *Nope* takes a historical Black legacy and infuses it into a contemporary storyline that also showcases the importance of generational legacy. Despite some of the other messages in the film, I truly think Peele offers a movie about Black joy, drive, passion, excellence, and adventure.

Literature

Poetry

Heart Love Messages of the Soul, Sherehe Yamaisha Roze, Heart Love Publications, 2002.

About five years ago I took one of my first Black studies classes with Miss Starla Lewis (a professor at a community college in San Diego). She is a true gem, and gifted me and my classmates with a book written by her daughter. Heart Love Messages of the Soul is a collection of poems and some accompanying images. I typically do not gravitate toward poetry, but this book holds such a special spot in my heart and memory. I am excited to have Roze on this list, and to support and shout-out a small author/artist—an act I think is so important to building up communities/the arts.

Non-Fiction/Music Criticism

Gunshots in My Cook-up: Bits and Bites of a Hip Hop Caribbean Life, Selwyn Seyfu Hinds, Simon & Schuster, 2002.

Selwyn Seyfu Hinds hooked me right away with his introduction, “I write this for you, lover of hip-hop. Because I once was, still am, and always shall be just like you. I, too, marvel at the growth of this music, this expression of style and being, from local phenomenon in the battered South Bronx streets of 1970s New York City to global economic and cultural force today” (1). Being the former editor-in-chief of *The Source*, Hinds has story after story after story to tell. Each page enthralled me with his personal anecdotes filled with iconic hip hop names and moments. His memoir makes you feel like you’re right there beside him, yet also understanding that you exist years later, living your own hip hop history.

Music is History, Questlove, Abrams Image, 2021.

This book is perfect for history buffs who are also huge music-heads. Questlove provides a thoughtful and intricate exploration of historical/sonic moments from 1971 until now. Questlove’s writing is so accessible, personal, funny at times, and passionate. He paints such

vivid pictures of his experiences, and his engagement with music throughout time. If you want any new music recommendations this is the book for you—he compiles a playlist for every year! If you want to time-travel back in time—either historically or musically—this is the book for you. Such a fun, entertaining, and educating read!

Photography (in book form)

The New Black Vanguard: Photography Between Art and Fashion, Antwaun Sargent, Aperture, 2019.

Sargent’s compilation of photographers brings together a range of artistry into one entity. There are photographs of actors, rappers, models, and pop culture figures from across different regions. It is the perfect coffee-table book (if you’re into that). Each page-flip captivates your eye, and excites you for the next image. Highly recommend this book if you’re interested in fashion, Black aesthetics, and widening your scope of artists/photographers.

Dawoud Bey on Photographing People and Communities, Dawoud Bey, Aperture, 2019.

I had the pleasure of viewing these images on a larger-scale in a museum (I unfortunately forget which museum this was). Nevertheless, seeing Bey’s work for the first time was an emotional experience. Part of this collection includes portraits of students, as well as a personal quote from them. Reading their words beside Bey’s work moved me on many levels, and reminded me of the preciousness of a classroom. In addition to his photography, Bey writes about his journey and process of becoming the artist he is today. I found his words extremely inspirational and comforting (we don’t need to have everything all figured out, especially when it comes to artistic expression, and that the process is key to the product). This book is a wonderful example of showing how words and images communicate together to a larger meaning and understanding.

Ice Cold. a Hip Hop Jewelry History, Vikki Tobak, Taschen, 2022.

Much of the art on this list relies on the movement throughout time, and this book is a continuation of this theme. Each era—1980s, 90s, 2000s, 2010s—is defined by its personalized take on fashion, trends, and style. Ice Cold archives iconic moments through the use of images, and words written by community members. The photobook, acting like a hip-hop-ified yearbook, displays images in a 10 x 13 inch frame—allowing the pictures to take up the space they deserve. I love how alive and freeing the book/photographs feel!

The Dresden Dolls In Portland: A Punk Cabaret

A Concert Review

BY BECKY PHILLIPS

KURTWEILL

The Aladdin Theater was glowing as I walked through the wide front doors and I could hear the hollering of the crowd as The Dresden Dolls were already entering out onto the stage. The “punk cabaret” two piece had no opening band and kicked off their set with the song “Good Day,” the first track on their early 2004 album. It felt like the perfect opener, as it referenced the beginning of their musical journey. Consisting of only piano and drums, the duo is known for dressing in a cabaret style with their faces painted like mimes, and it’s almost as if the music mimics the way they are dressed.

Without the drums from her bandmate, Amanda Palmer played piano as she sang the opener, one of the slower songs from their catalog. When the drums kicked in about halfway through the song, the energy in the old ornate theater went up a few notches. Some members in the crowd were dressed in costumes similar to the band which portrayed a sort of cult following. After the first song, the pace of the music picked up and Amanda and Brian began wailing on their instruments. The beginning of the set were songs from their early years, which brought me back to my younger self, remembering every word. I found myself hypnotized, singing along to the words I knew.

After the first few songs, Amanda announced a new album was in the works, and spent the middle of the set playing the entire unreleased album. It felt intimate

knowing the songs hadn’t been heard before. Amanda spoke in between songs and shared intimate details about her life and recent divorce that inspired the new music, which was melancholic but still encapsulated their signature sound. I was amazed at how theatrical they were on stage. Their facial expressions and gestures brought something extra to the performance. It was visibly and audibly clear that Brian was harnessing an immense amount of energy and transferring it all into his drumming. The beats were complex and powerful, and he never faltered once.

When the music from the new album had been played, they switched things up surprisingly as they performed a couple cover songs. They started off by playing “War Pigs” by Black Sabbath, the 70s English rock band fronted by Ozzy Osbourne. It was a curveball considering the different style of music, but it was done in such a way that worked so well with their instruments. When they finished the song, Brian exited the stage to bandage his bloody hand from his intense drumming. Amanda stepped away from her piano to introduce a special guest, a friend of theirs who had just moved to Portland; the perfect opportunity to join them on stage. Both Brian and the special guest re-entered the stage. This time, Amanda sat behind the drum set while their special guest was on bass, and Brian pulled out a guitar behind the microphone. They started up their second cover, which was “Fight For Your Right To Party” by The



Beastie Boys. I was pleasantly surprised by this choice. What a variety to play a cover of an old rock band, and one from the infamous rap/rock trio from the 80s and 90s. Of course they nailed it.

They finished the show on their own instruments and continued with more of their older tunes with the same driving energy. They played their last song, stood from their instruments, and hugged each other for such a time that showed their love for one another. The connection between the musical partners was obvious and emotionally moving. When they left the stage, I waited patiently for an encore, for my favorite song, "Girl Anachronism," which I knew they would play since it was their very first hit. Sure enough, they returned to the stage and Amanda started playing the first single notes on the keys of "Girl Anachronism" and everyone collectively roared. I had never heard the song so intensely. It was as if they took the energy of the entire show, doubled it, and put it into their very last song.

Experiencing music live is vastly different from what an mp3 can provide. It's raw and powerful as it reverberates through your body. As Amanda had mentioned earlier on in the show, The Dresden Dolls are meant to be a live performing band. I realized just how talented these musicians really are. The energy they put into their instruments creates an entity of its own that can only be seen in its natural form.

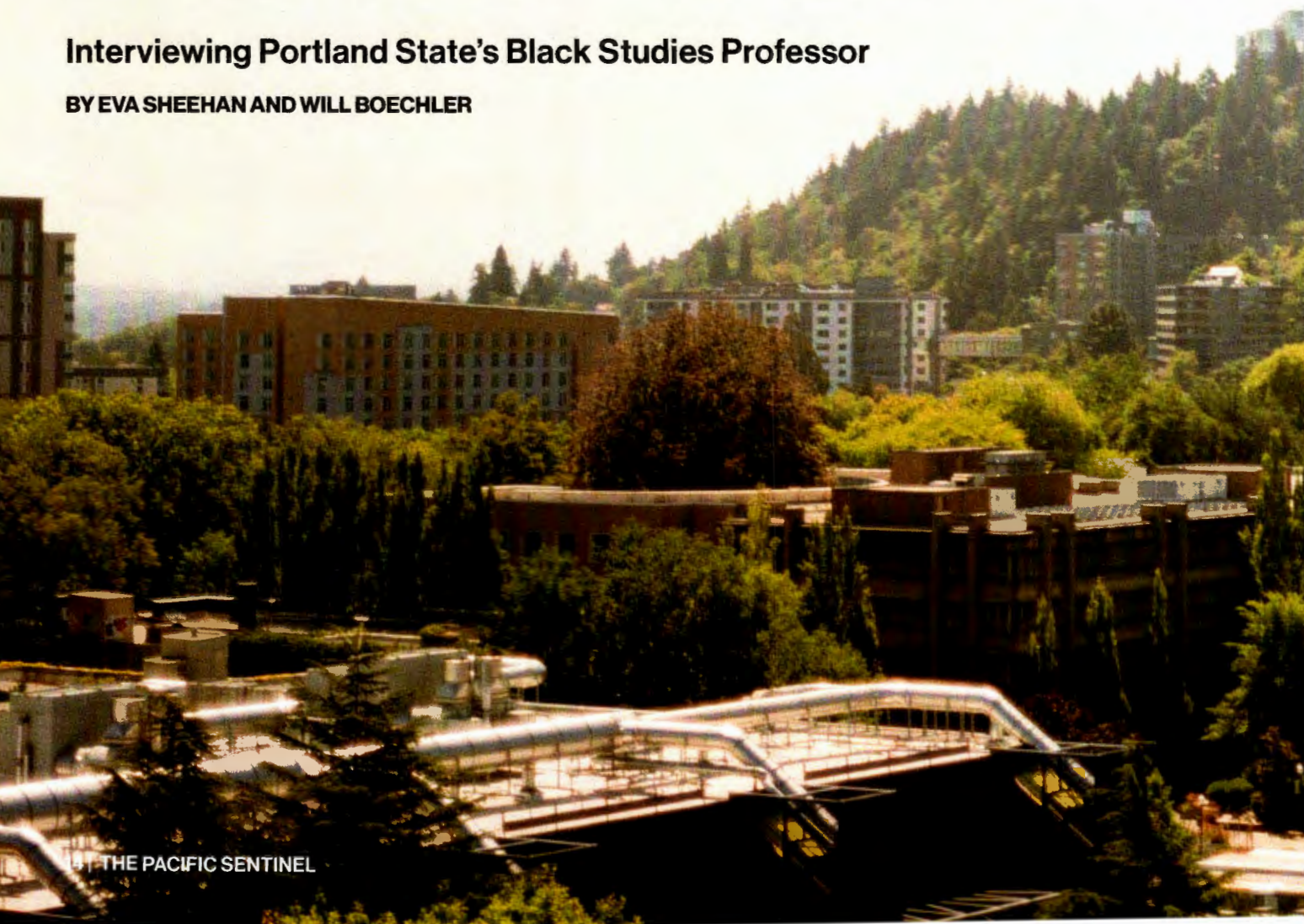
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



LET KNO SERVE T

Interviewing Portland State's Black Studies Professor

BY EVA SHEEHAN AND WILL BOECHLER



* featured

KNOWLEDGE THE CITY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOEHLER

Portland State University's motto, "Let Knowledge Serve The City" is an engraved adage suspended from parking deck 1 so the masses of downtown can read its yellow engravings. Dr. Bright Alozie, a professor of Black Studies, is someone who makes the yellow shine a little brighter against the faded concrete. Dr. Alozie has been featured in a few of Sentinel's articles, "How to Write About African Women" and "How to Write About African Children" which are satirical pieces playing on the stereotypes that surround Black and African narratives. Dr. Alozie is a Nigerian-born scholar-activist and historian whose research falls into four broad and overlapping areas: (1) social and political history; (2) sexuality, women, and gender; (3) protests and people power in relation to social movements and African people's experiences of resistance; (4) oral history and methodologies. Within these intersections, he adopts "a history from below" approach to center "the experiences, voices, and research of people of [Africa and] African descent as a way to challenge dominant narratives" as set out in the Black Studies program description. Many of the topics he teaches hold false narratives derived from Eurocentric beliefs which is why Dr. Alozie is such an imperative piece to Portland State's education. He is passionate about rectifying historical inaccuracies and providing his students empowerment through knowledge. Class by class, step by step, Dr. Alozie is serving our city with knowledge.

The Pacific Sentinel Associate Editor Will Boechler and I were fortunate enough to get an hour of Dr. Alozie's time to ask him questions, be stunned by his words, and listen to a little of his poetry!

Eva: Thanks again for meeting with us! I guess we'll just start out with this first question just to get to know you and what your role is at Portland State by asking, when did you start working at Portland State?

Alozie: First, thank you for this opportunity to share both my experience here at Portland State (my teaching and research) and of course, talk about Black Studies Department. I really appreciate that there is a special focus and feature for Black History Month. When I received your email, I couldn't have been any happier that The Pacific Sentinel decided to spotlight Black History Month.

So, talking about when I started working at Portland State, first, I want to state that I am a scholar activist, a storyteller, a student of history- I believe that I am a student for life- there's no end to learning. My work speaks to disciplinary and multidisciplinary conversations around and among African and Black Scholars, Black Studies, history, women, and gender studies. As a result of

my scholarship [and] my teaching portfolio, Portland State University found me fit to hire me as part of the SGRN cluster hire. They hired me in 2021 as a full-time tenure track assistant professor of Black Studies in the Black Studies Department. I am also an affiliate faculty in the History Department and the Women/Gender/Sexuality Studies Department.

Before this time, I taught at West Virginia University, Strayer University in Virginia, University of Liverpool where I got my second masters degree. Then, University of University of Nigeria, Nsukka where I proudly finished my bachelors magna cum laude. When I taught there, I was a very young junior lecturer at the age of (barely) 22 when I started. So, that has been my journey for about twelve years. I've been in academia, I've loved the academe, I've loved teaching, and I've loved the research.

My current research spans the period of the Atlantic Slave Trade up to the modern era and the contemporary era. It embraces the intersectional five fields of Nigerian, African, and Black historical studies. The fields are colonial and socio-political history, women, gender, and sexuality, petitions and documented sources, memory politics, oral histories, and social movements. I like these fields because they are important to both why I decided to join this department, why I wanted to be a scholar activist, why I am a storyteller and of course, a historian.

"I have to render services to the university, maybe at the administrative level, but more importantly, and for what Black studies represents, I have to support my colleagues, be part of efforts that may contribute to the community. After all, our motto is 'Let Knowledge Serve The City.'"

All my degrees, my Bachelors, my Double Masters, my PhD have been in African History– specifically African History, or International studies, or Women's Studies.

Eva: Thank you, that was awesome information. So, we kind of talked about this a little bit, about your role in the program as a professor, but we are wondering what classes do you teach and which one is your favorite?

Alozie: For starters, as a professor I have the primary teaching and research engagement. So I have to teach classes and at the same time I have to do research because Portland State is a research institution. In addition to teaching and research, my role also includes service commitment and service engagement. I have to render services to the university, maybe at the administrative level, but more importantly, and for what Black studies represents, I have to support my colleagues, be part of efforts that may contribute to the community. After all, our motto is "Let Knowledge Serve The City". For instance, I am a part of "Africa House" which is the African Immigrant and Refugee Organization [in Portland] and so many other organizations that speak to Black causes. I do give talks and lectures outside of Portland State and also within Portland State and of course, at conferences, workshops, and seminars where I share my research.

I teach a range of classes. I have to say that I am the only full-time tenure track faculty who is an African scholar in Black Studies Department. This is important because Africa is at the center of my research and conversations around Black Studies. So that's why the range of courses

I teach include: African History Pre- and Post-1800, Intro to African Studies, Post Colonial Studies of Africa, Black Studies Methodologies, and Intro to Black Studies. When joining Portland State back in 2021, I realized that there were a few courses missing. Especially in regard to women, gender, sexuality. So I introduced three new courses. One is, "Women in African History." The other is "Gender and Sexualities in Africa." And then "Protests, Activism, and People In Power in Contemporary Africa."

Which is my favorite... frankly, I'm tempted to say all of them, but I've really enjoyed teaching Women in African History just for the very significance of that course and for how engaging it is and the lessons my students learn. A lot of people know little to nothing about Africa and when it comes to African women, my students are always in awe when they hear, for instance, that in Africa, in pre-colonial times, women had power. Women had agency. You know, in pre-colonial times, a woman could become a man! Gender was very fluid. The excitement and glee that I see when my students get this new knowledge, I think, nothing surpasses it. (Women Studies) is also one of the courses I've had the most success in terms of post knowledge production. My students have produced excellent projects and essays– some of which I have worked with and collaborated with them to get published– of course, I did publish one piece in The Pacific Sentinel, a satirical piece on "How to Write About African Women".

Specifically, I also coordinate the African Studies Certificate Program and before I joined Portland State,



this program was not functional and it was housed in the Department of International and Global Studies. I was really grateful that I took charge along with my colleagues to revive the program and it's going to launch in the Fall of 2024. I will be the main advisor for this program. The certificate is part of the Black Studies Program here at PSU that provides students with a wealth of knowledge-tailored knowledge about the African continent. We recognize Africa's central role in global history so our curriculum provides our students with unique opportunities to delve into these wide array of themes of African history, African culture, African politics just to mention a few. We are trying to address this scholarly curiosity of our students in relation to the study of Africa. So it's part of that commitment and serves an intellectual function within our campus. Of course in the certificate program, we are going to give our students many major recognitions for their African related work.

So yeah, that's pretty much my role in the program. As the need arises, I'm happy to serve the department and the university.

Eva: Thank you. It seems like you've really built up the program and it seems to be really flourishing. It sounds really awesome! I'm going to move on to the next question which goes into you being an educator and professor. What is your goal as an educator when you're teaching these courses within the Black Studies program?

Alozie: My primary goal as an educator is to use my expertise and use knowledge to empower and liberate. Empower my students to know that whatever they are learning right now is powerful knowledge. It changes how they think or how they may have felt about a continent that is most grossly misunderstood.

I want to impact lives. I want to impact minds with my teaching and, of course, my research because they go hand in hand. So, I don't just teach for the sake of it. I am also very passionate about what I teach. I mean, you could tell from my email with you. I want to get a productive response from this (the article), I want to talk about it, I want many people to see this. I always want my students to see that I am a passionate professor. I want them to be inspired positively so. In pursuing my goal as an educator, I believe in this African philosophy of Ubuntu which means, "I am because you are". In the making of who we are in Black StudiesBlack, in the shaping of knowledge, I want to integrate my students- they are part of that knowledge production- the knowledge is empowering to them- the knowledge shapes who they are. So if I can achieve that at the end of a particular class, I'll say, oh goodness gracious, I have gotten my learning objectives.

I emphasize them because I teach here at Portland State University. Oregon itself is a pretty predominately white institution. Many undergraduate students do not even have any understanding of African history or geography. They have mainly learned about Africa through single-story narratives or misinformation stereotypes propagated by the American media. My goal is to shut down that narrative and by extension, shut down the stereotypes about Black people. I live for that. I breathe that goal within me.

As a result, my courses are structured around four frameworks: centering African or Black voices, teaching about Africa's immensity, identifying Africa as the heart of humanity, connecting Africa across disciplines, and of course, teaching Africa to affirm identities which might be African identities or, broadly, Black identities. Throughout my class, I create that classroom environment where I engage my students in very meaningful thinking, interactive learning, and practical application of the lessons they learn so they can appreciate the diversity and nuances of the continent they are learning about. So that is my goal

Eva: Awesome, I love that answer.

Will: That was so well said. I love that.

Eva: We're going to take a little shift to talk about the program as a whole by wondering, what would you say makes this program stand out from the rest of the PNW? I noticed that on the website, you mention how this program is different from the rest of the Black Studies programs around the Pacific Northwest.

Alozie: This is a very loaded question that goes way back into the history of the department where I'll just try to be as brief as possible. Forgive me for being very detailed, I am a historian-we tell stories a lot.

So, as you may have read from the website, Portland State University is one of the very few institutions of higher education in the Pacific Northwest that offers the degree in Black Studies. The program was founded in 1970 and the department and program itself is unique in how we deal with research, teaching, and further engagements that cover Africa, the United States, the CariBean, South America, Europe, Asia as well.

“When we look at it now, we have grown to become such a force in the university. We are a service university. We provide viable and useful services to the university that go beyond teaching.”

Looking at our past, looking at the social dynamic of the United States and cultural dynamic, this department stood out as one that was born out of activism. It was born out of that commitment to challenge a very Eurocentric view of Black people's pasts and Black people's experiences. The program was born out of the need to challenge Western Eurocentric views of Black people's present and the assumption that this Eurocentric view would somehow, some way shape the future of Black people, the future of Black histories, the future of Black education, the future of Black excellence. So, that was it. We set up as a very very unique department to challenge the intellectual and academic environment. Back then in 1970, the environment was pretty unpredictable and if I must say, was also not so kind to people of color. This was why the department was created. This is why it became, not just a discipline, but an empowering tool.

When we look at it now, we have grown to become such a force in the university. We are a service university. We provide viable and useful services to the university that go beyond teaching. That goes beyond research. Specifically, we are committed to addressing the needs of Black people. The needs of the Black community. Allow me to say that the liberatory nature of the department is one of the most fascinating things about it. We all know our stuff! We want to say yes to liberation, yes to power, yes to empowering Black excellence, Black history, Black voices.

As a department, we did not want to be looked down on. We do not want to be trivialized or politicized. We wanted to stand on our own and wanted to make positive impacts and we've continued to make that impact. When I look at how unique we have positioned ourselves both as a growing faculty, in our research, in our engagement that goes beyond Portland State University. We couldn't be any prouder of how far we have come. I think we started with just a few professors and if I remember vividly, Emeritus Professor Darrell Millner was one of the very first faculty

in the Black Studies department. It was definitely difficult during those formative years to get some structures in place, but now we have grown so much that we offer so many courses and so many programs, we offer two certificates, we have a Center for Black Studies, we have annual Black Bag Speaker Series, and all of that.

“We still struggle as a small department at PSU. We struggle with lack of full support from the university, but we live beyond and above all of our struggles because we appreciate the fact that our department was born out of struggle.”

That is not to say that the struggles are no longer there, they are still there. We still struggle as a small department at PSU. We struggle with lack of full support from the university, but we live beyond and above all of our struggles because we appreciate the fact that our department was born out of struggle. It was an activist department of sorts. So the struggles we have been facing within the institution help to strengthen us and also help us to maintain an active role both in university service and community service. So I think these are some of the things that really set us apart as a unique department. And again, I take pride in saying that there's not a lot of stand-alone Black Studies departments in institutions of higher learning in the United States—not just in Oregon or the Pacific Northwest. So we do really really stand out.

Eva: Wow, that's really interesting to know the history of how the department came out of activism especially during that time period. That's really interesting. Moving forward, this question is along the same vein because you kind of talked about how the program has grown and changed from when it was first founded in 1970. Going forth, what are your hopes and dreams for the progression of the program?

Alozie: Looking at the growth and changes within the department since 1970, it has been phenomenal. PSU's Black Studies department has definitely outlived many similar departments at public universities nationwide.

I think this is testament to the fact that, although it generally has not been easy, there is commitment by the faculty that you always have to fight and we do not postpone that fight. The fight is today. If there is something that is going to hurt our existence, we are going to fight it. This is something that has sustained us in our future plans and helped our students appreciate where they have found themselves.

In terms of future hopes for change and progression, yes. Every academic year, as a department we sit and think about the future of Black Studies. How do we gain more control? How do we gain more relevance? More visibility? We, of course, have made some changes. We now have a very robust faculty—very committed and very student focused. We now have a lot of full-time tenure faculty. I think we have about 6 or so and then we have a lot of adjunct and affiliated faculty and those who teach from other departments because our department is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. We have had faculty from English and Literature, History, Sociology, just to mention a few. It brings us together and opens up a lot of possibilities of considerations that have not existed before in our department.

We offer two certificates. The Black Studies Certificate and the African Studies Certificate that I mentioned [earlier]. We are hoping that these certificates continue to grow. We do have a Center for Black Studies and Professor Walidah Imarisha is the director. At the Center for Black Studies, we facilitate the study of the past and the present which encompasses experiences of Black America generally. One of the goals of the Center is to act as a forum between faculty and students of different disciplines who share a committed interest in Black Studies so they can collect and disseminate information that accurately reflects and helps to improve the Black experience and link the university and Black communities by continuing an active role in community service.

In the future, we want to continue thriving and growing. There are a lot of opportunities we have as a department to collaborate with several other disciplines and I must say that we are also nestled in the School of Gender, Race, and Nations. So, that is really important for context here because you cannot talk about race and nations or even gender without Black studies. So, the work we also do also involves support for the Gender, Race, and Nations graduate program.

In the future, we look forward to making more community connections. Currently, we support taking education to the prisons. We have taught a number of classes at the prisons and interestingly, this spring term, we are going to graduate our first Black Studies Certificate graduates

from the Oregon State Penitentiary which is really exciting for us. Talking about what makes us unique, this will be a historic first for us to be able to award Black Studies certificates to our friends who are incarcerated. So that, for me, is really great evidence of progress and growth.

Eva: Awesome. It's awesome to learn about the graduate studies at the penitentiary. I would love to ask more questions about that at another time. So my next question is asking are there any specific global or domestic issues that are on the program's radar that you are working on with activism or that you're trying to bring awareness to?

Alozie: Yeah, of course. Lately the polarization of the world has just been crazy. Black Studies as a department and as individual faculty, we are at the top of engaging with issues or any issue at all that concerns the oppressions of people or injustices. We position ourselves not just as a Black Studies department in fact, our motto and thanks to my colleague Professor Courtney Terry who mocked up the motto, "Black studies is for everybody and every kind of body". That driving motto helps us to see to it ourselves in conversations surrounding oppressions of any kind. For instance, in conversations around the Middle East right now, you know, Israel and Palestinian conflicts and crises. We are at the top of these conversations. In fact, we are leading the charge with our sister departments in [the School of] Gender Race and Nations to initiate conversations around these injustices. We are at the top of conversations surrounding indigeneity, sovereignty, and people power just to mention a few. We have collaborated with multicultural organizations, student body organizations, and BIPOC organizations just to have these conversations.

Importantly, we do not just stop at talking about it. For example, I've been actively involved in several protests. I have supported activism movements and I know that my colleagues also have. Through our activism, through our scholarship, through our teaching, we bring awareness to these issues. Of course, through collaborations with relevant departments, institutions, and organizations we also attack some of these global and domestic issues. From time to time, we host Black Bag Series that are specific lecture series about specific contemporary issues. This is one of the ways that we are actively involved in addressing some of these domestic or global issues. And sometimes we invite scholars from other universities and institutions to come and speak at our Black Bag events. And of course too, I want to say that the inequalities in our judicial system is something that is at the core of our concern and one the reasons we have a wholesome support for taking education to the prisons. This is how we are addressing some of the domestic issues that border around taking experiences of Black people.

Eva: Thank you so much. I am going to ask one more question and then I'll move it over to Will. This last question can be a loaded question, but what does Black History Month mean to you and the Black Studies program here at PSU?

Alozie: I want to answer this question by letting you know that I enjoy exploring creative ways to teach history. I think one evidence is the satirical pieces I've been proposing to The Pacific Sentinel. Another way is through poetry. So I will answer this question through a poem.

Black is beautiful

Black is excellent

Black is power

Black is pain

Black is joy

Black is evident, very much so

**Black is a journey, engagingly
so**

**Black is so much deeper than
just African American**

Black is humanity

Black is world

Black History Month reaffirms

**Black History Month is
liberating**

Black History Month is Black history

Black History Month is reckoning and appreciation

This poem captures what Black History Month means to me. It is a celebration of how far we, Black people, have come in disappearing the shames surrounding our lived identities, in disappearing the shames around our experiences, in disappearing the shames surrounding Eurocentric views and aspirations that pin Black people down. For me, Black History Month is a season to honor our ancestors and their hidden or sometimes visible contributions. Also, a time to reflect on what we have done in the past and what still remains to be done. Now, as a teacher, I speak both for myself and for my colleagues of the Black Studies department that Black History Month is also about the professor or teacher's freedom to teach the truth about our history. I'm saying this unapologetically. Oftentimes the truth might even hurt those who do not want to hear it, but Black History Month is about reaffirming that freedom and power we have to teach the truth.

We should understand that race and racism shape our laws, our policies, and the structures that are in place despite the years and decades of civil rights reforms. We live in Portland. We live in Oregon and we have literally seen the challenges [facing] people of color.

Black History Month for our department is also about teaching about systemic racism and providing a bridge to unite us all. Thankfully our faculty in Black Studies are thought driven leaders and activist driven leaders in areas of diversity, liberation, anti-oppression, anti-colonialism and decolonial practices, anti-racist pedagogy, feminist intersectionality, and equity and inclusion. We very much believe in that framework that sees Black History Month as a season to help reaffirm our commitment to teach the truth. To defend freedom. To defend the truth. And to amplify the voices that are contributions of Black people, both past and present.

Eva: I love that. Well thank you so much for answering my questions. I am very excited to write all of this down and get it in an article.

Will: I wanted to ask about your experiences growing up and how that has shaped your desire to educate others about the Black experience, in particular at PSU.

Dr. Alozie: Thank you! I really appreciate that you ask about my experiences because my positionality as an African scholar, I believe, is one of my greatest strengths and motivations in teaching, because from time to time I lean on these experiences to impart knowledge and teach my students. Growing up in a modest family and

household, I really got to appreciate my history and I got this appreciation from learning from my grandmother. My family has a history of activism, I think this is in my faculty page, that I come from an ethnic nationality known as the Igbo of Nigeria, and Igbo women were some of the people that organized and executed the first successful all-female-led revolt against colonial authorities, against oppression, against foreign rule, in 1929. And there is a long history of my family woven into that. The women in my life shaped my passion for history, shaped my appreciation for women's history. Remember, when Eva asked what my favorite course is, these are some of the reasons why, again, "Women In African History" turned out to be my favorite.

So, I grew a sense of appreciation for history, then at the same time, I was driven by the need to really pursue education. My family imbibed that in me. Sometimes growing up, my dad, who is late, he would say, "No matter what, get that education, it's as empowering as it can be". It stuck to me and I thought, if everything else fails me, knowledge will not. And this has really helped me to leverage these experiences to teach my classes. And I did say that I started in academia very early in life, I was just roughly 22; The moment I graduated college, I knew I wanted to be a teacher and educator. This is part of a stereotype that I've always hoped to shatter, this view that, "Oh, Africans are uneducated, Africans are 'savages', Africans are uncivilized", whatever, we go around in the streets on lion backs, elephant backs and all of that—frankly, all my life in Nigeria I never saw an elephant until I traveled to England, hahaha! So I mean just to give you the context, right?

So when I think about it, and I begin to think, look at my own lived experience at a young age of 22 I was already a junior lecturer, and when I tell my experience, I say, "Let this serve as evidence to shatter some of these stereotypes!" Then when I look back at the histories of where I come from, in Igboland, in Nigeria, in West Africa, I'm really proud of that history and I use it to teach. When I tell my students that Africa had long established millenia-old civilizations, in fact, we talk about Africa as a cradle of humankind, and sometimes that is where it stops, and it focuses on Egypt, but beyond Egypt, Africa had extensive civilizations. I tell my students higher learning [education] existed in Africa thousands of years ago. In fact, the oldest institution of higher learning is in Africa! That is the oldest, still running, institute of higher learning. And guess what?

It was founded by a woman! I mean, this is empowering knowledge! And I began to think about it. Knowledge is intentional, it's what a section of the community chooses to advance, and here, what has been advanced about Africa is a single story, a sometimes-stereotypical story. So I use my lived experience to encourage my students to look beyond.

“We cannot and should not look at Africa in the context of world history, Black studies, and general knowledge. We cannot and should not look at it from that Black and white perspective, it just clouds our reasoning.”

I am teaching a gender and sexualities class right now and I was telling my students just yesterday, you know, the nuances of gender, the nuances of sexuality. How it is possible for a woman to become a man, how gender is very fluid, how in many African societies positions of authority or power was not determined by you being a man or a woman at all. In fact, a woman could command respect. A woman could be a king. Hollywood has adapted so many episodes of African history, The Woman King, for example. When you think about some of these things, some of these histories, it imbues an appreciation for Africa, for the continent, and specifically for my homeland, Nigeria. So I tell my students, probably everybody, that I am unapologetically African in my thick proud accent, I am African to the core, you know. I don't deny who I am at all, in fact I take pride in the fact that I can leverage that history and that heritage to talk about so many complex histories of Africa. We cannot and should not look at Africa in the context of world history, Black studies, and general knowledge. We cannot and should not look at it from that Black and white perspective, it just clouds our reasoning. So I use my experiences to unpack the nuances. I just have an appreciation for the unique position that being a Black scholar in a predominantly White state and White institution has afforded me [the opportunity] to change and challenge the narrative. I don't shy away from even using my own histories to teach history, I bring all of me, so to speak, in my class.

Will: That is amazing... Thank you so much for such an amazing response. I deeply connect with that because I grew up in a predominantly white town in the midwest, and as a writer I was told a lot that you can't really be a Black writer or stuff like that and then to come to a place that embraces being whoever you are and to meet people that are passionate about being Black writers and being themselves, it's amazing to hear.

So, my second question kind of goes back to school, and as we had said PSU is a predominantly white school, only 4.3% of PSU's student body is Black or African American, and I just wanted to know from you, are there any ways you think that PSU can do more to combat oppression or racism within the academic world or even the Black studies world?

“We want support; individualized support for our students so they can finish their programs, and when we look at it, we say we cannot do this all alone.”

Dr. Alozie: Firstly, you can never go wrong with more institutional support. We would want that, but specifically support in helping us battle the systemic injustices that continue to go on. We are a department made up of concerned and caring activist faculty. Whatever aspect of research that we go into, we actually have that positionality as activists. We are so against racist and systemic oppressive tendencies. So institutional support, more resources to help us fight explicit and implicit forms of anti-Blackness, we would always welcome that. And of course that can go beyond the Portland State University institution, even the state [of Oregon]. So we would love more institutional support and this comes in terms of PSU being more committed to funding our department, hearing our voices as faculty [or] as students, and the administration being committed to protect the cause that we as faculty fight. And now when I say cause, I mean we fight for our students and we fight for our community. I want to emphasize this. We fight for our students, not just giving them knowledge, we protect them. And you made a point about the percent of Black students; we want to grow that population. We want to grow the number of Black students who are in the universities, we want to welcome more and more students to take more majors and minors in Black studies and related disciplines. And

importantly, we want to retain those who are already inside. We have noticed—maybe this is subjective—that Black students have been subjected to so many challenges that hinder them from even graduating.

We want support; individualized support for our students so they can finish their programs, and when we look at it, we say we cannot do this all alone. We would always want more institutional support and then we of course fight for the community; the Black communities, humanities, so to speak. And in that regard too, we would love our sister departments, the institution, to keep supporting efforts that we have initiated and [that] are ongoing to help uplift Black experiences and voices.

When we look at those who gain the most from a Black studies experience, they are people from a culture that has been oppressed, that has suffered segregation, racism, even Jim Crow laws back in the days. And so having an experience in the Black studies department is very eye opening to students. So we don't want to find ourselves struggling so much to juggle all of this, teaching, research, just because we don't have as much financial or resourceful support. And of course, I'm saying this from the position of someone who's in charge of the visibility of our department, the social media director of our department as well, so we do need more visibility. I want the entire university to recognize us, to know more and more about us, to appreciate a department like Black Studies, that, our contributions make the university community. We are important. And that visibility is very much needed.

Will: I very much agree. PSU, I always think there could always be more exposure, frankly I did not know there was a Black studies program in my undergraduate program until I was close to graduating. If I did, I would've taken it as a minor, absolutely. So I 100% agree.

My last question, as a fellow writer, I wanted to go back to your poetry that we were talking about. I read a bit about your creative projects, and I wanted to give you some space, to either talk about them, talk about what your process is like, talk about what they mean to you... I'd love to hear about that.

Dr. Alozie: I'm going to wrap this part of my answer with a part of a poem that I think is powerful to who I am...

As I said, I love poetry. I've been writing since I was a kid. I think one of my greatest strengths is my use of words. I believe in using words very positively. When I lost my dad and two of my sisters, poetry was a sanctuary for me. And of course it allows me to let the world know of my vulnerabilities and strengths. I'm currently working

on an assigned creative project with most of my class, and I start my class by reading some of my poems to my students, most of whom have been inspired to even produce or write poems of their own. I'm working with three students currently to get their poems published. So when I read my poems and I see how empowering it is to them, how inspiring it is, I'm very very fulfilled and happy. But oftentimes people ask me do you have a degree in creative writing? Are you a poet by training? And I say no, I'm just a poet by heart. But more importantly and specifically to my career as a Black studies professor and African historian, my professional background informs my poetry in so many significant ways. I use my expertise in African and Black history and these several other sectionalities as well, women, gender, marginalized voices, social justice, protests; I use my experience to poetically tell Africa's rich history and challenge euro-centric narratives.

“I am currently working to publish my first poetry collection titled *Voices Unmuted: A Poetic Homage to Africa's Histories, Voices, & Reclamation. Voices Unmuted*”

I am currently working to publish my first poetry collection titled *Voices Unmuted: A Poetic Homage to Africa's Histories, Voices, & Reclamation*. *Voices Unmuted* opens up those different paradigms and framings in which Africans are not belittled; they are writing, they are reframing, they are nuancing their own stories. So while I am primarily a historian and scholar, I feel that I can use poetry to teach African history. This collection of poems, though it, African history, can be assessed. It is my hope that we can also chat about new ways that historical meaning can be further harnessed by creating the creative and the historical side by side each other. In that collection, I have four sections;

At The Heart Of Africa: A Reclamation

Contains 18 poems that extensively celebrate African histories, culture, civilization, and legacies, and it also draws a sharp contrast to colonial and western single story narratives.

The White Man's Burden: A Poetic Injustice

Explores the traumas of colonialism, the sense of self, and the African people's fight for freedom.

Herstory: A Panegyric To African Women

A corruption of history; I believe that women's stories have not been told enough.

29 poems that pay tribute to African women who have been historically sidelined or marginalized. In these poems, I engage with multiple expressions of African women's stories and histories and activism.

Our Voices: Waiting For Wakanda

A play on the futuristic of Africa depicted in Black Panther

A collection of 12 poems that speak to Africa's present and future while amplifying our voices in resonant and powerful ways.

Epilogue: Loss and Love: Tributes to Family

A reflection of personal journey in losses and love. When I was talking about my losses, I said I lost my dad and two of my older sisters in a car accident, I was the sole survivor, so I come from a place of survival. As the first child of my family, I felt a weight of responsibility was on my shoulders and I had to be there for my siblings and all of that. When I look back at my story, it's one of strength, abundant love, and I cherish the memories of my dear loved ones that continue to inspire me today.

Let me just read one of these poems, one from “At The Heart Of Africa” and one from “Herstory.” The first one is the title of the collection, *Voices Unmuted*. It says:

In the stillness of time, a silenced voice

Africa's narrative, once a vibrant choice

Echoes of cultures, languages flow

Boundless stories, centuries ago

Colonial shadows, casts the array

Imposing shackles, inflicting pain

A plundered identity, torn apart

Histories rewritten, a thieving art

Languages hushed, silenced in fear

Cultural tapestries, made to disappear

Voices muted, traditions oppressed

Heritage obscured, in deep distress

Legacies fragmented, torn asunder

A silenced past, a stolen thunder

The essence of self, roBed away
Injustice haunting the light of day,
In the rhythms, the beats, the dance
Whispers of resilience, a second chance
A resurgence stirring, a rising tide
Reclaiming narratives, where pride resides
With every tale retold, language revived
Reignited flames once thought deprived
Identity forged anew, strong, and pure
Voices united, an anthem to endure
Africa's spirit, unyielding and bold
Finds strength in stories once untold
A resilient identity, no longer in chains
A reclaiming of voice, where freedom reigns.

And let me indulge you in this poem specifically for women. It's a poem that is so empowering. It is titled "Your Herstory, Miss Ma'am."

Miss ma'am, you are a walking revolution
Look what you have created today by just being you
No need, I will tell you myself in a dozen ways or more.

Number One: Your existence is an act of courage.

Without you, there would be no me.

Number Two: Your life brings meaning to society.

Out of Africa, you have made your mark.

Number Three: Your strength is an act of immense power.

Unmoved. Boundless. Against all odds.

Number Four: Your voice is medicine to a broken system.

Even oppressive systems couldn't silence or break you.

Number Five: Your inimitable beauty is a taste from the gods above.

A refreshingly beautiful and awe-inspiring sight.

Number Six: Your knowledge is a gift to this world.

Challenging his story and retelling history.

Number Seven: Your artistic abilities bring light into darkness.

You constantly waltz in wits and greatness.

Number Eight: Your eyes see truths that go unseen.

Shattering stereotypes and bringing awareness to many.

Number Nine: Your power keeps wielding.

For humanity you shine your ever bright light.

Number Ten: Your adaptive tendencies saved nations.

You have won and are still standing

Number Eleven: Your heart is an act of unconditional love.

In a loveless world you inspire us

Number Twelve: Your spirit keeps enduring and raising hopes.

You are worthy of your harvest.

Miss ma'am, you are a walking revolution.

A plethora of might, magic, and majesty.

Your herstory, miss ma'am, is a must read. So defiant and true.

Artificial Intelligence

A resourceful tool or inhibitor of progress?

BY COURTNEY JEFFS

Over the years, technology has been advancing in various ways. Without the progression of new technologies, society would likely lack vital knowledge of medical care, engineering, science, architecture, and more. However, with the benefits of technological innovations, there have been significant negative aspects such as over-reliance and misuse. Thus, this leads to the question, has technology gone too far? This question has recently been debated as artificial intelligence, more specifically, AI generation, has become more popular through applications such as ChatGPT. Similarly to other technologies, AI generation is a tool that allows users to innovate and create with a light amount of rules against usage. Ultimately, AI generation is trying to make the user's life easier. What could be wrong with wanting to make one's life easier? The answer, in this case, is that a lot could go wrong.

The advantages of artificial intelligence are vast and the world of AI generation is always expanding. Currently, creators use AI generation for multiple purposes, including but not limited to idea generation, artistic creation, writing assistance, design, writing code, and more. In a lot of ways, users in any profession can benefit from using AI in both their personal and professional lives. Although using AI is not a solution for every problem, it can assist in finding an answer and will provide ideas as solutions.

The disadvantages of artificial intelligence are as vast as the possibilities available. As AI generation is an extremely resourceful and helpful tool, it has also been used by creators to manipulate, plagiarize, and spread misinformation that may be provided by AI generators. As users tend to use AI generation in both their personal and professional lives, users can become over-reliant on the generative tool and some even completely rely on it to complete tasks.

An example of misuse of AI generative resources can be seen in further education. Throughout the advancement of these tools, universities such as Portland State have seen an increase in plagiarized and AI-generated papers without citation. However, to check if a paper is written by AI, universities use applications such as Turnitin that detect it, which in turn involve similar AI algorithms.

“artists and creative designers are noticing artistic inconsistencies and overall non-identifiable objects in generative images.”

Additionally, universities are updating their policies regarding AI generation, to promote usage in a legible way. In particular, Portland State University indicates that it “embraces new technologies...to the extent that they advance the university’s mission and values.” Thus encouraging academic freedoms for faculty and students to determine how to use the generative tools in not only a way that’s legible, but also creative.

As the advancement of AI generation is growing at a rapid rate, increasing its usability and performance, there may be an additional lack of job positions. Companies are increasing their AI usage without explicitly mentioning it. Although there is some or even no written evidence that companies and individuals are using AI generation for blogs, media posts, advertisements, and artistic creations, artists and creative designers are noticing artistic inconsistencies and overall non-identifiable objects in generative images. An example of this would be that AI uses inconsistent shadows based on a botched understanding of light theory and image creation.

As the world of technology is constantly evolving, there may be solutions to the current disadvantages that the AI generation currently poses. In contrast, there may even be more mishaps regarding technological misuse and cause an overall ban on AI generation in industries and institutions. Although, with the advantages that AI generative technology has provided the community so far, it’s notable that there could be valuable contributions from the tool. Reflecting on the usage of AI generation, it’s important to bring awareness to the strengths and weaknesses regardless.

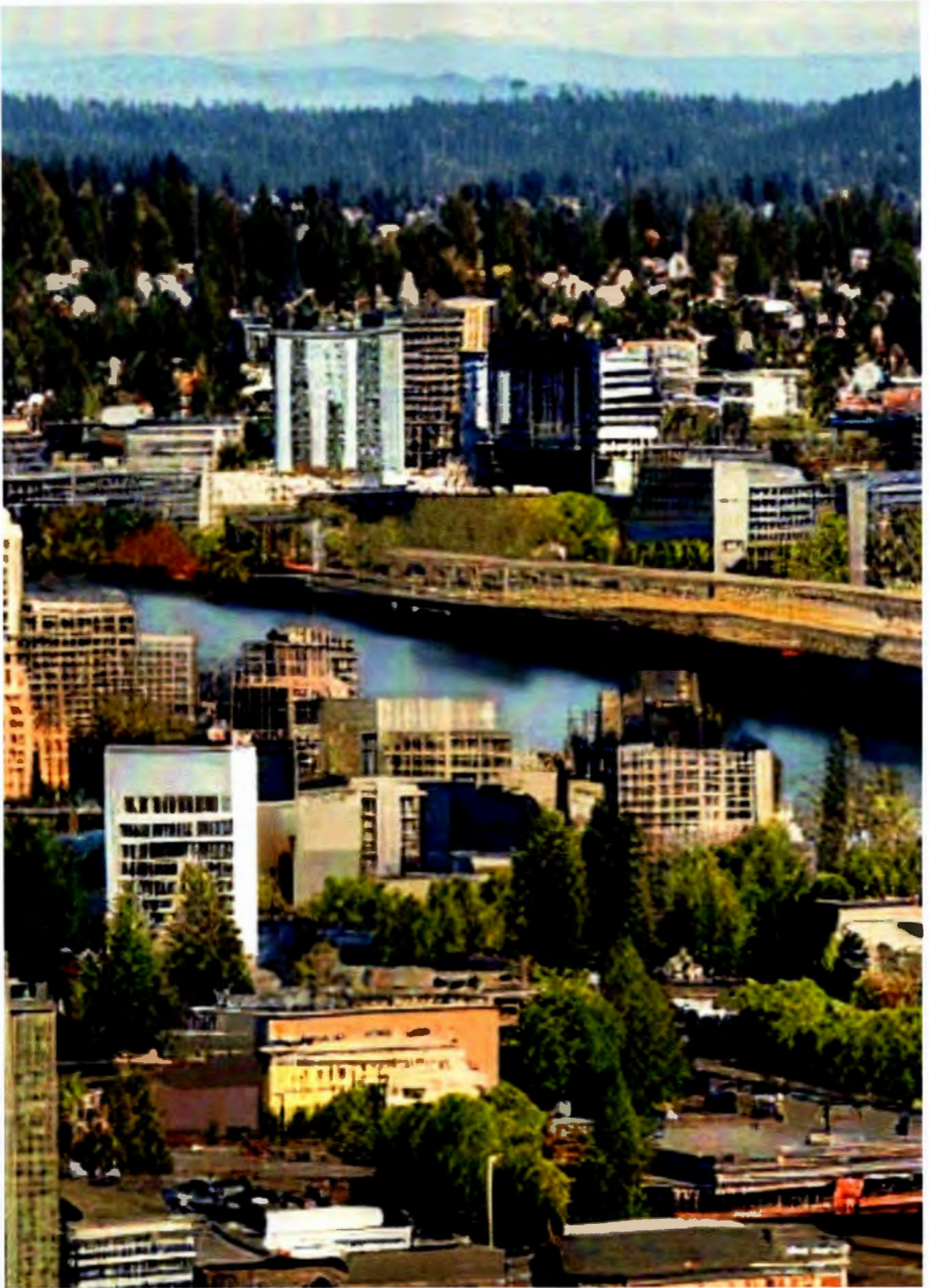


Photo created using AI

Surviving Seasonal Struggles

BY SHAELEE SINGER

LAYOUT DESIGNED BY GRACE LNU

Coping with Living on Campus
or Family Turmoil During The
Holidays

At the End of the Day

A poem By: Shaelee Singer

in the morning i see a text from you and i smile
but the smile quickly fades away with your complaints
i go out to breakfast and see a mom sitting in a booth with her daughter
they were laughing
smiling
happy
loving
carefree
why was that something i never got?
was i just not good enough?
was i born at the wrong time?
was i a mistake?
No.
I'm strong
I'm intelligent
Right?
Mom?
Right...
At the end of the day I'm still the same little girl who cries and begs for love from her mother

At the end of the day I'm still the same little girl who cries and begs for love from her mother

The winter holidays that are celebrated nationally are commonly known for bringing families together and promoting spending quality time together with loved ones. Unfortunately, the holidays are not always a magical time for some people. There are students who have lost family members, have a hard relationship with family, or are unable to travel long distances. A lot of students stay in their dormitories or other living arrangements during winter break due to these difficult dynamics. Unfortunately there is not an exact number for how many students stay on campus over the break from PSU directly. Our campus' population make up 5.6% of international students, 81.2% students from Oregon, 64.1% of students living in the Portland-metro area, and no percentages reported for out of state students shown on Portland State University's website. It is hard to determine if all international students stay on campus over the break, and near impossible for out of state students because there are no numbers or percentages available to make an estimation.

The holidays can be a very emotional experience for some as it may bring up bad memories, or feelings of loneliness being away from family. It can be hard to see others be able to and spend quality time with their families or loved ones when their experience could be the complete opposite for them. A study conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reveals, "64 percent of individuals living with a mental illness reported that their conditions worsened around the holidays" (Bommersbach

2023). For some students, being unable to travel and see family who are either out of state or abroad could feel very isolating. By being away from family during the holiday season intensify feelings of cultural or traditional disconnection. This may cause people who go through this to question themselves about not abiding to what is 'normal' in society.

"64 percent of individuals living with a mental illness reported that their conditions worsened around the holidays"

(Bommersbach, 2023)

could intensify feelings of cultural or traditional. This may cause people who go through this to question themselves about not abiding to what is 'normal' in society. Though, there are ways to combat isolating feelings by creating new traditions, choosing the people you want to spend the holidays with, volunteering to help those in need, or affirming yourself that any negative feelings you may be experiencing during this time are valid. It is a privilege for those who can say they are able to go to a welcoming home with family by

their side. An article published by The Guardian, shares experiences from the author, Becca Bland that sympathizes with people, "who are estranged from their family, or those who don't have a festive home to return to" (Bland 2014). This article gives readers a perspective from what it is like to be someone who struggles with family dysfunction during the holidays. As someone who has spent most of their holidays living on campus, it is definitely something that is a very isolating and depressing time of year for me. Though it does not mean that everyone who spends the holidays alone either on or off campus or who cannot see family is unhappy. There are a lot of people who just prefer to be alone on the holidays, or find a way to make the season enjoyable.

As someone who has spent most of their holidays living on campus, it is definitely something that is a very isolating and depressing time of year for me.

Here are some ways to make your holidays more enjoyable if you are alone!

Find Volunteer Opportunities

You can attend local shelters, churches, and centers in order to help others in need during the winter months. There are different types of volunteering like, at a veterinary office, animal shelters, or at a retirement home

Give Presents To Yourself

Though the holiday season is supposed to represent selflessness and sharing, if you are alone sometimes people do not have gifts to share with others. It's important that self-love and acceptance is shown to yourself in order to remind you that your needs and wants during this season are important too.

Attend Local Community Events

During the Winter season, there are a lot of local and public events dedicated to celebrating holidays. Most religious spaces hold holiday-themed events, and for those who may be non-religious there are other numerous events that can be participated in.

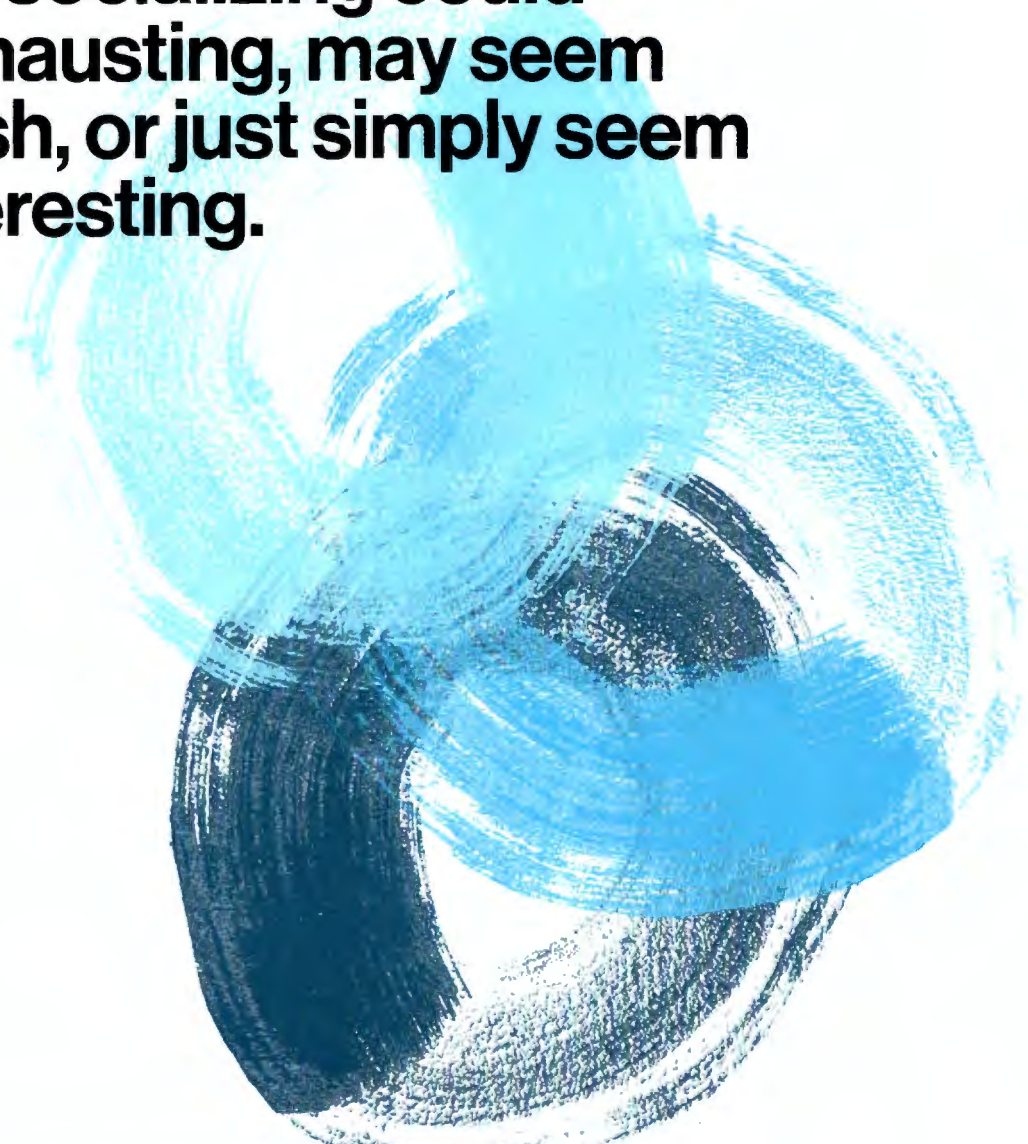
Reset Holiday Expectations

It's time to get rid of society's expectation of winter holidays and create your own expectations. Not all holidays are required to involve family, by creating something new to expect (e.g., spending it with friends, having specific activities to do, etc) can help erode societal norms surrounding the holidays.

As we approach our first month of Winter term, some may feel that it is difficult to talk about what they did over break or hear about other people's holiday memories. Right now can be a sensitive time for some individuals as some may get more support from family than others do. Consider the potential emotional impact on your peers or friends before asking them questions about winter. It is important to be mindful of assumptions that can be subconsciously made when speaking about the festivities of winter break. There are some who also do not feel any connection to the holidays and prefer to spend them alone or with other people. Not having a strong bond with winter holidays is completely valid, sometimes all the socializing could be exhausting, may seem childish, or just simply seem uninteresting.

During this time of year, take caution talking about holiday festivities as not everyone may celebrate, or it could lead to bringing up memories that could potentially be triggering; especially for those who do not have strong family support. Remember that the way you are feeling about the season is completely valid, and not all family holidays are required to be happy ones.

Not having a strong bond with winter holidays is completely valid, sometimes all the socializing could be exhausting, may seem childish, or just simply seem uninteresting.



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ILLUSTRATION BY ANN MCBRIDE

Twin Peaks

ABC
(1990)

Will's Score: ★★★★★

Much like Dale Cooper entering the town on that day, I start my yearly rewatch of Twin Peaks on February 24th. Equal parts surreal, funny, and horrific, Twin Peaks tells the story of Special Agent Dale Cooper as he investigates the mysterious murder of Laura Palmer, a local teenager and prom queen. Twin Peaks is an essential 90's television show; it manages to combine soap opera tropes, a healthy amount of thought provoking imagery, and just the right amount of mystery.



Illustration by Julianne Dalope

Night Country

HBO Max
(2024)

Eva's Score: ★★★★★

I've only watched the first episode of the new "True Detective" series, but I'm already hooked. This series follows a woman detective played by none other than Jodie Foster! The show takes place in a small Alaskan town called Ennis which has a town sign that reads "Welcome to The End of The World." This new series takes inspiration from native legend and folktale to backdrop the show which I find so interesting. I will probably have to write a full review on this show when I'm done because I have so much to say just about the first episode!

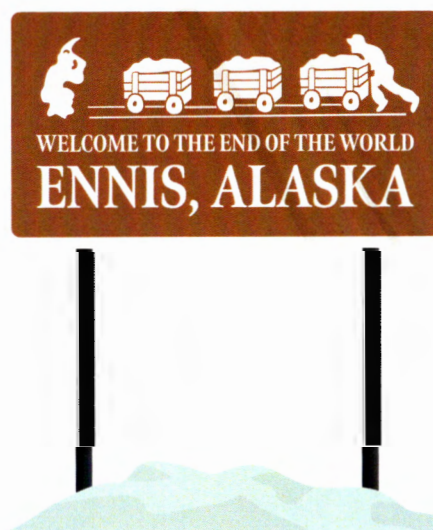


Illustration by Julianne Dalope

Percy Jackson and the Olympians

Disney+
(2024)

Yomari's Score: ★★★★★

If you grew up reading and devouring Percy Jackson like I did you will live and breathe this show. Yes, this isn't book accurate and it isn't as campy as the 2010 fever dream we love to hate on, but this gives a live action look at the characters we grew up loving and created lovable characters, great storylines for characters that were seen as monsters, and a peak inside Camp Half Blood (a place every Percy Jackson lover always wanted to go).



Illustration by Courtney Jeffs

Electric Dreams

Amazon
(2017)

Becky's Score: ★★★★★

I recently stumbled upon the 2017 Amazon Prime series Electric Dreams. After the first few episode binges, I couldn't believe I let this gem slip through the cracks. The Electric Dreams episodes are made up of unrelated stories in the sci-fi genre fixated on dystopian type worlds. If you've already watched all of Netflix's Black Mirror and you need a fix, Electric Dreams is the perfect medicine.

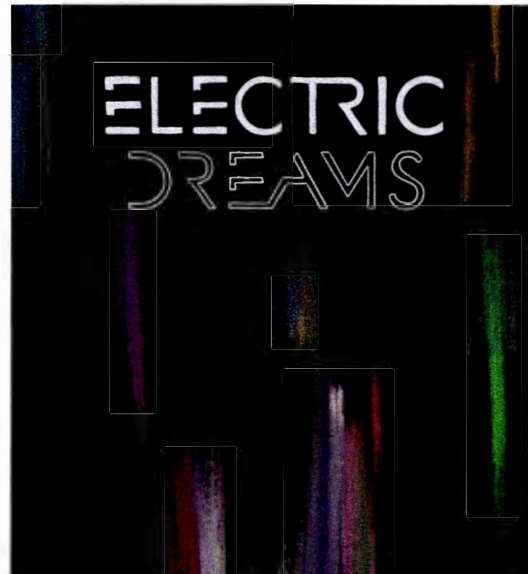


Illustration by Eva Sheehan

Snowstorms

Literally just the weather

Courtney's Score: ★★

As this segment is dedicated to what we've been enjoying, I apologize for the disappointment. I haven't been crazy about the winter weather. As the snowstorms rage throughout January and February here in Portland, I am reminded I am ill-equipped for the cold and ice. One thing that I enjoy out of the chaotic weather however is the beautiful sight of the fresh fallen snow.



Photo by Will Boechler

Saying Yes to Games

Sorry, Phoebe

Laura's Score: ★★★★★

As the wise Phoebe Bridgers once said, "Games kill the vibe. The vibe being literally any vibe." I used to subscribe to Phoebe's philosophy, but lately, due to friends with an obsession with card and board games, I've been learning to say 'yes', and surprisingly, I've succumbed to some of these games' tricky charms. I'll never be the biggest gamer, but it does feel good to ride my beginner's luck while it lasts.



Illustration by Courtney Jeffs

Priscilla Block \$20+

@ Wonder Ballroom

FRI. 2/16 @ 9:00 PM
DOORS OPEN AT 8:00 PM

Country artist Priscilla Block draws listeners in with her unfiltered, relatable songwriting and catchy melodies.

PDX Jazz Fest FREE

@ The Hoxton

WED. 2/21 - THU. 2/22
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

As part of PDX Jazz's annual Jazz Festival, Lovely Rita is playing host to two live jazz performances. Join the festivities at the Hoxton for music, cocktails and food.

PSU Farmer's Market FREE

@ Portland State University

EVERY SAT. 8:30AM - 2:00PM

Every Saturday, vendors set up shop at the PSU Park Blocks to sell their crafts. Grab locally grown produce and hand-baked goods at this wildly popular Portland Farmer's Market.

Portland Intl. Auto Show \$28+

@ Oregon Convention Center

THU. 2/22 - SUN. 2/25

The Portland International Auto Show takes place every winter at the Oregon Convention Center. The largest auto show in the Pacific Northwest region features more than 600 vehicles by 35 producers. It occupies over 480,000 square feet of exhibit space, showcasing the latest trends in car design and modern technology.

Jurassic Park in Concert \$35+

@ Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall

SAT. 2/24 @ 7:30 PM - SUN. 2/25 @ 2:00 PM

This action-packed adventure pits man against prehistoric predators in the ultimate battle for survival. Now audiences can experience Jurassic Park as never before, projected on the big screen with the orchestra performing John Williams' iconic score live.

Comedy Night \$10+

@ McMenamins Al's Den

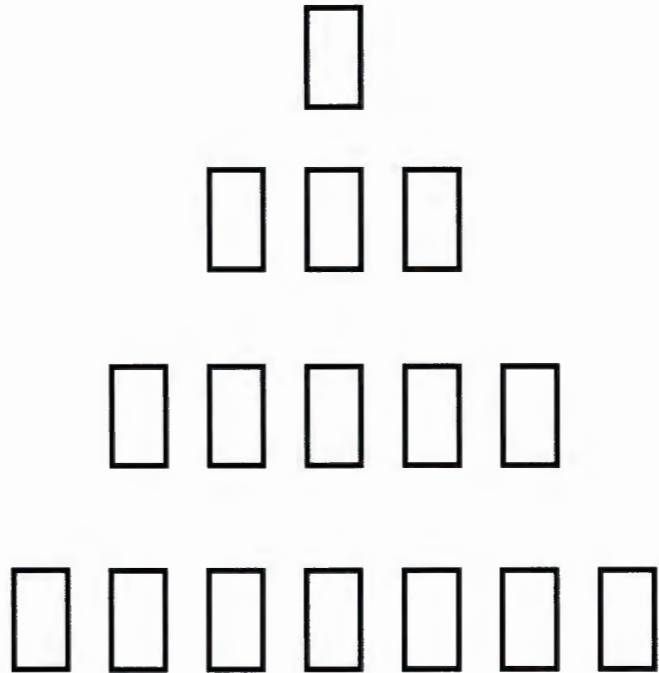
THU. 2/22 @ 7:30PM

McMenamins Presents: Comedy Night at Al's Den hosted by Brandon Lyons Get your laugh on Friday and Saturday nights as comedy returns to Al's Den. 21+ event.

events calendar

NIM: HOW TO PLAY

- 1 Grab a friend and 2 different colored things to write with.
- 2 First player crosses out as many squares as they want. Squares must be from the same row, and at least one must be crossed out.
- 3 Second player does the same. The person who gets to cross out the last square is the winner.



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