SPECTATOR

RADICALISM
THEN AND NOW
The Media’s Sweet Tooth For Eastern Europe

By Ben Simpson

Violence erupts in Ukraine and Venezuela alike, and while news coverage sinks its teeth into the former, the South American country is hardly dished.

Science Depends On…

Failure?

Matt Reynolds

Or rather, should disproved theories be seen as failures?

Return to Academia

Eugene Messer

The journey back to school is all about the discoveries along the way.

“Gentrification is akin to the displacement of warm air by cold air, high pressure systems swirling around low pressure neighborhoods. The rich displacing the poor, the privileged elbowing the disenfranchised.”

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Spring Break went by in a blink, and that’s nothing new. Something else that’s nothing new: the debate over athletics funding at PSU. In the past, we had a student body president who wanted to cut football completely. He was also the first black student body president on any campus in Oregon. For more on this, see page 4.

All right, so we’ve got this AAUP strike ordeal going on. No matter how you feel about it, you might as well stay updated at portlandspectator.org. We are committed to having weekly updates on the impasse/strike, or daily updates—as soon as there is new info, you will see it.

Meanwhile, as President Wiewel’s administration and PSU faculty negotiate over budget priorities, our tuition dollars are being pocketed by university employees thanks to our school’s corrupt system of logging hours. It would be nice to think that, after paying so much in tuition, our student dollars would at least see the light of day, whether in faculty salaries or real estate investments. Unfortunately, some of our school’s money is being syphoned by a web of administrators with connections and/or student employees. Read it on page 9.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to express right off the bat how frustrated the Spectator is with this administration’s lack of contact with us—specifically, President Wiewel and University Communications personnel. We had a date set with Wiewel for an interview, we had it set for three weeks, and the administration cancelled last minute. Since then, we haven’t received more than a hastily-scrawled line from the administration. (Read it on page 19.) Apparently, Wiewel is “too busy” to talk to student publications. Which is such a shame. It’s hard enough to attempt to write a well-rounded story on current events at PSU without your university’s president dodging you.

It isn’t very comforting to receive the cold shoulder from an administration which you’re paying thousands of dollars toward.

But then again, by ignoring us, the administration has given us another thing to write about. We’ve got to hand it to them for that much, at least. On this note, please don’t take our timeline on page 18 as a sob story. Yes, we are disappointed, truly heartbroken. But more importantly, we consider it our job to flag a university’s lack of conversation with student publications—especially considering the critical situation at PSU currently.

I’ll end with a reminder that we would like, as a platform for student voices, to be as diverse in opinions as possible. Are you passionate about what’s going on at PSU? Write about it. We want to publish you. Seriously. Wim’s rejection kind of has us feeling down and out. We could really use a friend right now. Just email us or come down to the office, Smith S-29. Let’s talk and get you published.

Jake Stein
Editor-In-Chief
LAST MONTH, two Portland State University students debated the merits of funding the university’s athletics program. Held in Smith Memorial Student Union, the event featured Keegan Meyer, arguing for defunding the program, and Marlon Holmes, who made a case for retaining it.

“Obviously it’s radical to defund athletics, but what I’m really calling for is a condensed and more efficient budget,” Meyer said during the debate.

Radical, maybe. But only by today’s standards.

In March 1969, Andrew Haynes was elected as PSU student body president, becoming the first black student body president in Oregon history. The Oregonian reported that Haynes defeated “his nearest opponent, Stan Amy, by a vote of 1,010 to 781.” At the time, PSU had an enrollment of 10,000 students, meaning Haynes won with over 10 percent of the student body’s vote. Overall, there was a 28 percent voter turnout, which was the largest in PSU history, reported the 1969 PSU yearbook.

In 2013, out of 28,766 students, the ASPSU election drew only 569 total voting students, representing just under 2 percent of the student body.

Two months after his election, Haynes announced his goals for PSU: abolish the football program, create a community government for the university, ban police from campus, establish guaranteed admissions quotas for minorities who could not meet entrance requirements, and establish an “experimental college” offering a new variety of courses.

Not only were these ambitious goals, but Haynes’ planned course of action was also unprecedented. “We will confront and negotiate with the university to effect these changes. If the negotiations are not successful, then we will have to resort to tactics to force a closure of the school before it opens next fall,” he told the student body. Talk about radical.
Haynes sought to get rid of the football program, largely for the same reasons Meyer has outlined for defunding athletics. Haynes felt the football program was “an expensive waste of money for ill-attended entertainment,” reported the Vanguard. He also said the money invested in football “could be put to much better use,” specifically for educational purposes. The Oregonian reported that Haynes wanted to “divert any money saved to scholarships,” strikingly similar to a statement made by Meyer at the March 5 athletics debate, answering a question of how saved money could be used. “My suggestion would be to put it into a diversity scholarship fund,” Meyer responded.

Meyer and Haynes also both argued that the athletics program does not draw much student support, even though students are forced to finance it.

Opponents of Haynes’ football abolition raised points similar to those Holmes mentioned at the debate—in particular, athletics’ role in preparing students for the job market. Holmes took a more general approach, citing a range of skills fostered by participation in athletics which are also attractive to future employers, while Haynes’ opponents were more specific, citing the Physical Education major as a reason athletics are vital. “When schools look at our record for a job they don’t care what our academic record is; they want to know if we can coach football,” one opponent told the Vanguard.

Aside from football abolishment, Haynes also focused on enacting a “community government” for the university. This idea evolved out of an older plan to create a “student-faculty” government. He cited PSU’s real-estate ventures, particularly the buying up and tearing down of housing surrounding PSU to make parking lots, as evidence that PSU’s actions affect the community as much as they do the campus. As such, the community should be involved in the school’s decision-making, he said.

Additionally, Haynes envisioned an “experimental college” at PSU, which would offer courses not offered by the normal university departments. The idea would be to give students a chance for a more diversified education. In practice, students “could design (with the appropriate advisor) a degree-granting program relevant to [their] career interest,” Haynes told the Vanguard. One of the first of these experimental classes would be black studies.

Haynes was adamant about removing police presence from campus. He felt that “the presence of police in times of tension and potential conflict stimulates unnecessary violence,” reported the Vanguard. Haynes wanted to establish a boundary the police could not cross, which would stretch from SW Market to SW Hall, and SW 6th to SW Park, encompassing a large portion of the central campus.

The final measure of his five-point-plan was to increase diversity on campus, even extending admission to those who were unable to pass entrance exams. Haynes felt that guaranteed admissions quotas for minorities at PSU could “go far in defeating racism in the Portland metropolitan region,” reported the Vanguard.

By his own admission, Haynes’ efforts largely did not come to fruition during his tenure as student body president. By September, he had not received the support he wanted in order to justify forcing the closure of the school. At a Sept. 3 press conference he cited the lack of “true activist elements” at PSU as one reason the changes would not occur. He again reiterated the necessity for dramatic action, such as closing the school, citing its power over ineffective dialogue with the administration. “I don’t think that conversation without other measures does that much,” he said.

But although the issues were not resolved during his presidency, he lit the fire for causes that would continue to interest the PSU community—even into 2014.

**FOURTY-FIVE YEARS LATER**

Although the voting figures from 1969 and 2013 suggest a lesser degree of modern student interest, the issues of concern to the campus community have remained strikingly similar.

In 1969, after opposing Haynes’ proposal, a member of the football team was asked when the team would be able to be self-supporting. “Football could be self-supporting in one year,” the team member told the Vanguard. “All it takes is the right coach and the right junior college transfers.”

That “one year” has come—four and a half decades later. But it’s not due to the right coaches and transfer students. “PSU can no longer afford to subsidize our football program from the university’s annual general operating fund,” wrote President Wim Wiewel, in a Dec. 2013 email to the student body. “The program will be required to become self-supporting.” This move came after the administration calculated an alleged budget deficit of $15 million, and searched for ways to reduce the university’s operating budget.

A community government has also recently materialized, though it’s unclear how much similarity it bears with Haynes’ vision. Starting in July, PSU will be governed by a Board of Trustees, made up of prominent Portland residents, as well as President Wim Wiewel, one faculty member, one non-faculty employee, and a student. This board will be involved in decision-making in many aspects of the university, including “reviewing the President’s compensation,” “providing oversight and guidance to the University’s strategic direction,” and “ensuring and protecting, within the context of faculty shared governance, the educational quality of the University and its academic programs,” according to the Board of Trustees Bylaws.

The “strategic direction” bylaw comes across as particularly relevant to Haynes’ goal—community members having a voice in the direction the university is taking. It’s a little late for the community to stop the real-estate demolitions Haynes was concerned about, but, as PSU is constantly expanding, perhaps it will have a say in future land grabs.

An “experimental college” in the style Haynes described actually had its beginnings several months before he was elected.
Called “Chiron Studies,” it was created during the summer of 1968, and began offering student-led classes that fall. One of its first courses offered was called “Psychology in the Community and the College,” and provided students the opportunity to go on a ride-along with local police.

Students had called for a student-led program for months beforehand, and received a fair amount of support from faculty, and even, to a certain extent, administration. Branford Millar, university president at the time, was supportive of the idea of course experimentation, but did not see the necessity for a dedicated program. “There are lots of ways to experiment within the existing curriculum,” he told the Vanguard.

Nevertheless, Chiron Studies succeeded in creating a dedicated program, and retained it for forty-five years. In 2012, former Provost Roy Koch ended its funding, and in 2013, Provost Sona Andrews declined to begin funding the program again. Instead, she suggested that the program find a different host department—it had been affiliated with the Office of Academic Affairs until then. On May 30, 2013, in response to these decisions, students rallied to show support for Chiron Studies, affirming that the desire for student-led courses continues to this day.

As it currently stands, Chiron Studies is in the process of becoming integrated with the University Studies program, according to the Chiron Studies Facebook page. It seems former President Millar’s vision, an experimental college integrated into an existing academic program, will be the new reality for Chiron Studies, after 45 years of independence.

Haynes’ emphasis on police reform is also highly relevant at modern PSU. While there are currently no proposals to remove police presence entirely from PSU, there are efforts to limit its power.

Last April, President Wiewel announced he would be convening a Task Force on Campus Safety (TFCS), in order to study the status of PSU campus security. In his announcement, he acknowledged that this task force was spurred by the question of “whether or not PSU’s Campus Public Safety Office should become a fully sworn police department.” Ostensibly, the task force would report back to the president with its findings, and make a recommendation on whether or not to deputize campus police. And therein lies the problem.

“We believe that the process has been less than transparent,” said Cameron Frank, a member of PSU’s Student Action Coalition (StAC) as well as the Portland State University Student Union (PSUSU), groups that have opposed both the idea of deputization and the way the process is being carried out. “The only two students on the task force were hand-selected by administrators.”

And, just as Haynes spoke of the potential for police to increase the amount of violence on campus rather than reduce it, StAC has its doubts about the efficacy of a deputized police force on campus. “We don’t think armed men with guns will make students more safe, or feel more safe,” said Frank. “There are tons of diverse and creative alternatives to policing that would actually be more effective for keeping students safe by targeting the real issues.”

**Drastic Action**

Haynes argued that, in terms of influencing university reform, threatening closure was the “only tool of power students have,” reported the Vanguard. He acknowledged that closing the school until reforms were enacted would negatively impact students, but countered that the outcome would justify the temporary inconvenience. He mentioned years of conversations about the aforementioned issues, and said that those talks had “been unable to demonstrate enough progress” in advancing the causes. Essentially, he and others felt that the status quo could no longer go on to the detriment of the campus community, and that direct action was the only strategy remaining.

This seems like a fitting parallel for the current contract negotiation process between the PSU chapter of the American Association of University Professors (PSU-AAUP) and the university administration. They have been unable to reach an agreement on a new contract for PSU professors, and the past few months have seen a progression toward a possible strike. And, as with Haynes’ strategy, nobody wants to take this drastic action.

“We don’t want to strike,” said Mary King, president of the PSU-AAUP. “We’d rather be teaching, advising students and carrying on with our research.” But, also as with the atmosphere in 1969, at a certain point the status quo is no
longer acceptable, and, as lesser measures are not effecting change, alternative tactics must be considered.

“We can’t sit by while the PSU budget is shifted further and further out of the classroom, and away from where it most benefits the people who are paying the bills,” said King.

Arguments have arisen that drastic action hurts students more than it sends a message to the administration. However, just as Haynes defended his strategy, supporters of a potential strike argue that current conditions are too harmful for the community not to take direct action.

“Students are already in pain,” said Patricia Schechter, professor of history and member of the PSU-AAUP executive council. “And I know that if we don’t do something, we’re not going to get what we want.”

In addition to a willingness to engage in direct action, groups working for change also share similarities in internal organizing strategies through the years.

Haynes was a member of a PSU group called the Activists’ Coalition, which, while not part of the student government, would offer support from outside—indeed, he insinuated that this group had the means to enact the school closure if there was enough support. In effect, they could do things that the student government could not.

Last month, the Spectator interviewed two members of PSUSU, who explained the idea of an “inside strategy” and an “outside strategy” in terms of effecting campus change.

“[ASPSU] can interface with the administration in ways that we can’t because they don’t want to talk to us. Which is fine, because we can speak more directly to the student body,” said Inna Levin. “It’s been a really beneficial relationship to both organizations.”

Frank added that “PSUSU works outside of the bureaucratically acceptable means that the administration has laid out for students to participate in the university system with.”

It seems likely that Haynes’ Activists Coalition, with its purported school-closure abilities and confidential membership, also worked outside of the administrative reach.

**STUDENT EFFORTS ALIVE AND WELL DESPITE NUMBERS**

Student involvement still has a presence at PSU, although cynics might see the voter turnout figures as evidence to the contrary. History indicates, however, that cynicism is also a time-honored tradition, no matter what the numbers show.

Shortly after Haynes made his proposals, the Vanguard printed a letter to the editor titled “PSU apathy plague,” which described a referendum ballot that the newspaper had published to stop Haynes. The author bemoaned the fact that “less than 1500 students” voted on the referendum, further exclaiming, “for less than 14 percent of the students to vote is ridiculous.”

While it’s unnerving to imagine what the letter writer would say when faced with the modern figures—2 percent student voter turnout for ASPSU elections, 0.3 percent signing a petition to defund athletics, far fewer attending the athletics debate—it is encouraging that activist groups like the Student Action Coalition and PSUSU have formed, and that the Black Student Union—created as a student group in 1968, now evolved into the Black Studies Department—is coming together again through student efforts (see our May issue for an interview with PSU’s new Black Student Union).

It suggests that, despite the apparent overwhelming apathy regarding elections, there is still a desire to effect change on campus. And it might even be increasing.
"I think there's definitely a movement growing at PSU," said Frank. "I would expect to see some very interesting things happening should the strike go down." If this proves true, it would follow a general trend of campus controversy spurring action. In 1969, Haynes' ideas generated a great deal of contention among the student body, which led to a higher degree of student organizing, nicely encapsulated by an at-the-time Vanguard headline: "Haynes' proposals spur student involvement."

"A faculty member recently told me she hasn't seen anything like this in the 20 years she's been teaching here," said Frank.

Indeed, there seems to be some long-dormant student activism emerging on campus. And while it may not resemble anything from the past 20 years, it's sure similar to what happened at PSU in 1969. In fact, even the language matches up.

The Vanguard interviewed Haynes shortly before his election, and asked what the concept of "student power" meant for him.

"Power is the ability to influence things in a very significant way," he responded. "Students need that power in a university in terms of budget and curriculum especially. We need to decide if we are getting benefit from the money spent in that area, area X."

The February "student power" events hosted by PSUSU, and the recent student and faculty calls for "tuition dollars in the classroom" and a "student-centered budget," stand out as examples of this ideology at work in the modern setting.

"The student government needs to combine itself with the faculty in the form of student-faculty power," Haynes told the Vanguard in 1969.

With this quote in mind, it is difficult not to think of the level of student support that has arisen for faculty during the contract negotiations. At a panel discussion in January, speakers also emphasized the importance of support between students and faculty. "Faculty interests and student interests align more often than not," said Rayleen McMillan, director of university affairs for ASPSU.

Haynes' mention of "student-faculty power" especially calls to mind the Feb. 27 campus community rally in support of the professors, which concluded with the crowd chanting, "students and faculty, side by side."

"To stand with students, to hear them say the things they were saying, it was a high point of my professional life," said Schechter.

That rally, combined with the growing student involvement on campus, may be the ultimate connection with past movements for change.

"At the walkout, it really felt like a flashback to the anti-war demonstrations from the late 60s," said Lorraine Mercer, professor of English. "I don't think there have ever been so many students gathered together at PSU like there were that day."
They Are Pocketing Our School’s Money, And “They” Could Be Anyone

An out-dated honor code system and the departure of an SMSU supervisor leaves our student union and dollars in a questionable situation

We invest in Portland State University for education, trusting our tuition dollars to be handled professionally. With all the money students pour into this university, we assume our money will be used to, say, keep Smith Memorial Student Union (SMSU) running smoothly, and pay people to manage the building who won’t steal money presumed to be invested in this school.

The final allocation for SMSU from student fees was just under $1.2 million this year. That means 20 dollars is taken out of each student’s tuition every term to fuel SMSU maintenance and employees. Thus, the university should take care of its student union building, and hire people who won’t cheat the system. This should go without saying.

But that’s not the case—not with an outdated, unverifiable employee clock-in system, a building that’s falling apart, and a serious lack of inspiring, ethical leadership.

Manipulation of an outdated system.
Smith Memorial Student Union is a hotbed for what is called “time card fraud”—entering false hours on employee time sheets. Employee hours are manually entered online by the employee via banweb, then verified by managers looking at schedules.

It’s a process which relies overwhelmingly on trust. Administrative and student employees are trusted to enter their own hours and, subsequently, administrators are trusted to diligently check logged hours with respective schedules for each individual. It is a tedious system, prone to mistakes and susceptible to deliberate manipulation by those who believe, well, they deserve a few extra hours here and there.

Ian Lomax, former Events and Logistics Team Supervisor for SMSU, left his job because, apparently, it was more than a matter of just a few extra hours here and there.

“It’s such an old system,” Lomax says. “You manually input everything. When you have 15 employees who work three days a week, it takes hours just sitting in front of a computer verifying at the end of the month. It’s just not realistic, and that’s why it’s never done.”

Lomax was discouraged when he realized it was not only student employees fudging the numbers, but administrative personnel too. He speaks of administrators clocking full days when absent, or taking paid breaks to go shopping. “It’s even easier for administrators,” Lomax claims, “because no one is watching them, and they are the ones in charge of it. They are never going to get questioned.”

Unfortunately, names must be withheld from such accusations due to a lack of higher-ups who will publically corroborate Lomax’s assertions.

Pam Hutchins, director of PSU Human Resources, bailed out of an interview with the Spectator and has neglected to reply to all further attempts at rescheduling. Recently University Communications has acted in a remarkably similar fashion and, ironically, has failed to communicate with the Spectator (see page 18). Mark Russell, SMSU operations manager, states, “There is only one instance of time card fraud that I am aware of.”
The single, only time that time card fraud has ever been committed, ever.

Lomax and Russell can both agree on a certain student employee who, years ago, swindled unknown amounts of money from PSU. “He’d come in the morning,” Lomax explains, “swipe, and then swipe back out—this guy was getting 40-plus more hours than everyone else, and no one caught it [at first].” Eventually a fellow student employee brought the situation to Lomax’s attention—but even after the culprit was dismissed for his acts of theft, HR neglected to deactivate his account, according to Lomax. “He was still funnelling money out of the school when he didn't even have a job.”

Such a situation proves the extent to which PSU’s banweb timesheet can be manipulated. Russell believes this was an isolated incident; Lomax, on the contrary, insists it is ludicrous to pretend that this is the only instance that time card fraud has ever been committed. After all, even if top SMSU administrators like Mark Russell happened to be aware of other instances of fraud, would they risk publicity at the expense of their careers?

Lomax witnessed administrators stealing from the school, yet when he reported these thefts, no action was taken and everything was swept under the rug. “These administrators have relationships for so long that they become friends here. It’s not business anymore—it’s this ‘you owe me a favor’ type of thing, or ‘let’s keep this quiet.’”

This circle of administrative patronage drove Lomax to the brink. “If you stick around, keep your eye on things, you can see it happening,” he insists. “The student employees see it—but they aren’t going to say anything because you can fire a student for any reason.”

Lomax was reluctant to leave PSU. “I love events and logistics,” he says. But recurring instances of corruption within the management and administration of SMSU persuaded Lomax to quit—leaving a team of unsupervised student employees in his wake.

It all falls on the Events Logistics Team.

The student workers of SMSU’s Events Logistics Team (ELT) are the ones who keep the building operating. They set up events, tear down, stack chairs, push tables, lock and unlock doors. They perform the grunt work in a deteriorating student union. They often work as late as 2:00 a.m., even during midterms or dead week.

At the moment, they find themselves in a frustrated state of chaos.

“I’m completely over it,” says one ELT student employee, when asked about the state of affairs in Lomax’s absence. ELT workers have always struggled with administrative scheduling errors, but now, without direct supervision, it’s only gotten worse. Student employees are now receiving direction via text messages from administrators like Russell.
“Without Ian,” says one ELT member, “nobody really knows what we’re doing.”

“Sometimes work orders don’t even make sense,” says another member. “It could be either this or that. By the time you figure it out, the administrators are gone at around 4:00 or 5:00, and you have to call them.”

With scheduling errors on a nightly basis concerning room setups, and the lack of in-person direction, this tough situation takes its toll on the ELT. “C’mon,” one student employee exclaims, “I have no idea what you want in here.”

“If I was hired on as a faculty employee of Portland State, I might feel differently,” says the same ELT worker.

It doesn’t exactly require a stretch of the imagination to understand why some students might feel they deserve extra hours. Especially when student employees see the negligence of those managing them, and the leniency given to administrators who slack off.

“They say they go to work, and then they don’t,” an ELT employee professes. “There are a lot of times that it seems like administrators will disappear during events.”

“They’re so isolated from the groundwork,” says another student, “they partially don’t know how to communicate with [us].”

On the whole, the ELT agrees with Lomax’s sentiment: logged hours are practically unverifiable, and time card fraud is a recurring problem among students and administrators alike. “Whoever approves the cards doesn’t check,” says one employee confidently.

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“Redundancy,” for better or worse.

So, are there safeguards that could be implemented to prevent theft by SMSU employees?

“There are safeguards in place,” says Russell. “We are transitioning into TimeTrax. You have to be physically present in order to use that system.”

TimeTrax, a physical clock-in system, was used in conjunction with banweb timesheets prior to Lomax entering the scene as ELT supervisor in 2011—but was quickly rejected by Lomax and students alike. Student employees call it “really redundant,” and Lomax points out the increased potential for human error when involving two manual systems for tracking the same thing. That certain “single” student employee who committed time card fraud years ago (see above) did so despite a physical clock-in system being in place as a safeguard at the time. “There needs to be an automated system straight to banweb,” says Lomax. “Not manual, so you can’t cheat it.”

Russell, however, wants to make the current combination of TimeTrax and the old banweb timesheet the status quo. “We feel the redundancy is a good thing.”

For Russell goes on to admit, “I certainly wouldn’t trust banweb by itself.”

Even so, banweb was the sole component of this time card system after Lomax left in mid-January until TimeTrax was implemented again in early March. That’s about two months of time when, apparently, the system could not be trusted.

“Goofy… horrible… insane.”

The current situation of time card fraud in SMSU seems to revolve around a nightmare of bureaucracy, a network of administrative pals who won’t own up to their actions, and a crew of poorly-scheduled and mismanaged student workers. Some of these administrators and students might be able to shed some light on the situation, but are afraid of retaliation. What is swept under the rug for well-connected higher-ups is considered a “dismissible offense” for student workers.

“You can get rid of students for absolutely no reason,” claims Lomax. “It’s all intimidation. It’s goofy, it’s horrible. It’s insane.” The fact that all ELT employees interviewed by the Spectator requested to remain confidential is perhaps evidence of their common fear of retaliation from the administration.

Meanwhile, these administrators who must verify employee hours are “not good with technology,” according to Lomax, “and a handful of them are pretty corrupt and dishonest.”

Sounds like the worst choice of people to check timesheets of students—students who are, quite often, computer savvy, and have plenty of excuses to justify adding some extra hours occasionally.

“It’s unfortunate how much money is wasted,” Lomax concludes. Even if all SMSU administrators were completely ethical, it seems that after spending hours in front of a computer screen cross-referencing logged time with rough schedules, any good-natured human might make a mistake and approve a fabricated time card. A more efficient system is needed—whether it be further redundancy or an automated and streamlined overhaul—or else the student dollars invested in SMSU will continue to be wasted, or pocketed by corrupt individuals.

And while these corrupt individuals are, potentially, taking our money on shopping sprees, the ELT student employees feel the weight of faulty schedules and a lack of supervision, not to mention poor compensation for their continuous late night efforts. As Lomax explains, “The guys that make Smith run are the lowest paid.”

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Protests Escalate In Ukraine And Venezuela, But Media Coverage Remains Lopsided

Amidst media black-outs and revoked press passes, the duty falls upon citizens-turned-journalists to cover the violence, and the rest of the world to publicize...
By now, just about everyone has heard of the escalating violence in Ukraine. Many innocent people have died, property has been destroyed, and the country’s citizens stand divided by two potential allegiances. On the western side of Ukraine, the people have been supporting a trade deal with the European Union, which has been in the works for several years. This deal would allow Ukrainian citizens to travel freely throughout Europe, while also implementing several new laws and regulations in the country. However, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych backed out of the deal last November, following substantial Russian pressure.

The Russian-speaking eastern population of Ukraine has shown support for Yanukovych’s decision, feeling that they should be more closely aligned with Russia rather than Europe. As European supporters continued to protest the decision, Yanukovych passed laws that aimed to suppress protesters. This only caused the situation to escalate, as over 200,000 protesters took to Kiev’s Maidan Square in January. Clashes between protesters and riot police resulted in deaths on both sides. In February, events took a turn for the worse when Ukraine’s Interior Minister signed a decree allowing police to use service firearms and live ammunition against protesters, which has led to the shooting deaths of over 100 citizens.

This tragic state of affairs is undoubtedly worthy of substantial media coverage around the globe, but it has grown to the point where it is eclipsing important events elsewhere.

In February, events took a turn for the worse when Ukraine’s Interior Minister signed a decree allowing police to use service firearms and live ammunition against protesters, which has led to the shooting deaths of over 100 citizens.

In Venezuela, for instance, a revolution threatens to escalate into a situation similar to that in Ukraine. Recently Venezuelan citizens have faced government-endorsed oppression while protesting a variety of social and economic issues. The protests began in February, at the University of the Andes, in reaction to the sexual assault of a female student. Protesters called for improved security to combat the occurrence of such situations. Police ultimately showed up to suppress the protest, initially arresting five students and spurring further outrage.

In reaction to the arrests, students at other universities across the country took to protesting, calling for the release of the detained students. These protesters also faced arrest as police forcibly put an end to the demonstrations. The escalating violence between police and protesters has lead to deaths in both parties, kindling a fire in the middle class and causing demonstrators around the country to continue rallying for President Nicolas Maduro’s resignation. Maduro is the primary target of the government-opposed demonstrators, who claim that his governance is responsible for Venezuela’s extensive troubles: incredibly high economic inflation, a lack of basic foods and public services, and an increasing prevalence of violent crime. Venezuelans clearly have good reason to be pushing for government reform. At this time, at least 55 people have lost their lives in the chaos, and there is sure to be more before the situation is resolved.

Knowing this, it seems undeniable that both Ukraine and Venezuela deserve worldwide media coverage. Sure enough, just about every major news channel has aired hours upon hours of footage covering the violence in Ukraine. Multiple major publications have featured front-page articles detailing every aspect of the conflict. Why, then, is the same not happening for Venezuela? One would be hard-pressed to turn on the television and find any substantial information in regard to the South American country. No major publication has given Venezuela a front-page article.

The major factor contributing to this lack of coverage is the attempted media blackout being carried out by the Venezuelan government. In the city of San Cristóbal, 650,000 people were cut off from internet access. CNN reporters were forced to leave the country at gunpoint, and press passes to major news networks have been repeatedly denied. This has left the media coverage of the unfolding events confined to social media networks such as Twitter, Youtube, and Facebook. Yet even these outlets have faced repeated attempts to block photos, videos, and social commentary.

So the lack of worldwide media coverage on Venezuela is not solely the fault of uninterested news corporations. The Venezuelan government is making it very difficult for information to get out of the country. That leaves the responsibility of recording and transmitting information up to those citizens who are stuck in the thick of it. As for spreading this knowledge to the world, that’s up to people like us. When a government attempts to suppress its citizens’ ability to communicate with the rest of the world, those who do have free reign of the internet become a crucial link in the media chain. What little information does get out must be shared to reach the eyes and ears of the world. When it comes down to it, we are responsible for helping shine a light on the crisis brewing in Venezuela.
In February, north Portland residents and community groups reacted negatively to a planned Trader Joe’s development on a city lot, at the corner of Martin Luther King and Alberta. This was largely due to a lack of transparency by the city and a long history of distrust for local government. The Portland African-American Leadership Forum cited the attraction of “non-oppressed populations” to their neighborhood as something that wouldn’t benefit them. In a word: gentrification.

Negotiations are back on the table for a Trader Joe’s at MLK and Alberta. What does this mean for surrounding neighborhoods already plagued with gentrification?

“Rent gap” filled by people with money.
Gentrification is the human reflection of economic flow—a cultural and socio-economic shift mirrored in the migration of communities, voluntary or involuntary. Gentrification is akin to the displacement of warm air by cold air, high pressure systems swirling around low pressure neighborhoods. The rich displacing the poor, the privileged elbowing the disenfranchised.

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“Rent gap” filled by people with money. Gentrification is the human reflection of economic flow—a cultural and socio-economic shift mirrored in the migration of communities, voluntary or involuntary. Gentrification is akin to the displacement of warm air by cold air, high pressure systems swirling around low pressure neighborhoods. The rich displacing the poor, the privileged elbowing the disenfranchised. Triggered by a perceived value, whether it’s location, amenities or architecture, neighborhoods, often those that have historically seen disinvestment, begin to be viewed as desirable. The difference between an area’s potential value and its current value is known as “rent gap.” This gap is filled by people with money. Capital floods into neighborhoods but not in an egalitarian manner. Higher income residents displace those with lower incomes by driving up the cost of rent. Gentrification is the name for this shift from poor to rich and, more often than not, from people of color to people who aren’t. This shift tends to scatter established cultural groups to poorer parts of urban areas.

Anti-gentrification protests in Seattle, Oakland, and San Francisco have been taking off. In the Puget Sound and the Bay Area the finger is being pointed at the tech industry as a cause for the rising cost of living in historically counterculture neighborhoods like Capitol Hill, and ethnic hubs like the Latino Mission District. The tech giants Google and Microsoft have headquarters near San Jose and Seattle, and hire young talent who are too trendy and childless to live in the stale suburbs, but are driven by the same financially-thrifty mindset. This social group is aptly described as “yuppies.” “Yuppie” is short for “Young Urban Professional” or “Young Upwardly Mobile Professional.” You’ll never catch
A history of segregation.

Although Oregon was on the side of the north during the civil war, drafted into its constitution was racist language meant to keep all but whites from living in the state. Although nullified by the 14th and 15th constitutional amendments, the following passage remained in Oregon's state constitution until it was repealed in 1927: "No free negro shall come, reside in, or be within this state... the legislature shall provide by penal law for the removal of all such negroes and for their exclusion from the state." One justification for this racist legislature was to prevent the intermarrying and radicalization of the Native American community with the black community. A congressional delegate in 1850 by the name of Samuel Thurston expressed fears that a union of marginalized people could challenge white dominance, which would lead to a protracted and violent social struggle between marginalized peoples and the current power structure. Indeed, in 1850, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner were not far from white collective memory, and neither was conflict with Native Americans.

At the turn of the 20th century Portland’s black population lived primarily on the west side of the Willamette, between SW Montgomery Street and NW Kearney. Housing was cheap, and most African-Americans were employed in the service industry—either working for the downtown hotels, Union Station or the railway as porters.

As the east side of the Willamette River opened up for development with the construction of the Steel and Morrison bridges, African-Americans and other minorities faced discrimination as to what neighborhoods they were welcome in. The Portland Realty Board prohibited the sale of property to blacks and Asians in whites-only neighborhoods, believing it to decrease the value of property. Neighborhoods like Ladd’s Addition remained vehemently white. A racially segregated pattern of settlement and housing began to appear. The only housing available to African-Americans was in North Portland.

During World War II, Portland was flooded with defense workers. Laborers working in the shipyards brought families with them, and put a general strain on local infrastructure. There was a housing shortage and many families ended up living in the housing project of Vanport on the Columbia River. Currently occupied by Delta Park, Vanport was named for its location between Portland and Vancouver. Vanport was a racially-segregated housing project turned city. It featured a theater, stores, medical center, recreational facilities and a daycare for the children of working parents. The schools were integrated, but apartments, medical facilities, and recreation centers were segregated. The population of Vanport peaked during the war, with 42,000 people living in 9,568 apartments. The population declined after World War II, and by 1948 little more than 18,000 remained, over 6,000 of them African-American. After weeks of heavy rain, the swollen Columbia River breached a protective dike and flooded the low lying area where Vanport was located, killing ten and displacing thousands. The black refugees had nowhere to move but North Portland's Albina area.

The Albina neighborhoods have been further fragmented and divided by freeway construction, and even public investment. In the 1960s the Portland Development Commission viewed Albina as being in the advanced stages of 'urban blight,' and feared that the poverty and dilapidation would spread to nearby neighborhoods.

The 1961 Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project, a $1 million urban renewal project, aimed to construct commercial space and new affordable housing in a “test site” in Albina.
In the city’s equitable growth toolbox are checks and balances meant to ensure that current residents aren’t forced to leave their neighborhoods—things like affordable housing units in apartment buildings, growth that clearly benefits the community, as well as transparency and communication during the planning and proposal phases of development.

Although the project did construct the infrastructure it set out to, residents still felt that their community was negatively affected by a lack of municipal services and jobs, along with heavy police presence. A race riot that lasted two nights in 1967 highlighted continued frustration felt by the community’s youth, and sparked a conversation between the young Albina residents and then-mayor Terry Schrunk.

The disjunction of local government aims and the needs of the community are highlighted by the expansion of Emanuel Hospital in the early 1970s. Largely through opaque planning on behalf of the Portland Development Commission and despite resistance from the community, especially the older generation, 188 properties were destroyed—158 of them residential. Residents were given financial restitution, but the promise to replace lost housing never came through—a result of federal budget freezes. Ironically, the hospital was expanded under the guise of ‘urban renewal’. By the 1980s, neighborhoods like Boise-Eliot were considered to be on the cusp of private reinvestment, and in turn, gentrification.

When balancing neighborhood attraction with affordability, transparency is key.

The public sector can not only influence, but even tip development in the favor of gentrification. Neighborhood “revitalization” projects like increased pedestrian accessibility or bike lanes may add to a particular area’s desirability, especially amongst the green-minded newcomers to the Pacific Northwest. This gives the city an additional line to walk—balancing planning with current resident needs. One of the problems is the fact that the housing market is produced by the private sector. Densely-populated modern apartment structures offer a considerably larger profit margin for a developer than a single family dwelling, or even several houses on the same plot of land. An apartment also offers long-term cash flow for owners and no chance of ownership by smaller parties.

The city of Portland does recognize that there is a problem with economically coercive migration. There are efforts to devise safe and sound ways to promote healthy and balanced growth that is desirable, modern and inclusive. In a “Gentrification and Displacement” study, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability stated that “the Portland Plan provides new focus on the issue of balancing neighborhood revitalization with the ability of current residents to stay in place to enjoy new amenities.” In the city’s equitable growth toolbox are checks and balances meant to ensure that current residents aren’t forced to leave their neighborhoods—things like affordable housing units in apartment buildings, growth that clearly benefits the community, as well as transparency and communication during the planning and proposal phases of development. In addition to this, the city has mapped out and identified neighborhoods that are at risk of gentrification and how to tailor mitigation for those neighborhoods.

Negotiations are back on the table about the Trader Joe’s on Alberta and MLK, with Mayor Charlie Hales promising an additional $20 million dollars to be spent on affordable housing in the “Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area,” an area of the city that includes areas both south and north of Albina. The Portland African-American Leadership Forum has stated that the meetings were a “start to a path of victory for all who have been displaced and marginalized for twenty years.” Hopefully the promises of the city can effectively meet the needs of the community, for generations to come.

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So states the Society of Professional Journalists’ code of ethics. It’s a tough feat for any publication to attempt, but we believe it’s worth the effort to get as many voices as possible on the same page, at the same table.

It’s difficult, however, when someone won’t talk to you. It’s frustrating when that person who won’t talk to you has asked to be consulted in the past. And it’s insulting when that person is the president of your university.

I know, it’s hard to fathom, but PSU President Wim Wiewel did indeed agree to a filmed interview with the Spectator. We had the date set for almost a month, and confirmed the date twice. Then, less than two days prior to the scheduled time of the interview, the administration cancelled with a phone call.

The following is a timeline of the steps taken by the Spectator to secure this appointment to talk to President Wiewel, the confirmations, and where we are now—left with nothing more than a hastily-written email from the administration. Throughout this entire process, we never once talked directly to President Wiewel, let alone saw him in person.
At the Moment...
The Spectator has received nothing since this sparse reply of false hope. In fact, all further attempts at contacting Scott Gallagher and University Communications have resulted in no response at all. The administration remains silent, and President Wiewel apparently continues to feel he is “too busy” to be bothered by talking to student publications. However, if the president suddenly has a change of heart, let this be an open invitation to Marinus “Wim” Wiewel.

Email correspondence following the cancellation

Jake Stein:
Scott,
When we last met, you told me that President Wiewel “loves talking to students.” During our fall publications orientation, students were encouraged to make an appointment with the president by arranging it through you. I did so; I even agreed to send you subject matter ahead of time, despite ethical qualms, in an effort of good faith. I have done everything necessary to make this interview happen, because I strongly believe that it is important for a student and the president to sit at the same table, on camera, and discuss issues which affect the entire PSU community.

The Spectator and PSU.tv have been preparing for this interview for three weeks. We take this matter very seriously. The interview was confirmed multiple times, by yourself on February 12, and by the president’s executive secretary on February 19. Mr. Wiewel’s cancellation shocks us.

I am currently writing an article focusing on the president and his administration. I am making a sincere effort to engage every angle of policies and events currently rocking PSU; in the past, the administration has voiced irritation when not contacted about issues relating to its practices. I can only see it as beneficial for the president and his administration if he allowed this interview to proceed. The Spectator insists on an in-person interview, not an email Q and A, because we believe the spontaneous dialogue of a one-on-one interview is not only conducive to ethical journalism, but essential to show the student body that our president interacts with students.

I understand that, with the declaration of the impasse, this is a busy time. But I think you can understand that, after planning on this interview for nearly a month, it is shocking to be informed that the president has decided he is “too busy”—the day after I sent an email regarding my prepared subject matter for our discussion. It strikes me as very unprofessional. I ask you to think about how you might view The Spectator, or any student organization, if we conducted ourselves similarly and canceled a meeting with the president less than 48 hours prior.

Let me be clear. During my four-year attendance at PSU, I have had no interaction with the president of my university. I have never seen him in person. I think most students have had a similar experience. The common sentiment among students seems to be that President Wiewel believes himself to be above us. A face-to-face interview with a student publication leader is an excellent chance to provide evidence to the contrary.

This is a great opportunity for everyone, and I strongly encourage Wim Wiewel to reconsider and spare 30 minutes for students.

Scott Gallagher:
Jake,
I’m still working on getting you at least 30 min one-on-one with President Wiewel—hopefully for next week. Talk soon.

Subject matter is sent to administration (despite ethical qualms)
I send the planned subject matter for the interview to Gallagher, as requested, in an effort of good faith. Subject matter includes:

· A day in the life of a university president
· Students graduating with debt
· ASPSU/the Student Budget Advisory Committee
· Sustainability
· Faculty collective bargaining
Science Depends On Incorrect Theories

The more we understand, the more we realize that many of the theories governing our universe are far from timeless.

History, from the perspective of human understanding, is a story of revision. Curiosity has always driven humanity to ask how and why. These inquiries are aimless, setting forth in all imaginable directions, contributing to the great quest to understand. This journey is cyclic: some brilliant thinker will propose explanations to natural phenomena, and centuries later some other brilliant thinker will realize and prove that the previous explanations were wrong. We often forget that outdated ideas, even if “wrong,” are ingenious.

Einstein’s theories were shocking not just for their incredible conclusions, but also because they revealed that collectively humans had wrong ideas about the way things were. Copernicus’ ideas created controversy because they demonstrated that how humanity had thought previously was wrong. Contemporary theories are often unintuitive and complex to the extent that we really can’t lay blame on the ancients for not figuring them out. It often requires lifetimes of brilliant effort to achieve baby steps toward understanding.

Let’s take a moment to appreciate our progress by looking at some of the theories science discarded over time. And let’s appreciate, for a moment, the leaps we’ve made and how we made them.

On Gravity
Aristotle wrote about his notions on elements around 350 B.C. He believed that the four fundamental forms of matter—air, earth, water, and fire—all had natural positions. Earth had a natural position which was down and, when you removed it from that position, its inclination was to return to that
position. When you lifted a stone and dropped it, it moved simply to return to its natural position. Until Isaac Newton, this view of gravity was not completely disproved.

Newton’s crucial realization toward a more accurate view of gravity was that all objects with mass have gravity, and furthermore that gravity depends on the masses of each object and the distance between them. This remarkably bizarre conclusion—that a falling apple is not only pulled down by the Earth’s gravity but also pulls itself toward the Earth—is incredible when you consider how unintuitive it is for a small apple to assert force on the Earth. Furthermore, this can be applied to even the tiniest objects—even air has gravity.

Aristotle, a man of enormous genius, managed to create a view on gravity that sounds absurd to us today. However, it took another great genius to break the mold, and further our understanding fundamentally.

Could Einstein have discovered special relativity and time dilation without the progress that incorrect assumptions had helped physics make? Does the evolution of scientific thought depend on incorrect theories in a fundamental way?

On Absolute Space and Absolute Time

Newton’s mechanics relied on the assumption that space and time were absolute; space exists independent of other forces, and time moves at the same speed always and everywhere.

Albert Einstein would come to thwart this understanding, and revolutionize our notions of gravity. Einstein’s special theory of relativity (1905) concluded that space and time collectively formed something called “spacetime.” If time is not absolute, then what is it? Einstein showed through the use of thought experiments that different observers, at different states of movement or rest relative to an event, will measure the time it took for the event to take place differently. Time is relative to the motion of an observer. This phenomenon is called “time dilation.”

Einstein would provide further dramatic insight into the universe in 1916 with the general theory of relativity. He found that gravity is caused when mass bends the fabric of spacetime around it. This theory was confirmed by a British astronomer when, during an eclipse, he produced photographs showing that light from distant stars can be bent by the gravity of the sun on its way to Earth. Not only did Einstein fundamentally revise Newton’s gravity theory, but in order to do so, Einstein had to reject some of Newton’s basic assumptions about space and time.

The future of scientific ideas depends ultimately on future generations not revering the ideas we have laid down, but challenging the ideas of the past.

There have been many brilliant scientific ideas that turned out to be wrong, and many thinkers who failed to accept the consequences of their ideas (Einstein and Max Plank are notable examples). The future of human understanding will be built upon the wrong ideas of the present, not just in physics but in all subjects. Moreover, the evolution of understanding is not certain. The fall of Rome left in its wake the Dark Ages, when Europe stumbled and fell backward on the road of civilization. The future of scientific ideas depends ultimately on future generations not revering the ideas we have laid down, but challenging the ideas of the past.
A Point of View...

Eugene Messer is a longtime Vancouver resident who has been writing for over 40 years. He was a campaign manager/speech writer for Robert Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern, among others.

Return to Academia: A Climb Up Everest?

“What are you doing?”
“Looking at the four walls and the cat.”
“Why don’t you do what I’m doing: return to school?”
“You’ve got to be kidding! At my age?”
“Ninety-year-olds are getting their BAs, and you always talked about getting your PhD.”

The conversation with my friend from San Francisco intrigued me, so I checked out Portland State University and returned, in the spring of 2015, to pursue a graduate degree.

My journey to Academia in my college years began when, in my senior year of high school, I was accepted by three institutions of learning: Stanford University, University of Chicago and Lewis and Clark College. I dismissed Stanford, as a much-disliked relative had gone there and boasted that we would be fellow alumni. “No way!” my young mind declared.

My mother and I visited the University of Chicago. I took one look at the school and was greatly impressed. My mother, however, looked at the metropolis of Chicago and panicked. “If you go to Chicago, your father and I would not want you driving in so large a city,” she said on the plane home.

“However, if you go to Lewis and Clark College we will buy you a new car for high school graduation, and you can live on campus to get away from home.” New car. I’d get it in the fall of my senior year. For my seventeen-year-old mind, that decision did not take long.

I would often say that I sold my education down the river for a new car, but actually Lewis and Clark was, and is, a fine school. It has always been considered somewhat of an Ivy League West. The campus itself has been voted one of the top three most beautiful in the United States.

Being away from home and curfews, we stayed up all night whether we wanted to or not, simply because we could! The basement of our building held a beautiful green felt pool table, and soon we were pool majors, with breakfast skipped and eight o’clock classes suffering.

My parents had wanted me to go into the Diplomatic Corps, and so I left the next fall to study at the Universite d’Montpellier in the south of France. I chose the school hedonistically, once again, because it was closest to the Riviera. Little did I know, my great aunt who lived in Paris chose it for me, as it was the toughest school in France. The aristocracy and nobility sent their children there, to be mentally whipped into shape.

When I returned to Lewis and Clark after years abroad, I was totally turned off by everything—after all, I had become a “cultured and worldly man.” Things like fraternities and homecoming seemed very unimportant, and classes seemed a bore. One day, while sitting in the student commons, I rose from my chair, left my books on the table, and walked out into the sun, into the world. My books, I was later told, sat there for two weeks, and then vanished.

Thus began several years in Southern California, where I operated several businesses: a restaurant, an art gallery, a boutique and antique shop in Los Angeles, and a home in Malibu. After being offered an unbelievable price for my businesses, I once again headed out into the sun, this time south to Mexico. I planned to write the Great American Novel.

I didn’t. I discovered gin, the beach, and the next tourist boat. But I did come up with a manuscript of poetry, some of which has been published.

One afternoon, while sitting on the beach, I made a decision. I was going to go back to Lewis and Clark and get the BA I’d never completed. I returned, informing the dean I was changing my major and taking a BA in English. I announced I would be doing this in one year.
One day, while sitting in the student commons, I rose from my chair, left my books on the table, and walked out into the sun, into the world. My books, I was later told, sat there for two weeks, and then vanished.

He laughed, telling me it was impossible to get a degree in a single year. “You have gotten enough money out of my family and myself over the years,” I replied. “One year is what you are getting.” I buckled down, took a massive course load, and finished in one year with a resounding four-point GPA.

I had also re-entered the political world, working for Senator Robert Kennedy’s presidential campaign. This was an exciting adventure that ended in tragedy, and the National Day of Mourning fell on the day of my Lewis and Clark graduation ceremony. I was asked to give a eulogy for Senator Kennedy, which I did.

With the encouragement of my English professors, I applied and was accepted for what was then a three-year PhD program at Brandeis University, and Harvard University. However, I was deeply involved in national politics, with a major position in Vice President Hubert Humphrey’s presidential campaign, and decided not to accept the offers.

In 1974, I ran for Congress myself in Washington State, but was, of course, defeated. (Unless you are a Kennedy, you usually lose on your first time out). I decided not to continue with politics, choosing not to live in a glass house and campaign every other year. Instead, I entered into writing, covering food, wine and travel.

And this brings us full circle, to once again climbing Mount Academia. Returning to my studies has proven a major undertaking, but happily I find that the brain still works. I have met delightful fellow students here, and have come under the educational baton of wonderful professors. As to classes themselves, I find the in-class use of laptops, tablets, the numerous other devices, quite revolutionary. Given my years of experience in writing, I have decided to pursue a degree in history, and I must say that PSU is blessed with a remarkably brilliant history department.

I have often been asked if I am auditing classes. “No way!” I reply to such inquiries. “I don’t do anything I don’t get credit for!”

So I find myself, once again, as a student pursuing a degree—composing papers and sweating over finals. And I made a great discovery last week: down in the catacombs of Smith Memorial Student Union lurks the beckoning green felt of a pool table. “Click” go those billiard balls, and suddenly I have returned to my youthful college days. I wonder if, along with all the other advancements, universities have developed a degree in pool yet...

Rack up those balls!
FRUSTRATED AT PSU?

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