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THE LEDGER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA

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Meet the students running for ASUWT 2023-2024

UWT students can soon vote for next year's student government.



Students running under the ticket Allied Student Initiative or ASI.

PHOTO BY ALEXA CHRISTIE

By **DESTINY VALENCIA**
NEWS EDITOR

Election time is upon us at UWT. Students can soon vote for fellow students who are running for positions within ASUWT. Before voting opens on May 8, students will have opportunities to learn more about the candidates and initiatives they plan on focusing on this upcoming school year.

Students can meet with these candidates this Wednesday, May 10, 11 a.m.- 3 p.m. at a Rock the Vote event on the Prairie Line Trail that will have live music, free t-shirts and stuff-a-husky plush toys. Candidates will be hosting their own tables where they will facilitate games as well as answer any questions students may have about their initiatives.

"Voter turnout has been low since the pandemic, and now that we are back to hosting more large-scale events, we are hoping that Rock the Vote helps educate the student body on the importance of voting in this election. The students that are running for ASUWT have put a great amount of effort into their campaigns and want to represent the student body on the local and state levels. We are also hoping that these events get the student body more involved with ASUWT in the future," said Rachael Spear, the Civic Engagement Specialist at UWT.

Students running for ASUWT positions include Holly Wetzel for ASUWT President, Roland Heyne for Director of University Affairs, Yolanda Escribano for Director of Outreach, Jay Estacio for Di-

rector of Student Technology, Alicia Whitten for Director of Finance, Chrystal Miskanis for Director of Legislative Affairs, Jamie Song for Director of Internal Communications and Affairs and Jon Angell for the SET senator.

Along with these students on the ASI ticket, there are several students running independently such as Santino Wong for Senator of the School of Education and Evan Campbell for a senator position for the Milgard School of Business.

While many of these students are running unopposed, these eight students have rallied together under the ticket of the Allied Student Initiative with a specific goal in mind to improve ASUWT and focus on three pillars to improve the UWT experience for students.

Overall, these goals include student health and wellness, food equity and diversity and student safety and security – a top priority for candidates such as Roland Heyne and others.

"I feel like our campus's recent response to events and our culture in America has been pretty lacking. I feel like having more of a student perspective challenging these ideologies and looking for ways to address the people who need to hear our opinions and concerns is going to be really important and I'm prepared to do that," Heyne said.

One student, Ryan Wicklund, is running as a write-in candidate for Director of Outreach. This is one of the few positions where there is another candidate running or campaigning. While they are not a part of the ASI and are inde-

pendently running, Wicklund can be spotted around campus handing out fliers with information on how to write them in as a candidate.

Something that Wicklund would like to focus on if voted for Director of Outreach is providing informational resources to students.

"I started during COVID, but that's not uncommon and a whole lot of people think there are not a lot of informational resources on campus. People don't find out about all the opportunities that there are. I had to work very hard and spend a lot of time meeting people and talking to other people and being networked in to find out about other things going on. People should know about these things, there should be an RSO calendar..." Wicklund said.

As for Holly Wetzel who is running for President of ASUWT, they want to create a foundational student government that will incorporate legacy documents or sustainability plans. Wetzel is hopeful that by creating such plans, future administrations will not struggle while stepping into the shoes of the previous administration.

These legacy documents and sustainability plans would create blueprints for these future administrations on the steps they may need to take in order to keep certain initiatives around or funded. Wetzel believes these established documents would benefit future administrations for years to come versus year-to-year which is how they have been in the past.

Wetzel shared some other thoughts regarding student engagement within ASUWT. While engagement has been low and most candidates running are unopposed, Wetzel believes that should not be the case.

"Unfortunately, that kind of change needs to be made from the top, which is partly why I am running for ASUWT president. You can't do it on your own as just a director," Wetzel said, "I think part of (increasing engagement) is really just catering to the non-traditional students."

Some of Wetzel's plans include bi-weekly updates and creating more of a strong media presence, something Wetzel has tried to work on this past year as Director of Outreach.

While these candidates are united on the goals they wish to accomplish in the next year, students can find out more about their initiatives and qualifications on their Instagram accounts at @voteasi and @asuwt.

If you are interested in being involved in ASUWT, there are still positions available for senators. Those interested can campaign to be a write-in candidate for those vacant positions.

Voting for candidates will take place Monday, May 8, through Friday May 12 and students can vote from an email sent out to all UW student accounts.

Weekly Weather

Monday

61/46

Tuesday

64/45

Wednesday

66/45

Thursday

70/49

Friday

75/52

Saturday

77/55

Sunday

79/57



Upcoming Events

May 5

UWT Latinx
Spring Baile
Milgard Hall 110
6:30 - 11 p.m.

May 8

ASUWT Elections
Voting Links in
Student Email

West Coast Grocery to relocate to TPS

The UWT grocery store is being updated with a new location, services and hours.

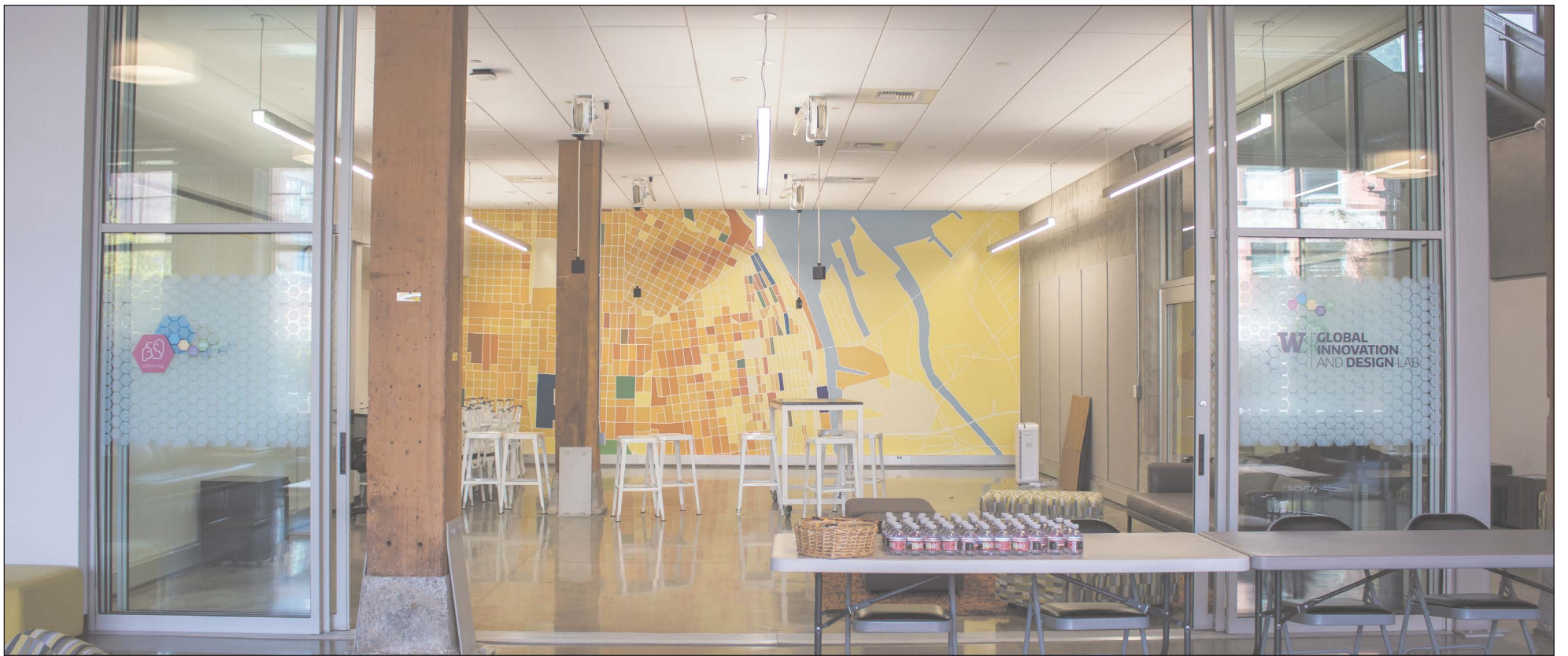


PHOTO BY ALEXA CHRISTIE

The former TPS Global Innovation and Design Lab space is being renovated into a new food resource on campus.

By **KATIE SCOTT**
NEWS REPORTER

The Reimagining TPS Ground project is moving the iconic West Coast Grocery store, UWT's tiny food oasis on campus, to a larger, more energy-efficient location. The new space will be in the former Global Innovation and Design Lab space, located on the ground floor of the Tacoma Paper & Stationery (TPS) building. With updated plumbing, extra storage and nearly double the square footage for operations, the new grocery store is set to offer hot and cold food options, snacks and drinks as well as indoor and outdoor seating for students to utilize.

Joe Lawless, UWT Chief Strategy Officer in the Chancellor's Office, describes the project as the first phase to building more community-centered spaces on campus where students can gain access to improved facilities, while also having comfortable places to build community in.

In discussing the difficulties of being a commuter campus and how that impacts community building efforts for students, Lawless explained this project is a direct response to years of UWT students requesting more spaces to study, relax, enjoy and utilize during day and evening class times.

"A complaint of students on our campus, for years, has been there's no community. There's no

place to just hang out... Especially as a commuter campus, you know, you come to class, maybe you've got an 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. class, and then maybe you don't have class again until one. There's no place to be and just hang out," Lawless said.

In response to student concerns around the use of the space, Lawless and the design hosted two in-person planning sessions in April. Attendees voiced ideas and concerns on the new proposed designs, added to strategic plan maps, and helped facilitate conversation around the use of the space. Lawless said student turnout for both events was in large numbers, and the feedback received by students and event participants greatly impacted the planning process for the Reimagining TPS Ground project.

Currently, the project is in the first phase of collecting student feedback and opinions to inform design and functionality decisions. An online survey has been posted for all UWT students, staff and faculty to share their ideas, concerns and design choices for the new space. The online form is available to receive responses until May 19.

In the survey, students have options to give their input on food choices, furniture design, usage of space and other important topics for planning. The survey also asks students to share their ideas on what to call the new space. Once the survey closes, McGranahan Architects, a local Tacoma de-

sign firm, will sort through the feedback and incorporate student ideas and input into the final design process.

"We really really really want (students') input. As part of the design process, the architects and the designers that are working on it need as much student input as possible... This is being done for students. Faculty and staff will benefit, they'll come hang out here too, but this is being done for students," Lawless said.

With construction set to begin in Autumn 2023, the new grocery store is projected to open and be available for student use by the beginning of Winter 2024. Once moved to the upgraded location, the current West Coast Grocery space will be converted into a new on-campus student use space that is still in the planning process.

In an effort to push the project forward, The UWT Reimagining TPS Ground project has created four goals for the renovation:

Goal #1 - Transform TPS Ground Floor into a vibrant, central hub for dining and gathering — a campus "living room" — incorporating furniture solutions that create spaces catering to different needs while allowing maximum seating and flexibility.

Goal #2 - Provide a new home for the Convenience Store (currently located in West Coast Grocery) in the former GID Lab space. This space will allow the store to nearly double in size, al-

lowing a more comprehensive selection of grab-and-go food and beverage offerings. The modern, super energy-efficient infrastructure of the TPS building will also mean significant annual energy savings from store operations.

Goal #3 - Create a space for students to hang out during the day and into the evenings in a safe, accessible environment.

Goal #4 - Allow a multi-functional space that can adapt to a variety of uses.

These goals will inform the design process, assist in mapping out logistics for planning and focus on the student experience, creating a brand new, student-centered space that is both functional and comfortable for UWT students to spend time in.

To learn more about the project, and for the feedback survey link, visit the project webpage at:



<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/fa/facilities/reimagining-tps-ground-campus-living-room>

For more information on the project, you can also email Elizabeth Hyun, Project Manager, at EKHyun@uw.edu

REIMAGINING TPS GROUND - A CAMPUS LIVING ROOM

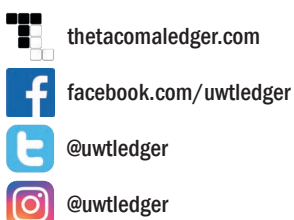


DESIGN CONCEPT IMAGE BY MCGRANAHAN ARCHITECTS

Design concept for the renovated TPS space.

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The war on fast fashion vs. sustainable fashion

Addressing the truths and calling out the true enemy, capitalism.

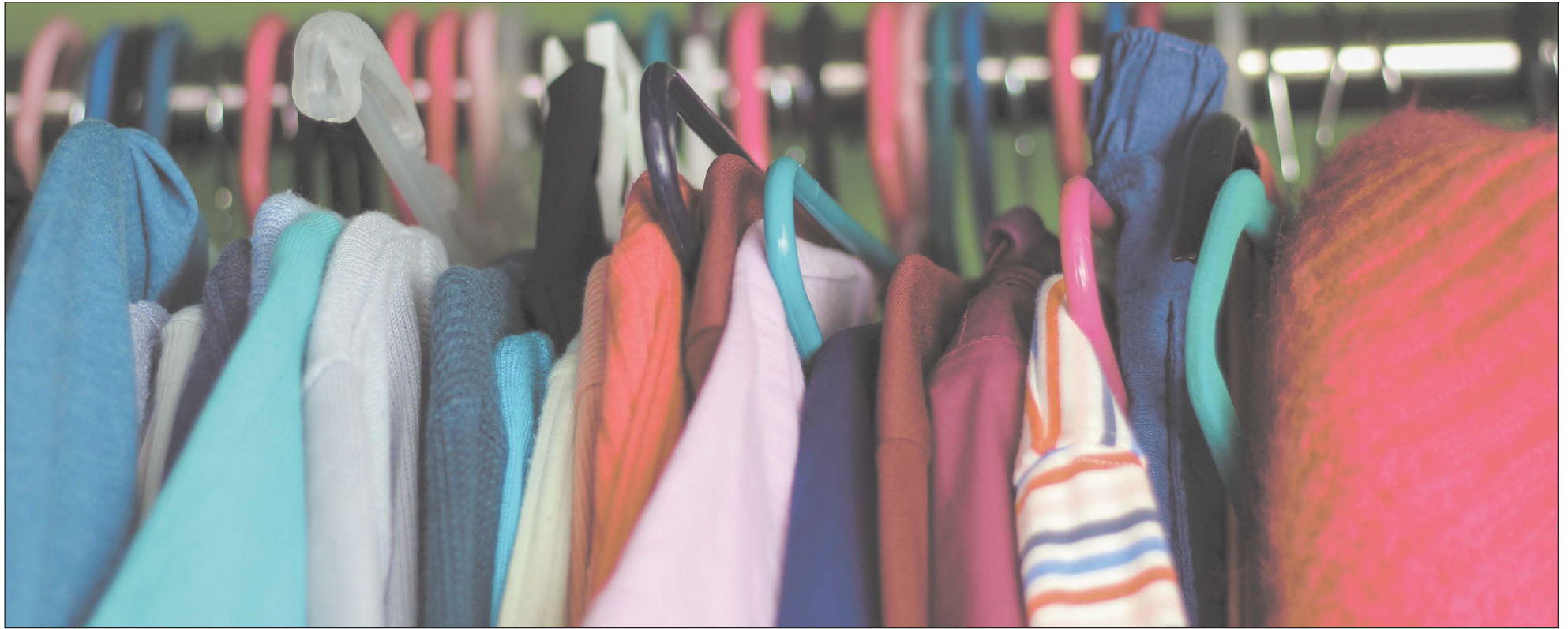


PHOTO BY ALEXA CHRISTIE

Fast fashion has been a major problem since the 1990s.

By HEIDI ORTIZ CANDELARIA
OPINION COLUMNIST

The last ten years have been marked by rapid changes in the world economy and the ease of buying both necessities and leisure products. These have paved the way for US consumerism. Companies like Shein have become increasingly popular, supplying customers with everything they need for relatively cheap prices. Yet there has been much debate about how they handle their production. Despite their founding having taken place in 2008, they have long been labeled as a fast fashion business. Since their name change in 2015, it has become the world's leading fashion retailer.

Fast fashion has continued to grow in production. Clothing companies in the US have searched for cheaper production methods and found a way to take advantage of other countries to pocket more money, making offshoring an extremely common practice. These companies created what are now known to be "sweatshops," or factories with inhumane working conditions that have been known to cause their workers long-term illnesses for only a fraction of the pay compensated to minimum wage

workers in the US. Not only that, but production equipment is so unregulated and unsafe that dangerous fumes, chemicals and machinery are the norm. Factories are placed in lower-class neighborhoods, taking advantage of financially struggling families.

This is all premeditative – of course. All in the name of making the most profit while attempting to invest the least possible amount of money in production and retail. Lastly, one of the most notorious effects of sweatshops and factories alike are the chemical dumps, or harmful sediments expelled illegally. Soil, local ecosystems, and bodies of water nearby will often become polluted, seeping into the water supply and damaging crops and local fauna.

We've gone through the negatives of fast fashion, and it's important to be conscious of these before jumping to my next point. There are hundreds, if not thousands of businesses that advertise themselves to be against fast fashion. These are the ones that label themselves as green, cruelty-free, sustainable and upcycled fashion companies; sometimes referred to as slow fashion, or eco-friendly brands. Though that is a much-needed practice throughout commercial businesses, the reality is that the majority

of people who care about this are not able to afford these products.

Inflated price tags are common as the products are advertised to be of higher quality with higher production value. Sometimes being as much as double or triple what you'd normally pay for the particular piece. As much as many of us would like to be able to buy from slow fashion brands, it's simply not realistic when you're living off minimum-wage jobs, paying monthly rent and accumulating student loan debts.

It's also worth mentioning the lack of size inclusivity in so many of these eco-friendly brands, making it so difficult for plus-sized folks to find properly fitting sustainable apparel. I'd also like to make a special emphasis on how near impossible it is to find clothes that aren't just absolutely basic. No hate towards those who enjoy basic fashion, but it's taken hold of too much of the sustainable fashion market. Goth, punk and other members of the alternative subcultures don't have a place in this market. This is a shame because most of us genuinely care about the environment and actively try our best to not contribute to damaging consumerist practices.

But as of late, prices get higher and a size XL continues to be the largest size inside the typical mall

store. Most of the time, it's not even a true size XL; fitting more like a large. It's upsetting. Even though I'm not plus-sized, my body is built so that I sometimes need larger clothing, but I've found it to be the most challenging to shop for clothes in malls these past few years. So, I've done what most of my friends and family have begun doing, only buying clothes from thrift shops and Shein, the infamous fast fashion online store.

People still get heat whenever they admit to buying from Shein, for it's no secret that they haven't had the best production practices. But the truth is that Shein has continued to expand their product line, now ranging from room décor to sex toys (no joke, but it is pretty funny). Whereas before, reviews were often mixed on the quality of products, now customer reviews are overwhelmingly positive, especially now compared to other fast fashion businesses. Shein supplies up to a size 5X and has nearly every kind of style you can think of. Their sister brand, ROMWE, was exclusively made to cater to alternative fashion and keeps up to date with the latest trends.

So, here's some food for thought: everyone needs clothes, and if there is a way to get de-

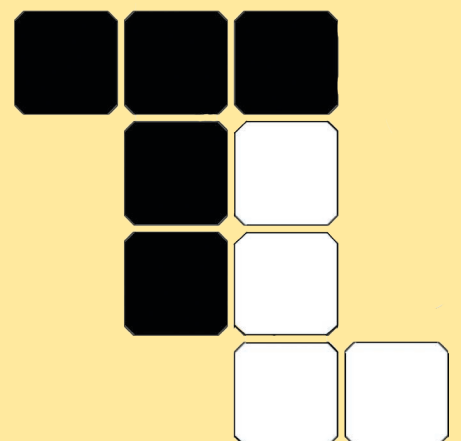
cent quality ones for cheap, then it should be allowed. A relevant phrase that applies to this anti-fast fashion debate is this: "There is no ethical consumption under Capitalism." Truth is, unless there is some in-depth digging and someone exposes the internal working practices of a company, we can't be sure that what they claim is true. I believe that if I can find the same piece I want for a lot cheaper, I won't hesitate to buy it. We spend so much of our lives working, studying and saving up for the bare necessities. No one should be shamed for buying clothes from a brand that supplies them with everything they need. No one should be shamed, period.

Just an additional tip: If you would like to know an additional cost-effective way to find cute clothes, I highly recommend thrifting. Though it is harder to find exactly what you're looking for, you can still find many hidden gems. My goth and alternative baddies all swear by this method, and I agree. But just know that if you ever find yourself buying fast fashion because you're on a budget, need a bigger size or simply because you want to, don't feel bad. Capitalism is the enemy here.

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I hate LinkedIn

I am excited to announce that I am an unrepentant LinkedIn hater.

By RUTH OGDEN
OPINION COLUMNIST

I don't like LinkedIn, and I'm tired of pretending that I do.

There's something so soul-crushing about logging into LinkedIn and seeing yet another paragraph full of meaningless buzzwords. It's chock-full of wannabe "success mentor" influencers posting inspirational quotes and attempts at making capitalism have a "feel good" vibe. If you dig deep enough, you get to boomer LinkedIn, which is recognizable by the grainy JPEG Dilbert memes and poorly photoshopped kittens. I've yet to discover a part of LinkedIn that doesn't make me irritated. LinkedIn's overall vibe is as if Facebook was made of cover letters. Nevertheless, I've been told over and over that LinkedIn will help me with my personal brand and career. I diligently check it once a day, and it's always the worst part of my day.

It's also a great way to feel like you're just not doing enough. A mere five minutes on LinkedIn is enough to trigger my imposter syndrome. According to

my feed, everyone has multiple internships, perfectly retouched headshots, attends five networking events a week and just started their own business while working as a realtor on the side. Logically, I know that it's all exaggerated. After all, it sounds way better to call yourself a Customer Relations Specialist when you're working as a cashier. However, it's just weird, especially when you know these people in real life. Imagine that the same person who posted "rise and grind" on LinkedIn is sitting next to you surfing Instagram during a class lecture. I'm not naming names, but we all know this person.

The biggest reason LinkedIn is toxic is that it glamorizes being exploited under capitalism. It generates a culture in which people are proud of working long hours, prioritizing work over family or relaxation and must always be reaching for the next step. It presents a message that all of our passions must generate income for them to be worthwhile (Love painting? Sell your art! Enjoy fixing up old cars? Better open a business!) The worst posts on

LinkedIn are the sob stories about how someone started from nothing, worked uphill and is now successful. Instead of questioning why their life was so difficult in the first place, the framing implies that this trajectory is somehow possible for us all if we just work hard enough. But if hard work is enough, why do we need professional networks? If hard work was correlated with income, why are janitors and teachers paid less than computer programmers? The game is rigged, and I'm tired of pretending it's not.

Look, I totally understand that LinkedIn has some value in finding a job and creating a professional network. It's also a good place to post about career success milestones. I'm probably the problem, not LinkedIn. Maybe I'm just not cut out for a competitive career.

I'm just a hater. Don't shoot the messenger.



PHOTO BY SOUVIK BANERJEE ON UNSPLASH
As a burnt-out introvert, LinkedIn is my personal social media nightmare.

Anti-transgender legislation in the US

The anti-transgender legislation is going to impact more than people think.



First trans solidarity rally and march, Washington, DC USA.

PHOTO BY TED EYTAN VIA FLICKR

By CELIA WILLIAMS
OPINION EDITOR

In recent months, many states have been pushing forward a number of anti-transgender bills. These bills, if passed, aim to control and restrict the sports teams transgender people could join, which bathrooms they are allowed to use and the medical care they can receive. In a very recent New York Times article, it stated that since the end of January, there have been more than 400 bills in around 45 of the 50 states as of mid-April.

The bills are all strongly against any minor receiving gender-affirming care and make it illegal

to do so. Specifically in Oklahoma and South Carolina, it would be considered a felony to provide gender-affirming care to someone younger than 26. Other states like Kansas and Mississippi would make it a felony before the age of 21. Finally, in Arkansas anyone under 18 would not receive gender-affirming care, nor would anyone who needs something similar such as hormone replacement.

The argument many conservatives take is that of wanting to protect the children, claiming that them being exposed to drag or non-heterosexual relationships is inappropriate. They also try to perpetuate an old belief that paints members of the

LGBTQIA+ community as predatory. Not only is this narrative wrong, it spreads harmful misinformation that can endanger the LGBTQIA+ community.

In another New York Times article, focusing on transgender voices, participants were asked to describe what it is like to be transgender in the U.S. today. Many said things like "misunderstood" and "dangerous" when it came to their experience. They also recount when they first realized they were queer or transgender, many of whom were very young. I spoke with a UW Tacoma student with a transgender child about their family's experience with anti-transgender legislation and its

impacts on them, even though Washington is a safe state currently. They specifically wanted to point out that gender-affirming care is not only hormone therapy and surgery, it is an array of things. From the clothing one wears to the surgeries they choose, it all falls under gender-affirming care. "Gender-affirming care is a universal right that every individual has and expects," they said.

As someone who is cisgender yet still needs hormones due to other health issues, it's crazy to think about not only how this would impact me but others that don't generally think of their choices being included in the narrative. Some birth control is hor-

monal and they use synthetic progesterone and estrogen to avoid pregnancy, though many conservatives and the bans they are pushing forward do not make a distinction between types of birth control. These birth control methods that are hormonal though are often used for other health issues beyond gender-affirming care, like hormonal imbalances. I take this stance because it seems that no one truly cares unless it directly impacts them. So, if these bills were to pass, how would it affect you? If you think that it would never come to that or that it could never impact you, you are wrong.

Dawg Bites and the future vision of UWT

It was wonderful to see so many people excited about Downtown Tacoma.

By ALEXA CHRISTIE
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

On April 29, UW Tacoma held its very first 'Dawg Bites' event, organized by the Milgard School of Business and Stan Emert. A community event for all ages consisting of games, exhibitions, food trucks, ice cream, mascot photo opportunities and information on the campus and university itself; Dawg Bites had something for everyone.

There were tables with information about the various programs and majors for prospective students, photo opportunities with Dubs, Hendrix and Rhubarb the Rainiers' mascot, along with a scavenger hunt complete with prizes. Aside from the various activities offered at Dawg Bites, it was great to see the campus filled with people.

The events that attracted the largest crowds were the Lincoln High School marching band and the Dawg Bites Passport scavenger hunt. It was wonderful to see people milling about campus, gathering passport stamps, snacks and prizes.

For several years, the campus has been working on creating a welcoming environment not only for students, but also for the surrounding community. The campus experience and environment is an important contributor to how the university functions over time. Introducing more events like Dawg Bites will be beneficial to both student life and the surrounding community.

Besides the opportunities to participate in activities and get information about the university, attendees were also able to

explore the campus and see its unique location. Posters detailing the future vision for the Tacoma Paper & Stationery makerspace were also there, which presented the opportunity to imagine what the university has in store for its campus.

Cultivating a welcoming setting where students can have lunch, study or spend time together is essential to any institution's community; the experience of Dawg Bites gave students an idea of what future campus events could look like.

Hopefully, the campus will see more events like Dawg Bites in the years to come!



PHOTOS BY ALEXA CHRISTIE
Dawg Bites drew crowds from all over the community to explore the UWT campus.



Review: New indie game 'Wildfrost' receives unwarranted mixed reviews

Is this cool new roguelike deckbuilder truly "too hard?"

By COLE MARTIN
A&E COLUMNIST

With the summer coming around and temperatures quickly rising, what's a better way to cool off than tricking your mind playing a frosty winter-themed indie game? Maybe air conditioning, but that's besides the point. Made by the powerful two-person team of Will Lewis and @Gaziter, "Wildfrost" is a cool, cute and incredibly addicting roguelike deckbuilder.

For a quick rundown for those unfamiliar, roguelike deckbuilders are all about gameplay and mechanics; the levels are randomly generated and you're forced to start a new run each time you die. Each run has you collecting characters and items that you draw in combat, and your goal is to defeat the enemy without having your champion knocked out. It's a genre known for its challenging and fun gameplay, with games like "Slay the Spire" and "Monster Train" being the two big staples. "Wildfrost"

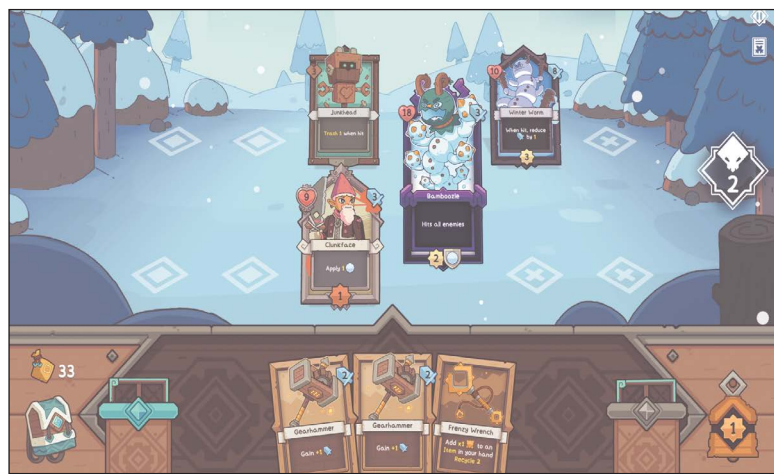


Image from Deadpan Games
Screenshot from 'Wildfrost.'

definitely doesn't disappoint on those terms either, and it differentiates itself from the rest by incorporating interesting mechanics such as attack timers and charms.

There has been debate on whether the game is too challenging. The game launched April 12, and hovered around a not-so-ideal mixed review score on Steam, with only 60 percent of reviews being positive. Fans and critics alike have adored the

charming artstyle and interesting game mechanics, but critics were quick to point out some supposed flaws.

"After nearly 48 hours of play, 110 runs and only one victory, I can't recommend Wildfrost in its current state," says Appa, one Steam reviewer.

"The mechanics are a lot of fun, the visuals are great and the abilities usually feel really good. But the sheer difficulty and what feels like unfairness in the

game just leaves a sour taste in my mouth," says Peter, another Steam reviewer.

Not to boast, but I didn't have quite as much trouble picking up the game. I've sunk about 9 hours into it so far and have gotten the normal and secret ending a handful of times. The game's mechanics are tough, but most of my failures have been on my behalf, overlooking some enemy attacks. There's plenty of merit in the flaws some critics have pointed out in regards to the game's balance, but it's really not as bad as it's been portrayed.

That being said, the team behind "Wildfrost" have been open to the feedback they've received, both positive and negative. They held a Reddit "Ask Me Anything" soon after the game came out to gather words from players, where plenty of folks asked about the game's difficulty and reviews.

"The team are also looking to address the balance feedback, to give players more options and allow for a smoother difficulty curve. We hope these

changes will address some of the comments, while also allowing for a challenging experience for those who want it," says @ChucklefishPilgrim, part of the publishing team.

All in all, "Wildfrost" really puts itself out there as an incredibly charming and unique game, among a genre that has already started to repeat itself pretty heavily. The cute and bright art style brought from @Gaziter is honestly a selling point, being one of the main reasons the game was on the radar of so many fans to begin with, and the innovative card-specific turn counter system further elevates "Wildfrost" into something truly fresh.

Its difficulty has thrown some people off, but with the promises we've been given from the development team and the updates the game will continue to get, it's in a really good place to pick up. The reviews have gone up, too! It's sitting at a pretty 76 percent, or Mostly Positive on Steam. If you're interested, the game is only \$20 on PC and Nintendo Switch!

Review: Netflix's 'Beef' overshadowed by actor controversy

The widely-acclaimed, fan-favorite dramedy has drawn criticism after an offensive podcast clip resurfaced.

By **STEPH CARONNA**
A&E REPORTER

A week after the premiere of Netflix's "Beef," the dark comedy had swiftly proven its chops to critics and general audiences alike. The show offers a nuanced portrayal of the consequences of stigmatizing mental healthcare, through an entertaining story about road rage and revenge. With a talented, majority Asian American cast, led by Ali Wong and Steven Yeun, the show also tackles the complexities of second-generation immigrant experiences.

But for some, that high came crashing down when a video clip resurfaced on Twitter which quickly took over the online discourse surrounding the show. The controversy centers around David Choe, who is best known as a visual artist, but acts in the show as a pivotal side character (additionally, he painted the works of art displayed during the title sequence of each episode). The clip from 2014 shows Choe telling a horrendous story on his now-defunct podcast, in which he purportedly admitted to sexually assaulting a Black masseuse.

When the podcast episode first aired, those aware of it criticized Choe. At worst, he is a rapist and admitted to it, and at best he trivialized a serious issue while engaging in misogynoir. Choe released a statement apologizing, claiming that the story was completely fabricated, and that his mode of storytelling involved trying to provoke his co-host and guests.

In the near-decade since this clip originated, Choe has been hired to paint high-profile murals, had a small role in "The Mandalorian," and even created (with his own funds) "The Choe Show," in which he interviewed celebrities while painting portraits of them. With all of this leading up to his casting in the critically-acclaimed "Beef," it's hard to see any true consequences for his harsh, inexcusable words.

My initial thought when I heard about the controversy—relief that it wasn't one of the two leads—is representative of a common desire to sweep controversy under the rug. For some time I agreed with those who felt bad for Wong and Yeun, seeing that, as executive producers, they were criticized for allowing Choe to be cast in the first place.



Ali Wong and Steven Yeun star as feuding road ragers in "Beef."

PHOTO BY NETFLIX



Steven Yeun and David Choe play cousins in Netflix's dark comedy.

PHOTO BY NETFLIX

But criticism does not equal harassment. Fans and critics have a right to be angry about the decision to cast Choe, considering the harm being spread by his words. There will always be people on the internet who take things too far, but there is still validity to the majority of complaints being lobbied.

Some would say that those who are offended need to try harder at separating the art from the artist. My feelings on this idea tend to shift depending on the medium, how artistically involved the offender is and the severity of the offense in question. If it's a single actor in an ensemble cast, it's usually easy enough to look past and try to enjoy the show or film. This particular situation shows the cracks in that line of thinking.

In reading more about this controversy, it became apparent that Wong and Yeun are friends with Choe. When "Beef" creator Lee Sung Jin saw him in "The Choe Show," he asked Wong and Yeun to see if Choe would submit an audition tape. While Lee argues that this was a matter of casting the best person for the role, and many would see it as successful networking, others have derided it as stunt-casting or even nepotism.

When FX was considering picking up "The Choe Show," Disney warned its subsidiary that Choe was a controversial person. That didn't stop FX from picking it up and airing it on Hulu. It's implausible to think that Netflix didn't flag Choe similarly when he was cast in "Beef."

About a week after the controversy broke, Lee, Wong and Yeun finally released a joint statement addressing the matter on April 21.

"We're aware David has apol-

ogized in the past for making up this horrific story, and we've seen him put in the work to get the mental health support he needed over the last decade to better himself and learn from his mistakes," reads a portion of the statement they made to Variety.

Many fans of the show were disappointed by this statement, voicing on Twitter that it failed to substantially address the issue. Some declared that it was too little, too late. Others saw it as rich, famous people trying to protect their rich, famous friend. It was nigh impossible to find a single person defending their statement.

The season finale of "Beef"—which may be the series finale, if it remains a limited series as originally intended—ends on a surreal, reflective note. Perhaps it was the absence of Choe's character, but I found it much more satisfying and thematically-relevant than the explosive action of the penultimate episode. But the longer I sit with my feelings about the show, the larger Choe's shadow looms.

No matter your personal opinion on this subject, the fact remains that we live in an age in which viewers are holding Hollywood to a higher standard. Audiences are growing more comfortable standing up for their feelings and beliefs. Even if one doesn't believe it's fair for Lee, Wong and Yeun to be criticized, others will disagree, because they were in the position to stop harm from spreading. Situations like the one with Choe have the potential to overshadow amazing works of art. It's a shame, but not as shameful as platforming and protecting perpetrators of harm.

Review: ‘Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret’ is a coming-of-age success

With lovely visuals, cute and funny scenarios and great acting, this classic book is brought to life.

By **EMILIA BELL**
A&E EDITOR

The 1970 novel “Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret” by Judy Blume has long been an iconic piece of literature for preteen girls. It’s a charming, accurate snapshot of what it’s like to be twelve and unsure of yourself. The film adaptation released in 2023, directed by Kelly Fremon Craig, had a lot to live up to – but it’s managed to pull it off and add even more depth to the characters.

Both the book and the film follow the character Margaret, an almost-twelve-year-old who is uprooted from her life in New York City and moves to the New Jersey suburbs. There, she meets friends and boys, and prays to God every day to start puberty.

“Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret” has often been boiled down to being about a girl getting her period. But both the book and film are about much more than that— sure, Margaret begs God for a grown-up body, but it’s really about Margaret finding her place in the world. Her parents decided to raise her with no religion, and Margaret struggles with her identity because of this. In general, being a preteen is a confusing period. Many of us have felt lost at many points in our lives, but for most, the ages eleven through thirteen tend to be the most awkward. The book and film convey this perfectly, in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, though neither ever fall into the trap that most comedies do about adolescence. Margaret’s journey is very normal and accessible; it’s no wonder people have related to the book since its publication. However, one doesn’t have to relate to Margaret’s

life for the film to be enjoyable. The story is well thought out and anyone can appreciate it.

Margaret, played by Abby Ryder Fortson, feels genuine and believable every step of the way. As a woman who struggled with adolescence myself, her portrayal is relatable, and her chemistry with the actors who play her family made everything very wholesome. The only minor flaw that can be found is occasionally the child actors feel a little stiff—but it makes sense given the awkward phases they are all in.

The film includes more scenes with Margaret’s mother Barbara, played by Rachel McAdams, which helped flesh out her character and enhance her relationship with her daughter. Barbara is a free spirit, embodying 1970s fashion and mindsets, contrasting the uptight, glamorous mothers of the suburbs. Barbara is endearing, warm, and lovable.

Margaret’s beloved grandmother is prevalent in the book and film. Brought to life by Kathy Bates, she is even sassier and funnier in the film, as we get to view her through everyone’s eyes, not just Margaret’s. Margaret’s father is slightly expanded upon, though not as much as her mother. Played by Benny Safdie, her father is gentle and has a bohemian flair.

The film is a near-perfect adaptation, which is not easy to pull off. It captures the spirit of the book while adding depth and context to many of the characters. It doesn’t hurt that it’s wrapped up in a warm blanket of nostalgia with its themes and ’70s aesthetics.

4.5/5

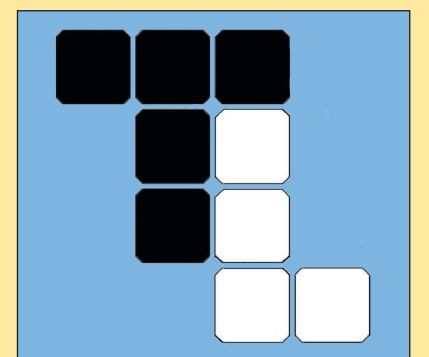


Rachel McAdams, Benny Safdie, and Abby Ryder Fortson in “Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret.”

PHOTO BY LIONSGATE

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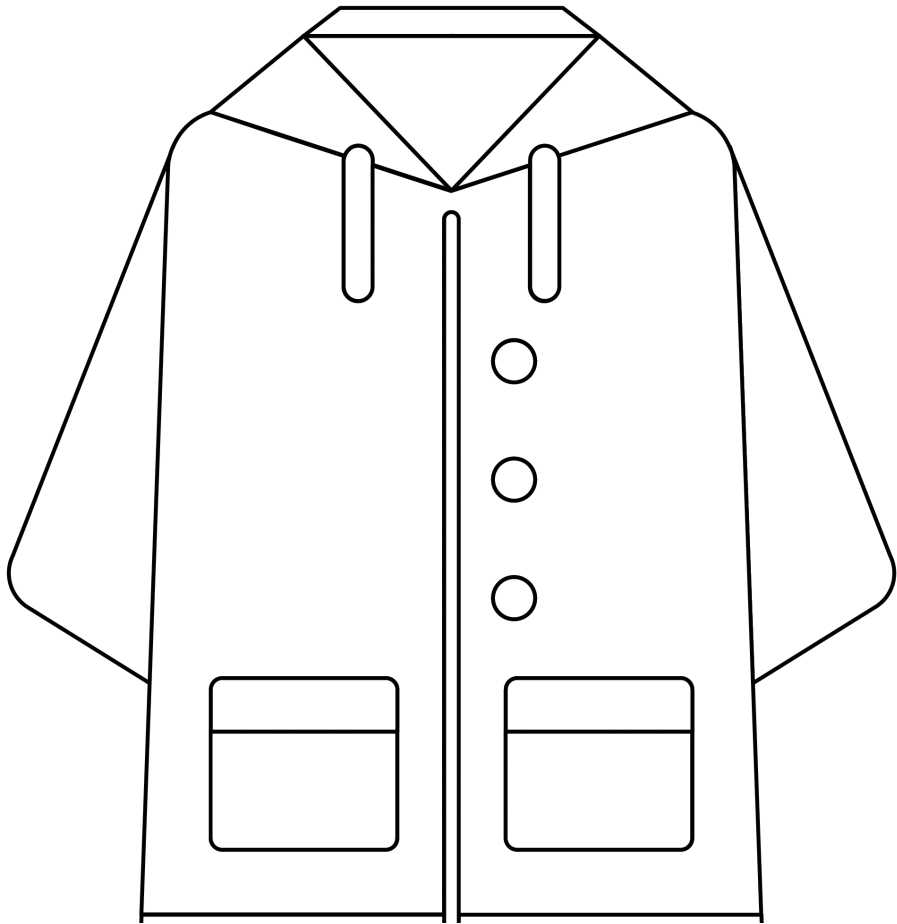


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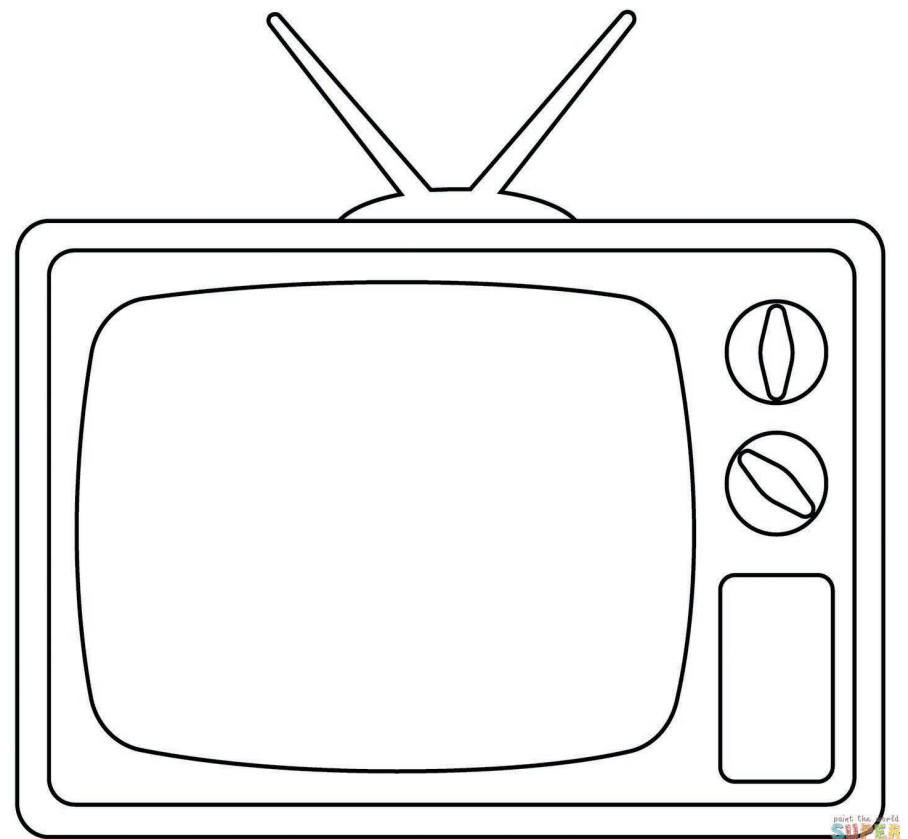


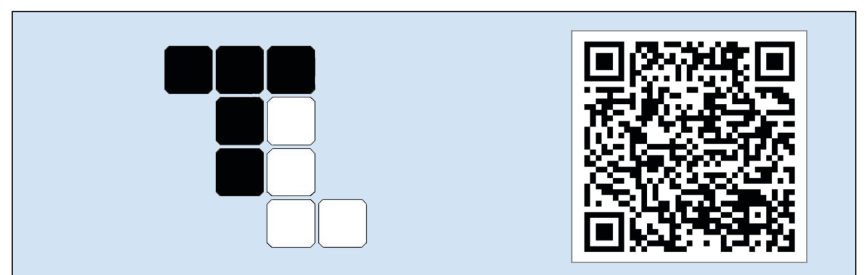
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Writer Picks



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