



NATIONAL PEACE ESSAY CONTEST 2011–2012

The Impact of New Media on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management

SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Introduction

The international system has witnessed dramatic changes recently. Developments around the globe and at home challenge us to rethink the role of the United States in the international community. What is our nation's place in this increasingly complex global picture? How do we best promote respect for human rights and the growth of freedom and justice? What can we do to nurture and preserve international security and world peace?

The United States depends on knowledgeable and thoughtful students—the next generation of leaders—to build peace with freedom and justice among nations and peoples. In the belief that questions about peace, justice, freedom, and security are vital to civic education, the United States Institute of Peace established the National Peace Essay Contest to expand educational opportunities for young Americans.

The National Peace Essay Contest

- + promotes serious discussion among high school students, teachers, and national leaders about international peace and conflict resolution today and in the future;
- + complements existing curricula and other scholastic activities;
- + strengthens students' research, writing, and reasoning skills;
- + meets National Content Standards.

What Do Essay Contest Winners Receive?

College Scholarships

State-level selection categories include the fifty U.S. states, Washington, D.C., U.S. Territories, and American students abroad. First place state-level winners compete for national awards.

1 National award, first place: \$10,000*

1 National award, second place: \$5,000*

1 National award, third place: \$2,500*

53 State awards, first place: \$1,000 each

(*national awards include state award amounts)

Invitation to the Awards Program in Washington, D.C.

First-place state winners are invited to Washington, D.C., for the awards program. The Institute pays for expenses related to the program, including travel, lodging, meals, and entertainment. This unique five-day program promotes an understanding of the nature and process of international peacebuilding by focusing on a region and/or theme related to the current essay topic. Program activities have included:

- + taking part in a simulation exercise in which students assume roles of national and international leaders, examine issues, address crises, and then formulate and propose solutions;
- + meeting with U.S. government officials and political leaders;
- + participating in briefings by highly-regarded practitioners and foreign government officials;
- + visiting historical and cultural sites;
- + attending a musical or play;
- + sampling international cuisines from some of Washington's most interesting ethnic restaurants.

NATIONAL PEACE ESSAY CONTEST 2011–2012 TOPIC AND QUESTION

The Impact of New Media on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management

Across the globe, innovations in technology are changing the way people consume information and communicate and consequently, are influencing peacebuilding and conflict management. Traditional media, like television and radio, once dominated mass communication and information flow. However, social networking websites (Facebook and Twitter), participatory media (YouTube and blogs), and mobile phone technologies are the new face of global media. Individuals and groups leverage these tools to connect and collaborate to develop novel approaches for overcoming violence and building a sustainable peace.

New Media tools have been used to hold governments accountable and protest violence. In the wake of Iran's recent elections, activists mobilized a resistance movement through mobile phones and Twitter, while exposing regime violence on platforms like YouTube. The "No Mas FARC" Facebook group sparked worldwide protests against kidnappings and killings by the Colombian rebel group. From Sri Lanka to Sudan, citizen journalists have used their cell phone cameras, blogs, and intimate knowledge of local realities to fill in vital information gaps in conflict zones.

These tools also help meet postconflict reconstruction and development challenges. They improve coordination between humanitarian groups, create access to public health, and deliver innovative educational programs. In Haiti, humanitarian organizations used these tools to coordinate earthquake relief efforts, and mobile phones help patients in remote parts of Afghanistan get the healthcare they need.

The use of new media, however, has not always yielded results that further equality, civic participation, or peacebuilding. In response to the prevalent and effective use of new media by protesters, the Iranian government blocked the use of cell phones and Facebook. It has also been used to thwart peace movements, fuel hatred, and promote the agenda of violent actors in fragile societies. For example, al-Qaeda and online hate groups like Stormfront have been able to bypass national restrictions on media and reach audiences through new media.

How can new media best be leveraged to help build peace and prevent conflict?

In 1,500 words:

- + Choose and briefly describe two foreign (non-U.S.) cases from the past ten years of countries in transition from violent conflict to peace where new media played a role. The cases may be from one country or two countries that face ongoing violent conflict or are in a postconflict environment.
- + Analyze the ways that new media, including relevant technologies, were used. If use of new media changed the conflict environment, explain what it changed and how. If not, explain why not.
- + What are the risks, trade-offs, and/or limitations involved in using new media as a peacebuilding tool?
- + What recommendations would you make to policymakers for new media in building/leveraging peace?

When is the Deadline?

Entries must be **received online by 11:59 PM EST, February 1, 2012.**

When Do You Announce the Winners?

Participants are notified in May of their essays' status. Students and coordinators should not contact the Institute for information about the status of the essays unless they do not receive notice in May.



Welcome to Washington D.C.

What Does the Institute Provide to Help Students and Teachers Participate?

This guidebook contains, in addition to the requirements, a national winner's essay as a sample. Also, we have created a study guide for teachers and students.

You may download the study guide as well as this guidebook from our website (www.usip.org/npec). Some hard copies of these materials are available and may be requested by using the online registration form found on our website.

Who Is Eligible?

Students are eligible to participate if they are in grades nine through twelve in any of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, or if they are U.S. citizens attending high school overseas. Students may be attending a public, private, or parochial school. Entries from homeschooled students are also accepted. Previous first-place state winners and immediate relatives of directors or staff of the Institute are not eligible to participate. **Previous honorable mention recipients are eligible to enter.**

Students must have a contest coordinator who can review the essays and act as the key contact between participants and the Institute. It is to the student's advantage to have a coordinator review the essay to make sure it is complete, has all the necessary forms, is free from typographical and grammatical errors, and addresses the topic. See the page 7 for further information about the contest coordinator.

We encourage students of all backgrounds and ability to participate in the contest.

How Will Your Essay Be Judged?

Essays are sent to state-level judges—qualified experts selected by the Institute who evaluate the essays according to the criteria described below. National winners are selected from among the first-place state essays by the Institute's board of directors. The decisions of the judges are final. The Institute reserves the right to present no awards at the state and national levels, or to reduce the number of awards if an insufficient number of deserving entries is received.

An excellent essay uses well-researched ideas and facts to hold together logical and compelling arguments and presents thoughtful solutions to the problem. It also reflects a student's ability to organize complex facts and ideas, to bring in his/her own interesting perspectives and ideas to the analysis and recommendations, and to pay attention to writing style and mechanics (grammar, syntax, and punctuation).

What Are the Essay Requirements?

For the purpose of the National Peace Essay Contest, an essay is a three-part paper that lays out and develops a position in response to the essay contest question. Researching the topic to gain greater knowledge about critical issues raised in the question and to find examples that support your argument is crucial. However, the essay should be more than a research paper, a narrative description of events, or a statement of opinion.

Your Essay Should Have the Following Structure:

- + **Introduction:** Introduce the subject and state your *thesis*. Demonstrate that you understand the essay contest question and have formed a response to it.
- + **Body:** Develop your arguments and assertions using **research and analysis**. The process of analysis may include comparing and contrasting, differentiating among several ideas or events, critiquing a variety of perspectives, interpreting results, or drawing inferences. **Be sure to identify the sources of your information or ideas using a standard citation method.**
- + **Conclusion:** Capture the significance of the research and analysis presented in the essay as well as your recommendations. Drawing on ideas already presented, you should demonstrate that your conclusions support the thesis you put forward. Your aim is to convince the reader that your thesis, facts, and analysis are reasonable, significant, and valid. Leave an impression.
- + **Recommendations:** There is no one best way to structure your recommendations. For example, you may choose to weave your recommendations throughout the body of your paper or build up to them, presenting them toward the end of your paper. The decision for how to make your ideas flow and hold together is up to you.
- + **Credit the Sources of Information and Ideas:** Use a widely used **standardized method and style** such as MLA, Chicago, or APA to consistently credit the sources of the ideas and information used in your essay. Use ***in-text citations or endnotes*** to credit the sources of your information or ideas. **Do NOT use footnotes.** Our online submission interface does not accept footnotes. Also include a ***bibliography or a references list*** for the works that you have cited or consulted to write your essay. In-text citations and endnotes are not part of the total word count.
- + Essays that use a variety of sources—academic journals, news magazines, newspapers, books, government documents, publications from research organizations—fare better in the contest. **General encyclopedias are not acceptable as sources, including Wikipedia.com. The USIP study guides are not acceptable as sources.** Essays citing general encyclopedias in notes or bibliography may be disqualified. **Websites and Web pages should not be the only source of information for your essay.** When citing Internet sources, include the following information: author(s), title of work, Internet address, and date information was accessed.

Your Essay Must

- + address all parts of this year's contest question in English;
- + **not** have your name, teacher's name, or school name anywhere on the essay;
- + have a descriptive title;
- + have no more than 1,500 words. The word count limit includes all words in the text, but does not include the bibliography and endnotes (you may exclude the words in the in-text citation from your word count);

- + follow accepted standards regarding attribution of quotations, arguments, and ideas of others, using endnotes or in-text citations;
- + include standardized citations and a bibliography with Internet sources listed separately.

For additional help writing your essay, use our study guide. A PDF version is available at www.usip.org/npec

Essay Requirements Checklist

- Is your essay written in English?
- Does your essay answer this year's essay contest question on page 3?
- Does your essay address all parts of the contest question?
- Have you given your essay a descriptive title?
- Is your essay no more than 1,500 words long?
- Have you made sure that your name, school, or city does **NOT** appear anywhere on the essay?
- Have you scrupulously followed accepted standards regarding attribution of quotations, arguments, and ideas of others within the body of your paper and bibliography?
- Does your essay have standardized citations and bibliography, which follow the APA, Chicago, or MLA styles?
- Does your essay have endnotes or in-text citations? Make sure you did **NOT** use footnotes.
- Are your Internet sources listed separately from other sources in your bibliography?

Essay Submission Directions

How do I apply and submit my essay?

We are now accepting all essays online. All students must have a coordinator and all coordinators must register online before their students register and submit their essay. Please see the steps below. Students and Coordinators can start registering and submitting essays starting **November 1, 2011**.

- + **Step 1:** Coordinators register at <http://npecregister.usip.org/>
- + **Step 2:** Coordinators will receive a unique link or coordinator key to give to his/her student(s). This link will be emailed to the coordinator when his/her registration is complete. Please check your spam folder if you do not receive the email within a few minutes of registration. The link will be unique to the coordinator, but may be used by multiple students. The coordinator will then give his/her student(s) this unique link.
- + **Step 3:** Once the student has received the link or coordinator key, students register either by clicking on that unique link or at <http://npecregister.usip.org/> and entering their coordinator key by hand.
- + **Step 4:** Once students have registered, they can submit their essay. To submit an essay, students will complete the essay requirements checklist, enter a title and cut and paste their essay, printed bibliography, internet bibliography and endnotes into separate text boxes. Students may lose some of their essay's formatting, such as the use of bold or italics, when they cut and paste. Coordinators will be notified by email when a student has submitted an essay.
- + **Step 5:** Coordinators login to approve each student's essay to certify that **the work is the student's own** and that **the information regarding the student's eligibility is true**. Students' entries are complete once the coordinator finishes this step. Coordinators will be able to approve their students' essays for up to two days after the February 1 deadline. Students will **NOT** be able to edit their essays after the February 1 deadline.

Participating without Access to the Internet

Coordinators and students who cannot access the Internet easily may contact the Institute by phone to receive materials by mail. We will also send you a simple set of directions and forms for submitting paper entries. Fulfilling request for paper materials can take up to six weeks. Please plan accordingly.

Please email us at essaycontest@usip.org or call us at 202-429-7178 with any questions.

SUBMISSION OF YOUR ESSAY MUST BE COMPLETED ONLINE BY 11:59 PM EST, FEBRUARY 1, 2012.

How to Choose a Coordinator

A coordinator is the key contact between students and the United States Institute of Peace. The coordinator may be selected by the student and can be any adult/teacher, parent, youth leader, etc. USIP does **NOT** select coordinators.

The four requirements for the coordinators are to: 1) register online, 2) give their individual link or coordinator key to their students, 3) help each student write an essay that meets our requirements, and 4) approve the students' essay entries online to make sure that the submission guidelines are followed. Coordinators need not contact the Institute to participate.

A Coordinator

- ensures that essays are conceived and written by students and represent the students' own thoughts;
- reviews the essays to ensure that they follow the guidelines and to check for grammatical and typographical errors;
- may coordinate individual submissions of many students (from a whole class, for example).

In addition to this guide, a study guide on the essay contest topic is available to download from our website: www.usip.org/npec





2010 National Peace Essay Contest Winning Essay

+ Fighting for Local Resources in a Globalized World: Unity, Strategy, and Government Support

National First-Place Winner

Margaret E. Hardy

Lick-Wilmerding High School, San Francisco, California
Coordinator: Elizabeth Dent

In 1980, representatives of the Chipko movement, based in India's Himalayan Uttarakhand region, met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.¹ They negotiated a fifteen-year ban on felling trees above 1,000 meters, ending the exploitation of their natural resources by companies from the plains region.² Fifteen years later on another continent, Kenule Beeson ("Ken") Saro-Wiwa and eight other Nigerian activists from the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) were hanged by the Nigerian government after a prolonged dispute over control of oil fields on Ogoni lands.³ Why did these two struggles for local control of natural resources have such different outcomes? By examining the results of Chipko's and MOSOP's struggles to petition their governments for control and preservation of their natural resources, one can identify three conditions important to the success of a nonviolent movement: it needs to have a focused strategy that addresses its grievances one at a time, be uniformly supported by the community it identifies with, and be able to petition a government willing to listen.

The Chipko movement arose from concern about the State Forest Department's policy of auctioning off trees to corporate bidders.⁴ The policy became a problem in the 1960s when the Indian government constructed roads through the region, opening once inaccessible Himalayan forests to development.⁵ Forests that local villagers had depended on for centuries were diminished, while distant companies benefitted.⁶ Women now traveled long distances in search of firewood, while soil erosion and loss of water-absorbing groundcover led to devastating floods

and landslides.⁷ Frustration among villagers in the region reached a peak in 1973, when the Forest Department not only refused Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh, a cooperative of local workers, twelve ash trees for tool-making and construction, but auctioned off thirty-two ash trees to Simon Company, a sporting goods company from outside the region.⁸

In response, Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh hosted a public meeting. Chandni Prasad Bhatt, a prominent Chipko member, suggested what became an enduring strategy—hugging the trees to protect them from contractors. Many villagers wanted to foil Simon Company by sabotaging the trees, but Bhatt reminded them, “Our aim is not to destroy the trees but to preserve them.” He later elaborated, “The main goal of our movement is not saving trees, but the judicious use of trees.”⁹ The first Chipko protestors came a step closer to realizing this goal when, as a result of their peaceful demonstration, Simon Company’s thirty-two trees were awarded to the local cooperative.¹⁰ As word of their strategy spread to villages throughout the region, Chipko workers and villagers prevented contractors from felling a forest in an environmentally sensitive area near the village of Reni.¹¹ In response, the chief minister of the state met with Bhatt and agreed to create a committee of experts to examine the area. There followed a ban on felling in an area measuring more than 450 square miles.¹²

Building up momentum, Chipko continued to influence the state government, which created more protected areas.¹³ By 1980, their demands had reached the national government, and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi called a meeting with members that resulted in the ban on logging above 1000 meters.¹⁴ With this success, Uttarakhand villages began to work on reforestation and responsible use of trees.¹⁵ Focusing on local conservation issues and working with the Indian government, Chipko has been able to claim Himalayan forests for public use and restoration.

The Ogoni people of the Niger Delta, like the Uttarakhand villagers, struggled with foreign companies for control over their natural resources. In 1956, Royal Dutch/Shell discovered oil on Ogoni land. By 1958, with the permission of the Nigerian government, they were exporting 6000 barrels a day, and by 1960, their success had attracted oil companies from around the world.¹⁶ The oil business proved lucrative for the Nigerian government and a small class of elites, but natural gas flares, oil spills, waste dumping, and canal construction polluted the air, soil, and water in the Niger Delta, destroying the ecosystems that the Ogoni depended on for agriculture and fishing.¹⁷ It was frustration at this injustice that gave rise to MOSOP.¹⁸

While Chipko and MOSOP faced similar problems, MOSOP’s aims and strategies were less focused. MOSOP hoped to achieve far more than local management of land and natural resources. In the “Ogoni Bill of Rights,” the document that spurred the movement’s creation, Ken Saro-Wiwa makes a number of political and social demands.¹⁹ Most strikingly, he requests “POLITICAL AUTONOMY to participate in the affairs of the Republic as a distinct and separate unit.”²⁰ MOSOP’s goals struck at the heart of the Ogoni’s political marginalization, as did some of its protests.²¹ The organization used a variety of methods, including rallies, church services, written pleas to the Nigerian government, and an election boycott, to send a variety of messages, political and social, as well as environmental.²²

The Nigerian government responded by repressing the Ogoni brutally, the most horrific example being the 1993–1998 occupation of Ogoniland. During just a few days of the occupation, villages were leveled and the local clinic was overwhelmed with the wounded.²³ In 1995, the Nigerian regime accused Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other MOSOP leaders (the “Ogoni Nine”) of encouraging the murder of four pro-government Ogoni elders. Although Saro-Wiwa had always endorsed nonviolence, all nine were convicted and hanged.²⁴ After Saro-Wiwa’s death, many of MOSOP’s goals remained unaccomplished.²⁵

The experiences of Chipko and MOSOP show the importance for politically marginalized communities of discussing approachable goals and specific strategies prior to taking nonviolent action. MOSOP developed from Saro-Wiwa’s “Ogoni Bill of Rights,” which laid out a variety of aims but did not suggest a winning strategy, impeding the movement’s ability to focus on any one goal.²⁶ For example, MOSOP’s attempts to achieve its most ambitious end, political autonomy, distracted the movement from its fight to manage Ogoni land and oil. When General Sani Abacha came to power in a 1993 coup, MOSOP extended a “cautious welcome,” believing he could help negotiate the creation of an Ogoni state. They quickly discovered that General Abacha was eager to silence MOSOP and exploit oil-rich Ogoni land.²⁷ Chipko members, however, managed to maintain clear priorities by discussing objectives and methods before taking action. Their goals were not the product of one man’s pen, but developed during the public meeting called by the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh. This dialogue resulted in specific, approachable aims and a strategy used to achieve larger political change.²⁸

Nonviolent movements would be further helped if the communities supporting them worked to resolve internal conflict before it undermined the movement. Class divisions among the Ogoni caused major difficulties for MOSOP: they were at the root of the murders that Saro-Wiwa was executed for. In May 1994, Ogoni chiefs who had grown wealthy through government support declared their native Gokana kingdom independent of MOSOP and loyal to

the federal government. Many residents of Gokana did not wish to disassociate themselves from MOSOP, and during the ensuing protest, four of the chiefs who had signed the accord were killed.²⁹ The victims, despite connections to Shell and the Nigerian government, had once been members of MOSOP and professed sympathy with many of the organization's goals.³⁰ Had the Ogoni worked to sort out the class tensions that led to the murders, they might have been able to prevent Saro-Wiwa's execution. Chipko, by contrast, does not appear to have been significantly weakened by internal conflict. In fact, the villagers at Reni, where protestors protected 2,500 trees from destruction, overcame a conflict of interest. Though the government had paid them to mark trees for felling, Chipko workers convinced them that protecting the trees was more important than being paid to cut them down.³¹

The international community can also help ensure the success of nonviolent movements. By applying economic sanctions to corrupt governments, outside countries can help marginalized communities work with their governments as Chipko did, rather than struggle against them as did MOSOP. In the past, the international community has successfully used economic sanctions to force repressive governments to hear opposition. For example, economic sanctions on South Africa, including an oil embargo and a ban on exporting arms to the country, are said to have significantly influenced the end of apartheid.³² Indeed, there was hope among the Ogoni that the United States would boycott Nigerian oil, but the bill that would have enabled the embargo never became law.³³

Given the radically different outcomes of Chipko's and MOSOP's struggles for local control of resources in a world influenced by global corporations, it is clear that politically and economically marginalized communities must resolve internal conflicts and set goals and strategies at the beginning of a nonviolent movement. Equally importantly, powerful countries should use economic sanctions to support communities like the Ogoni and the Uttarakhand villagers. Although the bill that would have enabled an embargo on Nigerian oil never made it through the U.S. Congress, it is never too late to help achieve the change that Ken Saro-Wiwa died for. "The struggle continues," as he said—in people and governments around the world.



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2. Narasimhan, "Roots of a Movement."
3. Oronto Douglas and Ike Okonta, "Ogoni People of Nigeria versus Big Oil," in *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization*, ed. Jerry Mander and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), 153–156.
4. Mark Shepard, "Hug the Trees!: Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Gaura Devi, and the Chipko Movement," http://www.markshep.com/nonviolence/GT_Chipko.html (accessed December 7, 2009).
5. P. P. Karan, "Environmental Movements in India," *Geographical Review* 84, no. 1 (1994), in the AcademicOne File, <http://sfpl.org/sfplonline/dbcategories.htm> (accessed December 6, 2009).
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7. Thomas Weber, *Hugging the Trees: The Story of the Chipko Movement* (Calcutta: Penguin Books, 1987), 26–27.
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16. J. Timothy Hunt, *The Politics of Bones* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2005), 12.
17. Douglas and Okonta, "Ogoni People," 153–154.
18. Douglas and Okonta, "Ogoni People," 155.
19. Hunt, *Politics of Bones*, 63–64.
20. Ken Saro-Wiwa, "Ogoni Bill of Rights," in "Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People," http://www.mosop.org/ogoni_bill_of_rights.html (accessed December 6, 2009).
21. In one conspicuous instance, protestors at a march celebrating Ogoni Day carried signs that read, "Give Ogoni oil money today."
22. Hunt, *Politics of Bones*, 66–109.
23. Hunt, *Politics of Bones*, 171–175.
24. Aaron Sachs, "Dying for Oil," *World Watch* 9, no. 3 (1996), in the AcademicOne File, <http://sfpl.org/sfplonline/dbcategories.htm> (accessed December 6, 2009); and Joshua Hammer, "A Voice Silenced," *Newsweek*, November 20, 1995, in the AcademicOne File, <http://sfpl.org/sfplonline/dbcategories.htm> (accessed December 10, 2009).
25. The Nigerian government is still heavily dependent on oil revenues, with 95 percent of its foreign exchange earnings coming from oil, and residents of the Niger Delta continue to see few of the benefits of these revenues. MOSOP successfully drove Shell out of Ogoni, but its facilities are poorly secured and continue to pose a threat to Ogoni villages and farmland. Douglas and Okonta, "Ogoni People"; and "The Niger Delta: No Democratic Dividend," *Human Rights Watch* 14, no. 7 (October 2002), <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2002/10/22/niger-delta> (accessed January 3, 2010).
26. Saro-Wiwa, "Ogoni Bill of Rights."
27. Hunt, *Politics of Bones*, 147.
28. Nelson, "Chipko Revisited"; and Shepard, "Hug the Trees."
29. Hunt, *Politics of Bones*, 183–191; and Sachs, "Dying for Oil."
30. Hunt, *Politics of Bones*, 192.
31. Shepard, "Hug the Trees." More recently, a reporter asked one of the many Uttarakhand women who have worked to replant the forests if the movement ever faces serious conflicts or a lack of cooperation. She responded, "No. This is a peace movement." Nelson, "Chipko Revisited."
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United States Institute of Peace

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote postconflict peacebuilding, and increase conflict management tools, capacity, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in conflict zones around the globe.

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