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PeaceInsight

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The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Never Again Rwanda or its partners.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In a world often fragmented by conflicts, hostility, and divisive rhetoric, the need for peace has never been more imperative. Now more than ever the world is concerned with global peace amidst the conflict in Palestine and Israel and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Closer to home, on the continent, 14 countries are currently experiencing conflict and the sequential Coups d'Etats that took place in West Africa last year threatened to destabilize the region. "An estimated 3.2 million Africans have been displaced due to conflict over the past year" (Reliefweb, 22 Aug 2023) bringing the total to over 40 million people. Even closer still, the unrest in the Great Lakes Region not only affects lives but is a dark cloud that impacts economic and political stability. As we often state at Never Again Rwanda, "Peacebuilding is not just the absence of violence" it is a concerted effort by concerned citizens, CSOs, and the public and private sector to contribute to a cohesive society.

We are being called upon to bridge the gaps between cultures, religions, and ideologies. "**Peace Insight**" serves as a platform for individuals from all walks of life to share their experiences, knowledge, and ideas on how we can collectively nurture a culture of peace.

As quoted by one of our contributors, Chiok Diang, "being a contributor to Peace Insight is a responsibility and a privilege. It's a chance to amplify voices, challenge perceptions, and contribute to the collective narrative of peace on a global scale. From personal reflections on transformative experiences to insightful analyses of reconciliation processes, each contribution adds a brushstroke to the canvas of global harmony, creating a mosaic of stories that inspire, inform, and propel us toward a more peaceful world."

Wishing you all a peaceful holiday period and a Happy New Year.

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Harmony's Tapestry A Journey of Peace and Youth Empowerment

By Florida Edgar Raymond

In the tapestry of peace, where dreams take flight,
Youth empowerment glows, a beacon of light.
Amidst the echoes of a Rwandan embrace,
A verse unfolds, weaving hope and grace.

In the corridors of time, where young voices rise,
An anthem of change, painting vibrant skies.
Mental health embraced, a compassionate song,
Empowering the youth, rendering them strong.

Through the labyrinth of challenges, they stride,
Climate change confronted, a daunting tide.
Social justice pursued with unwavering might,
In the realm of peace, they stand upright.

Human rights, a compass guiding their quest,
Economic development, a vibrant zest.
Women's rights echo, a harmonious chord,
In this symphony of empowerment, all are adored.
Intersectionality, where causes entwine,
A dance of ideas, a rhythm divine.
In examining connections, the boundaries we seek,
Create a foundation for sustainable peace.

Never Again Rwanda's journal, a canvas so vast,
Multidisciplinary strokes, ideas that last.
Articles that illuminate, a joint path we seek,
Towards positive peace, where thoughts speak.
So let the pages unfold, share the stories untold,
Peace and youth empowerment, a tale to behold.
In this multidimensional, intercultural dream,
A journey toward lasting peace, a vibrant gleam.

Unveiling the Intersectionality of Peace and Climate Change

By Robert Mugabo

In a world of multifaceted challenges, the intersectionality between peace and climate change emerges as a crucial nexus that demands our attention. Beyond polar ice caps and rising temperatures, the environmental crisis intertwines with global peace in ways that are both profound and urgent.

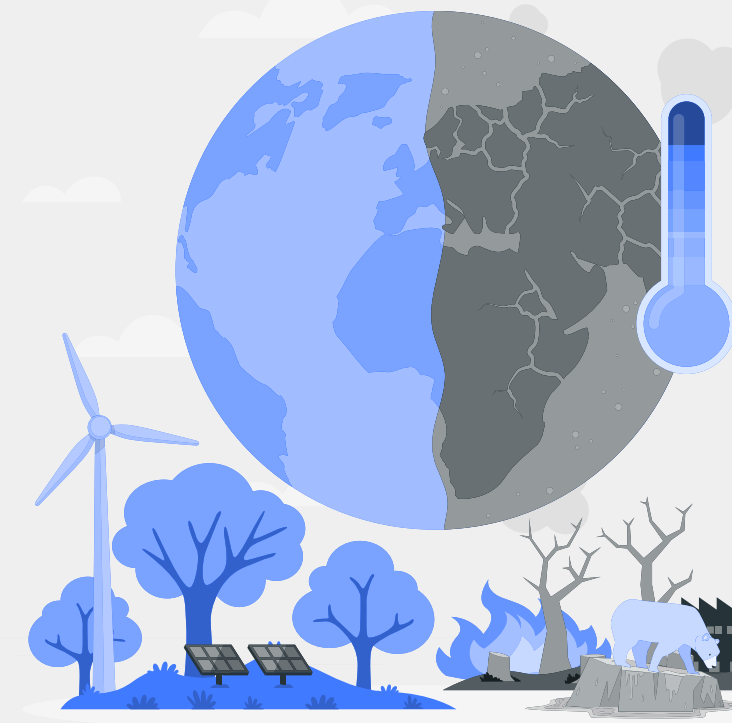
Recent statistics underline the gravity of the situation. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change-induced events have displaced an estimated 21.5 million people annually. This mass displacement not only disrupts lives but also amplifies the potential for conflicts over resources, as communities grapple with the strain of migration and competition for dwindling essentials.

Consider the Sahel region in Africa, where escalating conflicts and climate change form a scary partnership. The United Nations reports that 80%

of the Sahel's population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. Yet, recurrent droughts and unpredictable rainfall patterns, exacerbated by climate change, cripple agricultural productivity, leading to increased poverty and vulnerability. The resultant struggle for resources becomes a breeding ground for tensions and conflicts.

Beyond resource disputes, climate change contributes to the exacerbation of existing conflicts. Take the example of Lake Chad, which has seen a significant reduction in size due to climate-induced factors. This environmental stressor amplifies competition over water resources, exacerbating tensions and contributing to conflicts that have far-reaching consequences.

The interconnectedness of peace and climate change is not limited to conflict zones. Vulnerable communities worldwide face the excessive impact of environmental degradation, amplifying social in-



equalities and potentially creating breeding grounds for unrest. The Global Peace Index notes that countries with lower environmental performance often rank lower in peace, highlighting the tangled link between a healthy environment and a stable society.

Addressing this intersectionality requires a paradigm shift in our approach to both peacebuilding and environmental conservation. Sustainable development goals must integrate strategies that mitigate climate change impacts while fostering peace at local, national, and global levels.

Initiatives promoting sustainable practices, climate adaptation, and community resilience can act as catalysts for peace. By addressing the root causes of environmental degradation, we pave the way for a more stable world.

As peace and climate change are intertwined, we must recognize the symbiotic relationship between them. As we navigate the challenges of the 21st century, embracing strategies that address environmental sustainability and conflict resolution is not just an option but a necessity. The pursuit of peace and the protection of our planet can go hand in hand if we take collective action and renew our commitment to harmony.

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Africa Renewal. (2017). The new face of the Sahel. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/august-november-2017/new-face-sahel> [Accessed 7 Nov. 2023].

Marsabit: An Example of Peace and Security Destabilized by Climate Change

By Asha Bonaya Liban

Pace and harmony are critical aspects of any community, especially a pastoral one that lives in arid areas, where they have to share scarce resources such as water and pasture. The nexus between the adverse effects of climate change in such an area, gender inequalities and peace and security is very strong. Nomadic pastoral communities move from one area to another with their livestock in search of water. Women are left at home to take care of the children and to look after the cattle, fetch water, cook and undertake all other household chores.

In the Upper Eastern part of Kenya, lies Marsabit County where several nomadic pastoral communities live together. The area is arid in most parts and semi-arid in others. Over the last three years, the county has faced a severe long drought where not only humans starved, but even cattle did not survive. During this period, conflict between communities arose over the few resources left. This continued over time and many lives were lost due to starvation and the conflict that arose. In the process, women and children suffered the most. Children were left orphaned, and many women became widows. Livestock that were the only source of livelihood in most households died and corpses were lying all over the village.

The conflict grew over time, until it spread to the town. Schools were closed, houses burned down, and the central business district was not operational for the better part of the day. The situation became progressively worse.

The national government had to intervene and deploy security forces to restore normalcy although much had already been destroyed. This process was difficult and tedious. A lot happened including disarming the residents, but also harassment of women and men in the process. After all this, a few weeks later, the conflict erupted again.

After a while communities were brought together, to reconcile and work towards reconciliation. The council of elders, who were the community gatekeepers agreed to this, and led the process with the help of peace initiatives in the area. Several successful peace dialogues were held. For the very first time, women from all the communities came together and agreed to work on conflict resolution and saying no to the conflict that kept recurring. This was impactful, as women would convince their sons and husbands not to go into conflict, for the betterment of their future.

In such a society, all citizens need to work together to not only restore peace, but also to try and plant trees adaptable to the environment for carbon sequestration. Harmful cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriages especially during droughts just to get cows in exchange can be abolished if everyone is living in peace and harmony. This can be achieved if we collectively work towards a peaceful society at the grassroots level.



From War-Stricken Beginnings to Peace-Driven Endeavors: Mansuk's Vision

By Mansuk Milton

Mansuk Milton, a resilient soul molded in the crucible of war, found himself navigating the complex terrain of a life marked by conflict, displacement, and an unyielding determination to forge a different future. Born into a world defined by strife, Mansuk was raised amidst the echoes of gunfire and the shadows of unrest, earning him the label of the war generation. Yet, in the middle of adversity, he discovered a profound purpose - to be a harbinger of peace, a catalyst for change.

As a refugee in an unfamiliar land, Mansuk became the embodiment of resilience. However, the burning question that flickered in his mind was one that resonated with the collective yearning for real peace – “How could they raise a generation of peace when their hopes were consistently shattered by the harsh realities of a world consumed by conflict?”

Mansuk, with an unwavering spirit, recognized the necessity for a profound shift in approach. He envisioned a deep-rooted transformation that would make peace an inherent and indispensable attribute of society, woven into the very fabric of life and development. His vision embraced empathy, tolerance, and non-violence as guiding principles that would redefine human interactions and steer actions towards a collective pursuit of a peaceful coexistence.

In response to the prevailing challenges, he embraced the concept of home-grown solutions, advocating for a community-based approach to peacebuilding. He identified youth as both the drivers of conflicts and potential actors in wars, realizing the pivotal role they played in shaping the destiny of nations. His blueprint for change involved fostering dialogue, implementing restorative justice practices, and estab-

lishing youth-led peace committees within communities. Mansuk passionately urged for the creation of locally tailored peace plans, acknowledging the unique dynamics of each community. He envisioned workshops and training programs that would equip the youth with essential conflict resolution skills, empowering them to be catalysts for positive change. Community dialogues, rooted in empathy, were to become the platforms for understanding the root causes of conflicts and building bridges between divergent perspectives.

To facilitate the journey towards peace, Mansuk advocated for the training of community members, especially the youth, in mediation techniques. These skills were not merely tools for resolving disputes but instruments for fostering amicable solutions that would stand the test of time. He envisioned safe spaces for open conversations, where individuals could share their stories, bridge divides, and cultivate empathy.

Mansuk Milton's vision extended to mentorship programs that connected experienced peacebuilders with young leaders, creating a continuum of wisdom and guidance. Through these initiatives, he sought to provide communities with the tools to own their peace-making processes, crafting sustainable and locally driven solutions for conflict resolution.

In Mansuk Milton's narrative, the scars of war became the foundation for a future defined by peace. His journey, intertwined with the quest for understanding, tolerance, and reconciliation, illuminated a path towards a world where the echoes of gunfire would be replaced by the harmonious symphony of diverse voices coming together in the pursuit of a common dream - a world at peace.

Navigating the Information Age: Protecting Youth from Manipulation and Violence

By Hero Shyaka Nkubito

In the age of information, where knowledge is just a click away, we find ourselves grappling with a formidable challenge — the overwhelming surge of information, especially on platforms like 'X' (previously Twitter) and 'YouTube'. While this phenomenon affects us all, my primary concern rests with the youth, who, amid the sea of information, might find it difficult to discern truth from manipulation.

As we scroll through YouTube, we encounter videos discussing ongoing issues in our country, often laced with misleading information. It prompts a crucial question: Are our young people equipped to separate lies from the truth? I am an advocate for diverse opinions, but I advocate for informed opinions, and even when presented with seemingly innocuous information, such as celebrity gossip like Rihanna expecting a third baby with A\$AP Rocky, I find it imperative to cross-verify from multiple sources to mitigate the risk of perpetuating inaccuracies. The reason is simple – exposure to incorrect information, without a basis for comparison, leads to the creation of false facts and widespread confusion. It's a practice rooted in a commitment to truth and accuracy.

The ability to cross-reference information is crucial in an age where misinformation can easily take root.

Working in a field that delves into various governmental policies, I've witnessed the impact of misinformation on policies, ranging from those concerning the youth to broader societal frameworks like the social protection policy in Rwanda. I've witnessed the challenges arising from misinformation. Consider, for instance, the Rwanda Social Protection Policy, a pivotal initiative impacting citizens' lives. Do you know about it? Do you know how many citizens benefit from it? Recognizing implementation gaps, the policy was recently revised to address these challenges, underscoring the importance of informed decision-making.

Sometimes, exposure to incorrect information without a benchmark for comparison can create misconceptions or confusion. When hearing about citizens starving, it is crucial to inquire about existing government interventions aimed at assisting vulnerable individuals, before succumb-

ing to the manipulative narratives propagated by 'X' and 'YouTube' trolls.

Critical thinking emerges as a vital skill, particularly for the youth. While it's commendable to instill the values of a Rwandan citizen, critical thinking becomes the armor



against manipulation. Without critical thinking, our young people remain susceptible to manipulation. The ease of access to information, coupled with the multitude of voices influencing them, demands a more discerning approach. The 'Itorero' program in Rwanda, integral to fostering national values, should consider incorporating sessions specifically dedicated to nurturing critical thinking skills. Critical thinking, in this sense, doesn't imply mere criticism but rather embodies its original meaning — being crucial, highly relevant, and capable of discernment. (Critical Thinking toolkit, Never Again Rwanda 2016).

The absence of critical thinking skills in young people can have dire consequences as documented in the cases of youths in the DRC engaging in cannibalism who displayed blind obedience.

The conflict in the Great Lakes Region compounds the challenges faced by the youth. Various channels have historically exploited them, turning them into unwitting actors in violent conflicts. Notably, violence in one country often spills over into neighboring nations, affecting them in a myriad of ways. Instances of mass violence by youth before and during elections, along with mandate debates, underscore the urgency of addressing this issue.

Recognizing the challenges posed to the youth in this information-rich landscape, the collective responsibility to impart critical thinking skills becomes apparent. Through educational initiatives and targeted programs like the Itorero initiative, we can fortify our youth not only to absorb information, but more importantly, to critically analyze it. This approach will foster a generation with the resilience and wisdom needed to adeptly navigate the complexities of the modern world.

"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." - Aristotle

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."— Kofi Annan

"The highest result of education is tolerance."— Helen Keller

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."— Martin Luther King Jr.

The Power of One

By Lamelle Shaw

It only takes one
To say no, I will not discriminate, today I will not spread hate
I will choose to hold hands with my father, my brother
I will respect the rights of my sister, my mother
We will treat our scars, heal one another
It only takes one
To say "I will build a peaceful nation"
I will focus on reconciliation and education
I will include people I don't understand
I will open my eyes, I will open my hands
I will create safe spaces, havens
Open places where all are included
There will be no divide
I will welcome the old and young alike inside
Address intergenerational trauma, talk it out side by side
I will choose leaders with vision and purpose
I, in turn will lead with focus
It only takes one
To truly seek to understand
To do the hard work of rebuilding, healing
To stand tall for human rights
To decide that peace can be won if we are willing to fight
And sustained when our mental health is right,
Reconciliation and cohesion, our goal,
our young people, our communities, our spirits, our souls
It only takes one to create the domino effect
To lean forward, push harder and help us all pass the test
We have our history, we have overcome
We may feel insignificant
But it only takes one.



Peacebuilding – What can South Sudan learn from Rwanda?

By Chiok Diang

Contributing to Peace Insight magazine is not just an opportunity; it's a calling for peacebuilders and young leaders like me. It's a chance to weave narratives that transcend borders, challenge the status quo, and inspire collective action toward a harmonious world. Drawing from my experiences at the Peacebuilding Institute (PBI) workshop hosted by Never Again Rwanda in Rwanda, I see this contribution as a bridge connecting the profound lessons learned in Rwanda to the ongoing journey of peace in my home country, South Sudan, as well as my organization, Action for Women Empowerment. As a peacebuilder and a young leader, my journey in contributing to Peace Insight is deeply intertwined with my commitment to fostering positive change. The Peacebuilding Institute workshop was a transformative experience that instilled in me the belief that individuals hold the power to shape the destiny of nations through the pursuit of peace and reconciliation. Rwanda's history, marked by the devastating 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, stands as a testament to the resilience of communities and the transformative potential of reconciliation.

Crafting content for Peace Insight magazine is an art in itself, offering a canvas where diverse voices can paint narratives of hope, resilience, and change. From insightful articles unravelling the complexities of peacebuilding to evocative poems capturing the essence of healing and reconciliation, the magazine provides a platform for varied expressions. This flexibility allows contributors to convey the intricate tapestry of peace in ways that resonate with a broad readership, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and triumphs in the pursuit of global harmony.

One compelling topic that resonates with me is the transformative power of reconciliation within communities. Rwanda's journey from the shadows of genocide to a

beacon of reconciliation is a poignant example that South Sudan can draw lessons from. Exploring the parallels between Rwanda and South Sudan, I aim to delve into the mechanisms and strategies that have proven effective in healing deep-seated wounds and fostering unity. By highlighting the successes and challenges faced by these nations, I hope to contribute to the discourse on reconciliation, offering insights that can guide and inspire peacebuilding efforts.

Beyond the specific focus on reconciliation, Peace Insight encourages contributors to explore the intersectionality between peace and other vital issues. This holistic approach recognizes that peace is not a standalone concept but intricately linked to various aspects of human existence. Mental health, youth empowerment, climate change, social justice, human rights, economic development, and women's rights are among the interconnected issues that shape the landscape of peacebuilding. My belief in the power of examining these connections is rooted in the transformative experience of the Peacebuilding Institute in Rwanda. The intersectionality lens allows us to push the boundaries of traditional peacebuilding, creating a more comprehensive and sustainable foundation for peace. Through thoughtful exploration of these interwoven issues, contributors can offer nuanced perspectives that contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding peace.

Armed with the knowledge and experiences gained at the Peacebuilding Institute workshop, my commitment to championing peace in South Sudan is unwavering. The institute not only equipped me with practical skills but also fuelled a passion to be a catalyst for positive change.

Peacebuilding Practices From A Cross Cultural Perspective: Lessons Learned From Rwanda

By Okolosi Oghenerukevwe Esther



As a Nigerian student studying peacebuilding in Rwanda, I have had the privilege of learning and experiencing Rwanda's peacebuilding and reconciliation process. The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi did not only result in loss of lives and properties, it also left a negative impact on the psychosocial, economic and general welfare on the life of Rwandans. Prior to my coming to Rwanda, I was oblivious of the genocide. Fortunately, this has changed over the years as I currently have knowledge on the history of Rwanda and the steps the country has taken towards peacebuilding and reconciliation. Therefore, in this article I will be pointing out lessons I have learned from Rwanda's approach to peacebuilding while comparing it to what is being done in Nigeria as regards to peacebuilding.

The post-genocide Rwandan government has promoted a national identity for all Rwandans "Ndi Umunyarwanda" which means I am a Rwandan, a program that aims at building a national identity established in trust and dignity amongst citizens which strengthens the unity and reconciliation process. Currently, Rwandans do not focus on the divisionism along ethnic lines that led to the genocide, neither do they carry identity cards with ethnic labels on them, they identify as one people from one nation.

Nigeria is one of the most diverse countries in the world, which has over 200 million citizens, 36 states and capitals, more than 500 languages, over 300 ethnic groups and different religious and regional distinctiveness (Green, 2023). These differences have led to conflicts and divides amongst ethnic, political, and religious groups. Presently Nigerians do not see themselves as one people from one nation, and these differences cloud the decisions we make and the way we treat one another. The government, institutions and civil society can do better in promoting national unity and togetherness, by learning from Ndi Umuryarwanda.

Another practice implemented in Rwanda is gender equality and the involvement of women in peacebuilding. During wars and conflicts, women and children are the most affected. In the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, women were raped and mutilated, they suffered a lot of horrific incidents that caused great harm to their physical and mental health. In post-genocide Rwanda, women's rights are promoted, and they can now inherit and own properties. These rights are supported by the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) policy and the Maputo Protocol (Ezeh n.d.). According to the 2023 Global Gen-

der Gap Report, Rwanda is the twelfth highest country with gender equality worldwide with a significant representation of women in politics. The Rwandan government and civil society promote women's rights through empowerment, trainings, advocacy and education. In Nigeria, several NGOs and institutions also focus on gender issues and women empowerment. For example, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) protects the lives and rights of women and children in Nigeria through free legal representation, advocacy, policy campaign, education, mediation and counselling services. Despite this, the private and public sector and civil society still have a lot to do as we rank 130 out of 146 in the Global Gender Gap report.

Young people in Rwanda are also involved in the peacebuilding and reconstruction process, through education in schools, workshops, and trainings, some of which I had the chance to participate in. The involvement of youth in the recovery process is necessary as they were used negatively in the past to commit atrocities. Giving proper reorientation and guiding them towards a path of peace will lead to sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation. Likewise in Nigeria, NGOs and CSOs also offer workshops and trainings but regrettably it is not enough as the youths are used as instruments of violence and crimes leading to loss of lives, properties, and

a negative impact on the image of the country.

In conclusion, Rwanda has a lot of significant lessons that can be adapted not just in Nigeria, but also other countries especially sub-Saharan Africa. It is paramount for young people to get these cross-cultural experiences because they have an advantage over others. They get a new perspective, skills and practices that can be applied in their own societies, and lead to sustainable development and growth.

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The Future History of Africa (The Africa We Want)

By Lamelle Shaw

The Africa we want
is simple when read.
We want every child to
go to bed loved and fed.
We want to remember who we are,
A time when we were guided by stars,
Connected to our ancestors, to one another,
Community living, pulling together,
Standing firm in our heritage, souls filled with pride,
Celebrating our cultures,
shining our lights bright
Nothing left to hide,
Writing our own stories,
singing our own songs
Landing anywhere on the continent feeling like we belong.

We want to dissolve borders.
with continental passports
that unlock all doors.
We want travel within to be cheaper
than travel across our shores.
We want to promote education,
reawakening, healing
We want to help bring back that Ubuntu feeling...
Where when I have or you have, we all get to eat,
When we humbly offered to wash our visitor's feet.

We need to appreciate knowledge of self,
We must now acknowledge our true wealth.
Let them fight over oil, diamonds and gold,
When the true battle is over our souls
A greener earth for our sons and daughters,
World War III will be over clean air and water.
Africa's been branded as the runt of the litter,
Yet, everything that's gold doesn't glitter
We could rise from the ashes, like we've done in the past,
Build a future history meant to last,
But none of this will take place if we don't unite,
Afrophobia exists, the 'Other' is no longer White.

So 'Africa's Future History' is somewhat of a mystery
The story is waiting to be told
The future is under our control
We can choose Love
We can choose Light
We can choose to Run
We can choose to Fight
Mind you... not choosing is also a choice... 'SPEAK UP!'
People died to give you a voice!

© Previously published in "Ashes of my Heart" available on Amazon and performed
at Spoken Word Rwanda – April 2015 – Future Memories

Scan for more information



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