

ISSUE NO. 10

Introduction: Open Call

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Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons

Is as important to the rest of the country as the killing of white men, white mother's sons

We who believe in freedom cannot rest.

We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

Bernice Johnson Reagon (<http://www.bernicejohnsonreagon.com/ella.shtml>)^[1]

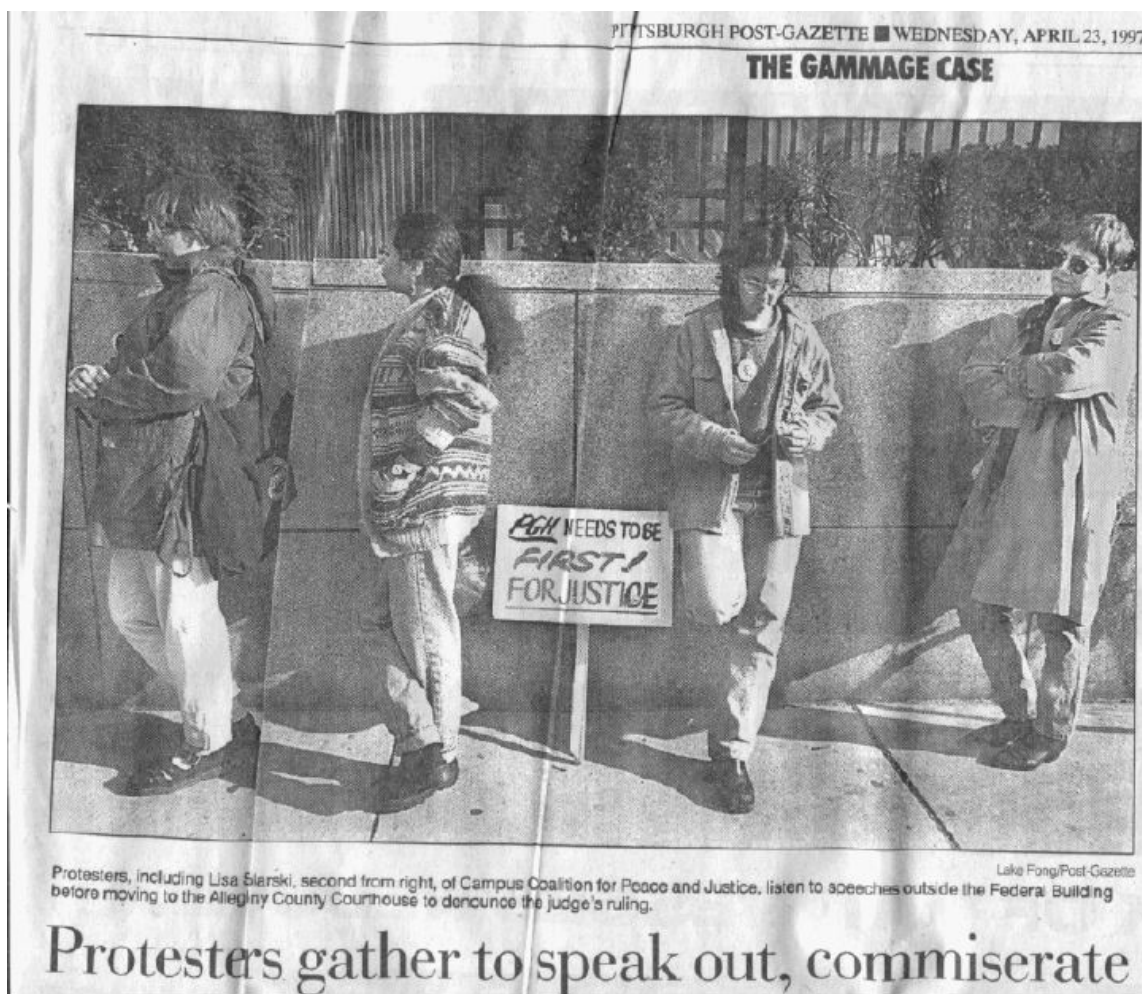
In 1995, two of the co-editors of this issue of *Ada*, Radhika Gajjala and Carol Stabile, were living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when motorist Jonny Gammage was pulled over by police on an October evening.

Less than seven minutes later, Gammage lay dead; his last words reportedly uttered to one of the police officers as they killed him: "Keith, Keith, I'm 31. I'm only 31."

Gammage was a gospel-singing entrepreneur who had moved to Pittsburgh to start a business with his cousin, Pittsburgh Steelers' player Ray Seals. John Vojtas, one of the police officers responsible for his death already had been suspended from the police

force, after his girlfriend purportedly committed suicide with his service revolver. He would be suspended a second time later, for an incident involving his two young sons. Vojtas' history of domestic violence was well documented.

Like many cities across the United States, Pittsburgh was not alone in its history of white supremacist structural violence grounded in toxic forms of masculinity and the police misconduct that follows from it. Two years before Gammage was murdered, in 1993, 23-year-old Maneia Bey was shot 13 times in the back while running from police. Thirty-three witnesses testified about the incident, but a coroner's jury voted 4-2 to recommend no charges be filed against the six officers involved in killing Bey.



The "Women of the CCPJ" (Campus Coalition for Peace and Justice

(<https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~pshell/gammage/flyer.html>))

The murder of Gammage followed a well-established pattern in police-involved shootings. The trial of two of the officers ended in a mistrial, John Vojtas was acquitted by an all-white jury, and despite massive social movements in Pittsburgh and Syracuse,

New York (Gammage's hometown), the Department of Justice decided not to bring civil rights action against the police departments involved.



Ray Seals addresses rally in Pittsburgh, PA

After national media had packed up their cameras and left the city, the pattern of unchecked police violence continued: in 2002, 12-year-old Michael Ellerbe was shot in the back and killed on Christmas Eve as he was running away from police. Less than seven years later, 33-year-old Nicholas Haniotokis was shot and killed by the same Pittsburgh police officer who had killed Ellerbe.

Justice — if it was to be had at all in places like Pittsburgh — was slow in coming.

The deaths of black people at the hands of police officers are one dimension of the structural violence of white supremacy, violence inflicted and tempered by relations of gender and class. These relations of intersectionality – of gender, class, sexualities, abilities — also demand analysis, not to detract attention from the fight against police violence, but to ensure attention to forms of gendered violence that impact women of color in ways less likely to be captured on camera or to be conducive to what Fischer and Mohrman describe in this issue as *sousveillance*.

To return to Pittsburgh, by way of another example, as the city grappled with police violence in the early decades of the twenty-first century, other forms of structural violence received substantially less attention. In October 2004, **Celia Flewellen** (<http://www.post-gazette.com/frontpage/2004/10/10/Husband-arrested-in-slaying-of-city-principal/stories/200410100217>), the 40-year-old black principal of Homewood Montessori,

also in Pittsburgh, was beaten to death with a hammer by her husband, while her two young daughters hid in their bedroom. Flewellen was one of 11,766 American women murdered by current or former male partners between 2001 and 2012. More than 1,600 women were murdered by men in 2013 (the last year for which data was available).^[2]

This body count is unconscionable. We #sayhername not only as a reminder of the gender-specific ways in which structural violence impacts women of color, but to ensure that we do not lose sight of forms of violence less easily incorporated into the visual economies of new media. Contributors Mia Fischer and Katy Mohrman remind us that structural violence, even as it disproportionately impacts all women, queer and trans people of color, also makes invisible their suffering, as well as their efforts and struggles to protect themselves.

Activists and scholars recognize that these forms of racist violence are not new, however much they have only intermittently received national media attention in the US. Nearly twenty years after the murder of Jonny Gammage and a decade after the murder of Celia Flewellen, in November of 2014, a grand jury in St. Louis County ruled to acquit Darren Wilson (a white Ferguson police officer) of responsibility in the death of an 18-year-old black teenager, Michael Brown. Civil unrest overtook the streets of Ferguson in response, as decades of racialized violence at the hands of law enforcement poured out in grief and anguish at the immeasurable indignities and violence suffered.^[3] Protests, sit-ins, and marches met with the state's repressive force are not new either — these are tried and true tactics in the struggle for equitable access to civil liberties, evidence of which can be seen globally.^[4]

What is new, we are repeatedly reminded in both scholarly and popular literature, is the medium: information communication technologies now allow for the rapid dissemination of testimony, images, and information connecting a once disaggregated and repressed landscape of anguish and protest. And with these new possibilities, new pathologies and abuses have emerged; the harassment of women, people of color, and the LGBT+ community through digital interfaces, the amplification of interpersonal and domestic violence facilitated by social media, and offline consequences for online activities.^[5]

We caution against the lingering presentism that can accompany a hasty embrace of digital platforms understood as somehow having transported us into an era dislodged from history. Careless celebrations of the digital often lose sight of situated, processual diagnoses of the many ways in which new media ecologies are enlisted by older

institutions and practices of structural violence. Seeking to avoid over- or de-emphasizing the digital, we urge feminist media scholars to take stock of what happens once precarious spaces, steeped in long-standing historical legacies of racist and sexist violence, become digitally mediated.

To those ends, this issue of *Ada* begins with a special section of contributions solicited for their timely attention to structural violence as it relates to digital environments. This special section was more than an effort to bring together a specific kind of content — it was also an experiment in production. Taking advantage of the flexibilities that Fembot's open access digital publishing platform offers *Ada*, this special section grew out of an attempt to test the limits of scholarly publication given the tumultuous news cycle. **Putting out our call in early summer**

(<https://adanewmedia.org/blog/2016/07/18/cfpspecialissue2016/>), this section went through production in under a quarter of the time of our usual publication cycle — using the volunteered labor of our collective members who participated in everything from peer review to copy editing to issue production. Here we find that Fembot's ethos of alternative publication in the face of the restrictive limits of traditional scholarship offers yet another way to make meaningful scholarly content available that addresses issues of the most urgent concern to readers engaging with feminist theory, scholarship, and activism.

The four contributions that make up this section pay specific attention to imminent crises of gendered and raced violence and their entanglements with technologies, information, and media. The first of these contributions, by Australian scholar **Sky Croeser** (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-croeser/>), explores how the propensity for anonymous harassment on mass digital platforms has brought into question the efficacy of adherence to 'free speech' policies, often positioning victims of online harassment in conflict with a core Western liberal value. Croeser argues that women, people of color, trans and non-binary people, queer people, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups disproportionately absorb hate speech, death threats, and countless other manifestation of on and offline intimidation. This amounts to a massive chilling of speech; one rarely taken into account because it operates through practices of silencing and disappearing marginalized voices. "The common answer to these problems is to say that while political liberalism has its flaws, every other possible system is worse," Croeser writes, urging for creative and radical reconsideration of liberal ideals in the face of new media environments. Through an intersectional

approach, Croeser looks to activist and political work being done in the margins to offer alternative politics of expression and space for public discourse.

Mary Ingram-Waters and Emilee Eikren (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-eikren-ingramwaters/>) consider another manifestation of violence that affects women online: revenge porn, which they define as “as the non-consensual circulation of intimate images with the intent to harm.” In formulating their “feminist sociology of revenge porn,” they conceptualize revenge porn as a gendered crime, one that frequently triggers victim-blaming in response. Eikren and Ingram-Waters observe this tension in focus groups in their efforts to analyze revenge porn through a feminist theoretical lens. They provide us with insight as to how blame is assigned in these situations, the lack of faith in legal systems, and the gaps and ambiguities in how gender is or is not considered as having relevance to the crime. “A feminist sociology of revenge porn,” according to them, “helps us understand why participants could say this much about revenge porn, focusing on individual victims and perpetrators, without being able to see it as a product of a culture of violence against women.”

In the third of these contributions, “Black Deaths Matter? Sousveillance and the Invisibility of Black Life,” **Mia Fischer and Katy Mohrman** (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-fischer-mohrman/>) contemplate the optics of racialized violence. Looking to Diamond Reynolds’ use of Facebook Live to stream the police shooting of her boyfriend, Philando Castile, in July 2016, the authors argue that live-streaming social media offers a powerful inversion of the institutional gaze, giving anti-police violence activists a medium for “sousveillance,” which they define as “a subversive surveillance from below” and an affordance of new media technologies “that allow for the inversion of the institutional gaze and enable individuals who have historically been the subjects of racialized surveillance practices.”

With the broad transmission of sousveillant images, previously invisible black lives and deaths become legible as victims of state-sanctioned violence. Fischer and Mohrman are quick to temper an uncritical embrace of these images, urging us to pay critical attention to the risks of sousveillance. What, they ask, are the consequences of seeking the empathy of white viewers through visual registers? How are we to avoid fixing these images and naturalizing them for a white viewership whose visual literacy is imbricated with a legacy of anti-black subjugation and violence?

In keeping with Fischer and Mohrman's focus on visual activism in the face of racial hostility, scholar **Janel Hobson** (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-hobson/>) also argues for a moment of caution in "Black Beauty and Digital Spaces: The New Visibility Politics," as she addresses the online discourses that orbit the hashtag #BlackGirlMagic. A "'magical' intervention to reframe the beauty and value of black womanhood," she warns, "maintains its rhetorical and visual power." Hobson carefully parses through recent media events such as Jonathan Bachman's photograph of 28-year-old **Ieshia Evans** (<http://content-img.newsinc.com/jpg/415/31121974/40477258.jpg?t=1>) depicted in a standoff with riot police, Yaba Blay's "**Pretty.Period**" (<http://prettyperiod.me/>) blog as a "visual testimony of black beauty," and Beyoncé's visual album, *Lemonade*, all the while resisting the urge to distill these events into uncomplicated resistance to anti-black racism. Taking note of the way the "specter of respectability lingers over these projects," Hobson's work offers us a deeper and more complicated understanding of what #BlackGirlMagic implies, both in its relationship with #BlackLivesMatter and on its own terms.

Although we did not plan for this, the five articles that follow the special section flesh out many of the points raised by Croeser, Eikren and Waters-Ingram, Fischer and Mohrman, and Hobson. **Panteá Farvid and Kayla Aisher** (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-farvid-aisher/>), for instance, in writing about the experiences of heterosexual women from New Zealand who use Tinder, the location-based dating app, note how discourses that link women's use of Tinder to risk-taking behaviors divert attention from the larger societal issues of male violence against women. Even as Tinder offers opportunities for technologically mediated intimacies unique to the app's technological affordances, they observe that "where women could have access to a wider pool of men and explore their sexuality, the app also re/produced some traditional discourses of gendered heterosexuality." Thus this mobile technology-facilitated intimate space reproduces the contradictions manifest in women's lives as they traverse domains of danger and pleasure through heterosexual relationships.

The issue of computer-facilitated couplings is given historical context by **Marie Hicks** (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-hicks/>)'s article, which provides a history of computer dating grounded in its mid-twentieth century origins. She uses sexuality as a lens to review the ways in which a particular form of heteronormativity was coded into the protocols established for computer dating. Addressing issues of computer mediated and computer facilitated relational communication, Hicks notes how the aspiration was to change what was seen to be a "messy and imperfect emotional process into a clean,

scientific and rational one.” Seeking a life partner was coded through particular contextual heteropatriarchal models. The relational space thus was predefined to make women available on terms set by men.

As Hicks sees it, implicit in this particular coding of how a heterosexual relationship should be was a reproduction of the violence of heteropatriarchal relationality that undercut women’s attempts to assert agency. In their article on “*Let’s All Be Abominable Feminists*,” **Jeremiah Favara and Caitlyn Kawamura**

(<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-favara-kawamura/>) similarly explore the violence of heteropatriarchal norms that shape digital interactions — in this instance, women’s participation in “the digital college party scene” through their use of the app Yeti. Their in-depth research into the structured nature of the app and women’s attempts to use it for their own pleasure provide rich insights into the contradictory nature of women’s participation in the digital college party scene.

The remaining two articles in the second section of this issue of *Ada* look to how more traditional media forms shape self-perceptions of race and gender. **B. Afeni McNeely Cobham** (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-cobham/>) analyzes the impact of mainstream rap on Black women college students’ experiences in a predominantly white institution, noting how students exerted agency and made choices about how they engaged with Hip Hop culture. Her research emphasizes the importance of embedding culturally relevant pedagogy in our courses, while at the same time recognizing the reproduction of gendered micro-aggressions in mainstream appropriations of Hip Hop. To our thinking, this article shows the importance of an epistemic shift in the way we teach that enhances efforts to be fully inclusive.

In “Gender Differences in Movie Superheroes’ Roles, Appearances, and Violence,” **Monica K. Miller, Jessica Rauch, and Tatyana Kaplan** (<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-miller-rauch-kaplan/>) also look to popular culture to understand the impact of racism. Their contribution provides a quantitative analysis of portrayals of superheroes in film, offering empirical evidence of the very limited representational possibilities for female characters in this genre. Even in the realm of the fantastic, they demonstrate, do sexism and racism demonstrate their grip over media industries’ imaginations.

Most of the essays in this issue of *Ada* focus on issues arising from the context of the US, an important limitation of this issue. Still, in the context of rising global anti-immigrant sentiment, the BREXIT, and political forces simpatico with Donald Trump’s blend of

dictatorial free market capitalism and revanchist white supremacy and misogyny, these articles raise issues of less parochial concern about both the invisibility and visibility of gender. Practices of digital mediation and the perpetuation of violence through this interface, moreover, are global even as the issues play out contextually in local ways.

Although we did not receive submissions that explored caste violence, religious violence, violence against LGBTQ people in global south contexts or violence in the context of the worsening international refugee situation, we hope that future issues will examine these and other issues through intersectional lenses. Violence against peoples marginalized by race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and religion is both a global issue and very localized, requiring careful unraveling.

This issue allows us to begin to explore particular instances of how structural violence manifests itself in digitally mediated forms that are increasingly transnational in the hope that we can provide a springboard for a broader, transnational conversations about gender and structural violence.

Because this issue operated on such a tight deadline, more than any other issue of *Ada*, we could not have done this without the enthusiasm, commitment, and labor of all the reviewers, volunteers and members of the ADA team who contributed to Issue 10's production. We are grateful in particular to the following reviewers:

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Footnotes

1. Bernice Johnson Reagon, *Ella's Song*,

<http://www.bernicejohnsonreagon.com/ella.shtml>

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2. "More than 1600 Women Murdered by Men in One Year," Violence Policy Center, Washington, DC. September 15, 2015, <http://www.vpc.org/press/more-than-1600-women-murdered-by-men-in-one-year-new-study-finds/> (<http://www.vpc.org/press/more-than-1600-women-murdered-by-men-in-one-year-new>)

3. "Grand jury decline to charge Darren Wilson for killing Michael Brown," *The Guardian*, November 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/nov/24/ferguson-police-darren-wilson-michael-brown-no-charges>

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4. "Tens of millions of Indian workers strike in fight for higher wages," *The Guardian*, September 2, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/02/indian-workers-strike-in-fight-for-higher-wages> (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/02/indian-workers-strike-in-fight-for-higher-wages>)

5. "Two gay rights activists hacked to death in Bangladesh," *Aljazeera*, April 26, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/people-hacked-death-bangladesh-capital-160425141155758.html> (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/people-hacked-death-bangladesh-capital-160425141155758.html>)

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Footnotes (returns to text)

1. Bernice Johnson Reagon, *Ella's Song*,
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2. "More than 1600 Women Murdered by Men in One Year," Violence Policy Center, Washington, DC. September 15, 2015,
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3. "Grand jury decline to charge Darren Wilson for killing Michael Brown," *The Guardian*, November 25, 2014,
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(<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/people-hacked-death-bangladesh-capital-160425141155758.html>)

◀ **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** ◀ **JONNY GAMMAGE** ◀ **POLICE VIOLENCE** ◀ **RACISM** ◀ **SEXISM**

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Carol Stabile is professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and associate dean for strategic initiatives in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Oregon. She researches the history of gender, race, and class in media institutions. She received her PhD from Brown University. She is the award-winning author of three books: *Feminism and the Technological Fix*, *White Victims, Black Villains: Gender, Race, and Crime News in US Culture*, and *The Broadcast 41: Women and the Anti-Communist Blacklist*. Her articles have appeared in *Camera Obscura*, *Cultural Studies*, and *South Atlantic Quarterly*. She co-founded the Fembot Collective and co-edits the *Feminist Media Studies* book series for University of Illinois Press. Her book, *The Broadcast 41: Women and the Broadcast Blacklist* (Goldsmiths University Press, 2018) tells the story of a group of women who were driven from US media industries during the Cold War. Stabile received an American Council of Learned Scholars (ACLS) Fellowship to complete the book and is working on a digital companion to it. She is currently collaborating with digital humanities scholar Roopika Risam on a new digital publishing project, *Reanimate*, aimed at restoring the contributions of women and people of color to media history and documenting lost innovations, creativity, and resistance within media industries.

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Sarah T. Hamid studied Media Studies at the University of Oregon where she was a Graduate Affiliate of the UO Libraries' Digital Scholarship Center and served as the Webmistress for the Fembot Collective from 2014-2016. She sits as Assistant Editor to Fembot's open access publication, *Ada*, and is member of the 2016-17 HASTAC Scholars cohort. She is joining MSRNE this year as a research assistant for the Social Media Collective. Her research interests broadly consider the knowledge systems supporting and supported by practices of new media; her MA work looks at the ways data-driven criminal justice and the informatics of policing are used for the surveillance, regulation, and colonization of bodies of color in Chicago.

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Radhika Gajjala is Professor of Media and Communication and of American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University, USA. She was Fulbright Professor in Digital Culture at University of Bergen, Norway for the year 2015-2016 and has continued collaborations through affiliation with the Western Norway Research Institute in Sogndal, Norway. In 2012, she was Senior Fulbright scholar at Soegijapranata Catholic University and has continued collaborating with faculty there in the examination of Indonesian craft communities/entrepreneurship. She has researched online activism, DIY crafters and women-centered communities online, non-profit organizations and also engaged in community partnerships with biracial communities in the U.S. Her work that engages themes related to globalization, digital labor, feminism and social justice. Her experience in critical feminist (digital and ethnographic) research methods, in building digitally mediated networks (since 1995) and also research in craft communities internationally has led to her being invited to participate in various projects internationally as advisor, mentor and collaborator. Published books include "Digital diasporas: labor, affect in gendered Indian digital publics" - co-authored with several online activists and co-researchers - (Rowman and Littlefield International, Forthcoming in Fall 2019). "Online Philanthropy: Connecting, microfinancing, and gaming for change" (Lexington Press, 2017). Lexington "Cyberculture and the Subaltern" (Lexington Press, 2012) and "Cyberselves: Feminist Ethnographies of South Asian Women" (Altamira, 2004). Co-edited collections include "Cyberfeminism 2.0"

(2012), "Global Media Culture and Identity" (2011), "South Asian Technospaces"(2008) and "Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice" (2008).



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