

Jesse Brown Pulse



Mr. Cecil Johnson
Bronze Star Medal
United States Army
1st Infantry Division
Airborne Medic (1954-1966)
Jesse Brown Volunteer since 1996

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Rick A. Ament, MSA, FACHE
Director, Jesse Brown VA Medical Center

Team Jesse Brown,

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Jesse Brown Pulse.

The Pulse is the Jesse Brown Monthly Employee newsletter designed to inform, celebrate, recognize, reflect and sometimes just have fun.

It is so appropriate that this month we honor our very own Cecil on the cover of the Pulse. For many an employee and Veteran, Cecil's smile is what starts our day. Like a double shot of espresso, Cecil's energy gets us moving in a positive direction. Immediately inside the cover, you will learn about the man behind our name, Jesse Brown. You will also learn a little more about JB4BL and our strategic initiative addressing health equity. Every month, we will highlight a department and staff. This month, we chose Voluntary Services. Then, as we roll out our new employee newsletter, we thought it appropriate to revisit our new Employee Recognition Wall and showcase Joyce White, our Employee of the Year.

At Jesse Brown, we always have success to recognize. This month, we celebrate "Raj" and the Radiology Department's recent accomplishments. On Page 9, we introduce you to some of our recent FLDP graduates as we talk a little about that program. And, as we will every month, we share news and updates from our labor partners.

The Pulse is yours. It is your vehicle to recognize excellence, to celebrate success and to inform your colleagues of new developments. Please bring your stories to us. Together, we have a lot to share.

Until next month, please enjoy this edition of the Pulse.

MISSION

The Jesse Brown Pulse seeks to celebrate all the amazing things our employees do, both in and out of work, as well as highlight resources across the medical center for our Veterans.



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This newsletter is for you, so if you have a story you want to share, please reach out to VHACHSNewsletter@va.gov

COMMUNICATIONS TASKFORCE

The Communications Taskforce is a group of your peers who volunteered to search out and tell the stories of our medical center and the Veterans we are honored to serve.

COMMUNICATIONS TASKFORCE MEMBERS

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Misa Lopez
Elizabeth Sundin

Ashley Frank
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Michelle Kamin-Lindsey
Helen Morrison
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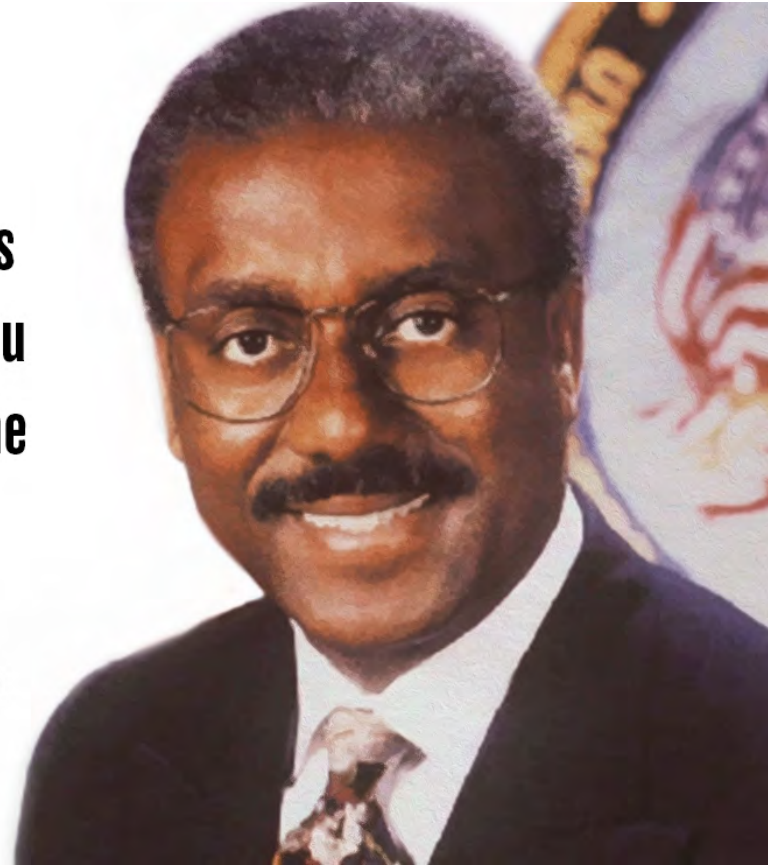
Jesse Brown | The Man Behind Our Name

Ashley Frank - Clinical Dietitian

“ If you look at the history of this nation, you’ll see that when you invest in the people, you get the greatest return.”

— Jesse Brown

U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs (1993 - 1997)



Welcome to the first full edition of the Jesse Brown Pulse! This issue has a range of inspiring stories and resources for not only Jesse Brown employees, but also the Veterans we serve. What better way to start off this issue than to share the legacy of Jesse Brown, which lives on in the halls of our hospital, but few may know about the life of the man who is our hospital’s namesake. Jesse Brown was born in Detroit in 1944 but grew up in Chicago. He studied and graduated with honors from Chicago City College. In 1963, he enlisted to serve our country as part of the United States Marine Corps. As a Marine, he fought in the Vietnam War and eventually rose the ranks to corporal.

During his time in service, he was shot in the right arm which became partially paralyzed, however Jesse Brown continued to persevere. After returning to Chicago, he joined the Disabled American Veterans organization in 1967. The DAV is an advocacy and service organization whose mission is to provide assistance for our nation’s disabled Veterans.

In 1988, Jesse Brown became the DAV’s first African-American executive director, a position he held until 1993 when he was selected to serve as secretary of Veterans Affairs. He was the first African American to hold this post and served in the position until 1997. Under his leadership, the

Department of Veterans Affairs expanded services for homeless Veterans, female Veterans and Veterans who suffered illness related to chemical exposure during their service in the Vietnam or Gulf wars. Jesse Brown was eventually diagnosed with ALS and passed away in 2002. Two years later our facility, which was formerly known at the West Side VA Medical Center, was renamed in his honor – the **Jesse Brown VA Medical Center**.

Have a great story to tell? Want to contribute to the Jesse Brown Pulse? We’re always looking for more storytellers! Reach out at VHACHSNewsletter@va.gov



Strategic Initiative Update | JB4BL and Health Equity

Tenena Soro - Medical Support Assistant

A strategic initiative is a detailed plan that helps organizations achieve their goals and long-term vision. One of Jesse Brown VAMC’s strategic initiatives is to:

Become a national resource by leading the VHA with advancements in Health Equity.

The Jesse Brown 4 Black Lives taskforce contributes towards this initiative, but first, what is the purpose of JB4BL?

The Jesse Brown for Black Lives Task Force came into existence in the wake of George Floyd’s murder in Minnesota, with the goal to identify, discuss and address racial inequities within the medical facility to improve experiences of Black Veteran-patients and employees. The Taskforce works with an interdisciplinary team to “Create clinical initiatives that directly benefit Veterans locally, regionally, and nationally.” JB4BL’s overarching goal is the dismantlement of racism in medicine and promoting the health and well-being of all patients equally. Among others, here are just a few of the JB4BL’s accomplishments worthy of notice:

- JB4JL has established a mentoring committee for high school and college students who are aspiring to become medical professionals
- JB4BL has been working on improving access to medical assisted treatment for opioid withdrawal.
- JB4BL received regional and national recognition, honored with the “Deputy Secretary Coin” Award by Deputy Secretary Donald Remy for its contributions to health equity.

Looking out to the future, here are some of the major goals that JB4BL would like to accomplish:

- Use quality improvement initiatives to explore health disparities in the care of our Black Veteran patients.
- Improve health care access, pharmacy support/assistance,

and improve/increase empathy of providers and residents.

- Continue to engage in education and courageous conversations by providing a safe space to educate VA staff about the effects of racism for the advancement of health equity everywhere.
- Establish a veterans committee as well as a community engagement/memorial committee.
- Assess the spiritual/health/general well-being and vocational needs of Black employees and building collaborative efforts to address those needs.

It is evident that JB4BL has been working hard to promote and support the Jesse Brown’s Health Equity Initiatives, leading to better care and support of the Veterans we serve.



Jesse Brown Celebrates BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Take a look at some of the events held during Black History Month this year, and learn more about how Jesse Brown 4 Black Lives is supporting our mission and strategic initiatives!

In February, JB4Bl hosted the first ever “Rollin’ Together” Skating and Bowling Event at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Skating and Bowling Center. This event was open to Veterans and their supporters, as well as Jesse Brown staff to provide some much-needed cultural immersion for Veterans and VA staff alike.

Along with roller skating and bowling, the JB4BL clinical committee gave updates on their successes with increasing health equity across the VA, and various Veteran service providers were present to provide resources and referrals, as needed. This event is just one of many to come that will strive to bring together Veterans, their supporters and Jesse Brown staff in celebration of Black culture.

Some Success Project Stories of Jesse Brown for Black Lives Clinical Committee

Francis Agyei - Medical Instrument Technician

One of Jesse Brown VAMC’s core missions is that of research. This is a mission the clinical committee of the JB4BL Task Force takes very seriously and engages in. According to co-chair, Dr. Cheryl Conner, the JB4BL Clinical Committee is a multidisciplinary group of clinicians and trainees made up of 40 members whose focus is on removing racism from the medical side of health care.

Some project success stories by the JB4BL Clinical Committee include:

1. Changing the calculation for kidney and lung function tests so they no longer include race. These are just the beginning of many future changes to remove race-based factors from health care and provide equitable care for all Veterans.
2. Removed barriers to prescribing insulin pens, which is shown as just as cost-effective as vials.

Dr. Conner pointed out the need for all to pitch in to help change mindsets, especially in the medical field to help correct wrongs caused by many years of racism in a scientific world such as medicine.

Kudos to the JB4BL Task Force and the Clinical Committee! Watch out for more success stories.





The Hon. Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs Donald Remy, shakes the hand of Cecil Johnson, to thank him for his duty as a volunteer.

Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE)

THE FIVE HEARTBEATS AND THEIR TEAM

The Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) has a mission to improve the lives of those who have served

Michelle Kamin-Lindsay - Social Worker

The Center for Development and Civic Engagement (formally known as Voluntary Services) is one of the amazing programs here at Jesse Brown VAMC. The Center for Development & Civic Engagement has a mission to improve the lives of those who have served, with their five staff members (Patrick Gleason, Cherrise Scida, Don Jackson, Bernina Green, and Alberto Lopez) and 183 volunteers (half of which are Veterans). Together they create one of the most comprehensive systems at Jesse Brown and our affiliated CBOCs.

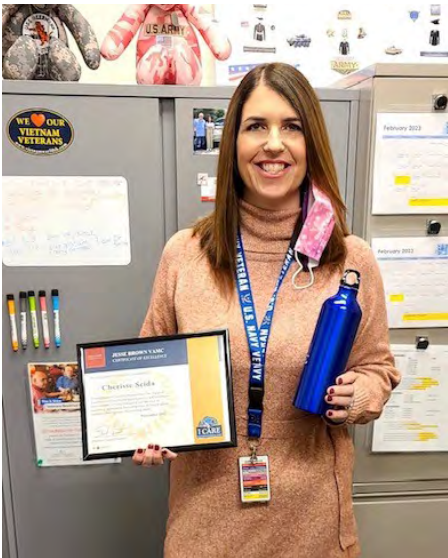
This office improves the health outcomes of our Veterans, bridging the gap between what a Veteran has and what is needed for success. This is evidenced by increased appointment attendance, access to food and

clothing, mattresses to sleep on, and other life necessities. They are able to do so through generous donations of items and time through community supporters such as local businesses, corporations, nonprofit organizations and Veterans Service Organizations.

When asked about a particular event that pulls on his heartstrings, Mr. Gleason reports there are “so many over the years I’ve served, but here is one that really sticks out.”

About five years ago, Voluntary Services received a call from the VFW in Springfield requesting assistance for a Veteran in need. The young woman was a combat Veteran with two young children who was also pregnant with triplets and had just lost her

husband in a tragic incident. Due to the stress of the situation, the triplets were born prematurely and between having to spend time at the hospital, coping with her loss, and having to navigate single parenthood, she was unable to provide for basic needs. This is where Jesse Brown’s CDCE stepped in. With a single email, they were able to secure supplies for the family including: three cribs, three changing tables, three high chairs, diapers/clothes/wipes for years to come, a triple stroller, and even connect them to an organization that donated a vehicle. Mr. Gleason has remained in contact with the family and has a picture of the healthy and happy boys on his wall and affectionately calls them “Our triplets—meaning the Jesse Brown triplets—everyone pitched in to help this family.”



“As a patient and an employee, serving has been such a rewarding experience.”

Cherrise Scida



“What a gift it is to be able to take care of your family by taking care of others.”

Patrick Gleason

The work that CDCE does in nothing short of a miracle. If you are interested in volunteering, or know others who are, please see a member of their team.

“This is my dream job. I firmly believe that to whom much is given much is required.”

Don Jackson



One of the most well-known volunteers, Mr. Cecil Johnson, has been volunteering at Jesse Brown since 1996. He served in the United States Army 1st Infantry Division as an Airborne Medic from 1954-1966. He served “100% of the Cold War and was part of the first combat troops to land in Vietnam.” Cecil earned the Bronze Star Vietnam by trying to save his fellow soldiers who were in an unmarked live minefield by entering the area himself. Mr. Cecil volunteers Monday-Friday,

arriving at 4:30 a.m. and leaving at noon to 1 p.m. depending on what is needed. You may recognize him from his exuberant and enthusiastic greetings, which he points out, “Covers all the shifts; sometimes it’s good morning and sometimes it’s good night for the overnights. I’ve got a little something for everyone.” However, he is also often behind the scenes, completing administrative tasks, visiting with patients, and “whatever else needs to be done.”

“We will always have an answer for staff or Veterans. If we don’t, we will find the answer.”

Bernina Green



“I get to live my best life and fulfill my purpose in life of serving others, personally and professionally.”

Alberto Lopez

Employee Recognition Wall | Employee of the Year

Ashley Frank - Clinical Dietitian



In March, The Executive Leadership Team of the Jesse Brown VAMC held a ribbon cutting event unveiling the new Employee Recognition Wall.

The ceremony was held on the first floor of the Damen Pavilion and was attended by Jesse Brown staff and Veterans. Jesse Brown employees who exemplify the VA's ICARE values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence were recognized by having their images displayed.

One employee featured on the wall is Jesse Brown 2021 Employee of the Year—Joyce White. Joyce has devoted the last 28 years of her career to serving the Veterans of Jesse Brown VAMC.

As the procurement technician in the Nutrition and Food Service Department, Joyce works in collaboration with food sales

representatives and NFS staff to keep food operations running smoothly. She ensures that food service staff and clinical dietitians alike have the necessary ingredients to provide the best nutritional care to our Veterans.



Joyce White
Jesse Brown 2021 Employee of the Year

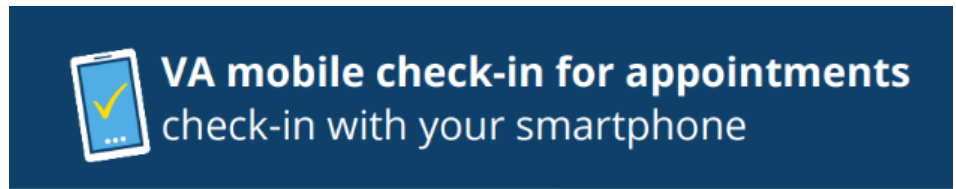
Joyce's nominator, Cornelia Thompson, describes her as "one of the hardest working, loyal and honest employees she knows." And goes on to explain that Joyce "exhibits an I CARE attitude on a day-to-day basis." As an employee of the NFS department myself, I can attest to Joyce's I CARE attitude. Joyce is a real team player and problem solver. Multiple times I have seen Joyce stop what she is doing to help out her fellow employee or veteran however she can. As Cornelia Thompson put it, "I CARE is truly who she is." When asked why she chose to work at Jesse Brown, Joyce explained she "loves assisting people" and has "a great appreciation for Veterans' service to our country." Joyce White, Congratulations on being awarded 2021 Employee of the Year and thank you for your dedication to serving the veterans and staff of Jesse Brown VA Hospital!

What's new in the VA? | VA Mobile check-in

Lacretia Henderson - Transportation Assistant

This March, the VA deployed the Patient Check-In Application for mobile phones.

Patients now have the option to use mobile check-in.



What is it?

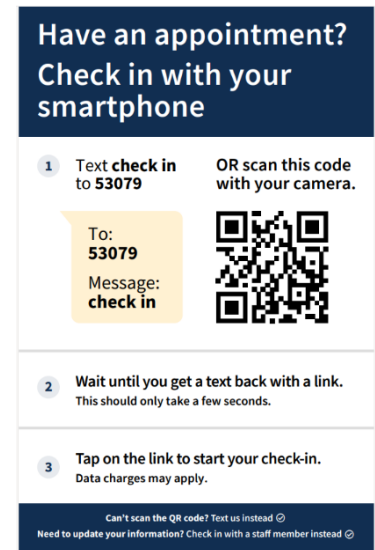
Self-service platform for pre-check-in and appointment check-in activities

- Veterans use a mobile device to verify demographic (contact, emergency contact, next of kin) information up to seven days before an appointment
- Veterans use smartphones on day of appointment to check in
- Alternative option to checking in with staff

How does it work?

1. Patient text "Check in" to 53079
2. Immediately the patient will receive a link to complete the check in process
3. Verify patient contact and demographic information for privacy and security purposes
4. If no information has changed, the system patient accepts the check in and they are all checked in.

Simple as one, two, three!
They are all set.



Celebrating Radiology

Elizabeth Sundin
- Public Affairs Specialist

Jesse Brown Radiology Program Recognized by American College of Healthcare Executives

Jesse Brown VAMC's Medical Imaging Service, and specifically its Program Director Brahamjit Raghav, was awarded the 2022 Chicago Healthcare Executive Forum Service Excellence Award in February.

This is a very prestigious award given by the American College of Healthcare Executives that



considers the service provided by many different medical facilities locally and nationally. This is the first time that a VA Radiology Service has been recognized in this manner, and we are proud

of the efforts of the Jesse Brown VAMC Medical Imaging Team in their focus on Veteran Centered Care. Congratulations Brahamjit Raghav and the radiology team!

Education Update | FLDP

Carl Johnson - Training Specialist

In 2022, the Learning, Innovation, and Leadership Development Department reimplemented the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center's Facility Leadership Development Program after a three-year hiatus. The FLDP is part of the National Veterans Health Administration Leadership Effectiveness Succession Planning effort. Its major goal is to develop leaders who can manage the challenges and changes that face VHA.

FLDP focuses on leadership, not management or supervision. Program participants work on developing their leadership style. Through the use of self-assessment tools like Workplace DISC Assessments, combined with the wisdom of internal and external subject matter experts, participants establish a knowledge base and skill set for defining and expressing the leadership part of themselves.

FLDP is available to all full-time permanent employees in pay grade GS 7 and above and in Wage Grade/Title 38 equivalent. Those interested can be in either clinical or administrative positions and must have at least one year of service at Jesse Brown. The program is highly interactive and participants work in group settings and independently during the program. FLDP requires a serious commitment of time and energy.



Check out what two of the 2022 FLDP graduates have to say about the program:



“FLDP provided an excellent opportunity to collaborate and network with people from all over the facility. I was able to learn new technical skills, processes, gain a different perspective on how systems in the medical center operate, and build professional relationships with some amazing peers.”

Cheryl Svec



“I learned so much! It's an excellent program! Even if you're not in a leadership role, the skills you learn in FLDP will benefit you in your present position.”

Marian Johnson

Nothing About Us, Without Us

Jessica Gardner - Research Health Science Specialist



VETERANS

Annie App for Veterans

★★★★☆ Average: 3.6 (334 votes)

Launch in Browser



The VA HSR&D|QUERI 2023 National Meeting was held Feb. 8-10 in Baltimore. The theme of this year's conference was "Advancing Health Equity through Research, Implementation, Diversity, and Inclusion." Meeting participants included more than 550 researchers, VA operational partners, clinical leaders, Veterans and caregivers who were able to come together for the first time since the pandemic began. In fact, several Jesse Brown employees and Veterans attended the conference to share, learn, and listen to topics such as health equity, long-term care, COVID-19, suicide prevention and other pressing health topics.

Ms. Kathryn Peoples-Robinson, who served in the Army as a psychiatric nurse, presented a poster on her work for the research project, "Diabetic Disparities: Texting to Extend Treatment." This project conducted a randomized controlled comparative effectiveness trial with 400 Veterans whose diabetes was uncontrolled in Gainesville,

Florida and Chicago using components of the interactive, tailored self-management texting protocol "Annie." Annie is a text messaging program developed by the VA that helps support chronic disease self-management and overall self-care.

Dr. Stephanie Shimada leads this study out of Bedford VA and Dr. Howard Gordon serves as the site principal investigator here at Jesse Brown. Ms. Peoples-Robinson has been working with the study team since early 2021, providing input to the development of the texts, study materials, and more on a weekly basis.

Ms. Peoples-Robinson reflected on her experience at the conference and said she didn't know what to expect, but it exceeded her expectations, and that being in the company of other Veterans and Veteran employees was most memorable. For the past two years, she has been working virtually with the study team across three VAs (Jesse Brown, Gainesville, and Bedford) and she said it was so nice to finally

meet everyone in person. She also believed that her input as a Veteran in the study was unique but was happy to discover at the conference that involving Veterans in VA research is a VA-wide effort and practice.

When asked, "How do you think we can get more Veterans involved in research?" Ms. Peoples-Robinson said that "You [Veterans] can't just wait for someone to call you to ask to be a part of this, but to seek it out yourself and ask when you're at the VA." Ms. Peoples-Robinson is a part of several Veteran women groups and believes it's important for Veterans to have a seat at the research table, especially women Veterans. Ms. Peoples-Robinson said that she would absolutely attend this conference again, and hopes there is a way more Veterans can attend conferences like this. She not only got to present, but learned about other topics she was interested in.

Thank you, Ms. Kathryn Peoples-Robinson, for your service and contribution to VA research!

Union Update

National Nurses United:

NNU is located on the second floor of Damen, office 2466 and 2468, if you have a need to contact National Nurses United, either email Adelenia Marshall@VA.Gov, or call 630-865-6501. Also, Alternate Work Schedules are coming to Jesse Brown and NNU and the other unions are currently in bargaining with management for this opportunity. NNU is looking forward to the signing of their new contract, until then the 2012 contract is still in effect.

American Federation of Government Employees:

American Federation of Government Employees Local 789 is located in Room 6412 on the sixth floor of the Damen Building. AFGE represents professional positions at Jesse Brown.

For more information, please call (262) 358-9992 or email afge0789@gmail.com. Check your SF50 Box 37 – if it says “1276” you are represented by AFGE!



Community Resources

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County

Elizabeth Soto - Superintendent of Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County is a unique organization that is comprised of two separate bodies: the non-for-profit membership body which, consists of various federally/state chartered, Cook County Veteran Service Organizations (501c-3), and the Operational VACCC Office, which consists of a dedicated staff who distribute direct benefits and services to Cook County, Illinois, Veterans, and their immediate family members (501c-4). Both entities operate collectively to concentrate on their main objective: Providing direct immediate emergency financial hardship assistance and connecting local social service organizations to Veterans and their families in need in Cook County.

A valuable part of the organization's operation consists of partnering with the various local programs to provide added

services to these Veterans and their families. Many of these dedicated departments can be found throughout the VA. The VACCC has developed and maintained long-term partnerships specifically with Jesse Brown VAMC social workers, the Minority Veterans Program, the Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, the Suicide Prevention Program and the Peer Support ATP and DDTC plus many more.

By partnering with the VA and the many other local organizations, we are able to provide a continuum of services in addition to the emergency assistance the VACCC directly provides. We value these partnerships and the Cook County, Illinois, Veterans and their families that we serve and continue to strive to work internally and externally to provide the most meaningful and positively impactful services to our Veteran community.

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