Activists from across the nation converged to share ideas, create coalitions, and plan actions against reproductive health injustices at the 4th annual Take Root: Red State Perspectives on Reproductive Justice on February 21 and 22 on the University of Oklahoma Norman campus. The diverse range of panels and participants spoke to this year’s emphasis on collaboration over the course of the conference, which was hosted by the OU Women’s and Gender Studies Center for Social Justice.

Prior to the official kickoff of Take Root 2014, Ashley Nicole McCray hosted a film screening of the PBS Independent Lens feature documentary “Young Lakota,” by filmmakers Marion Lipshutz and Rose Rosenblatt. “Young Lakota” takes place on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, which ranks among the poorest “counties” in the Western hemisphere. This documentary brought to light how the issue of reproductive justice plays out in a context wherein suicide, teen pregnancy, and high-school dropout rates are disproportionately high; teens and adolescents often have few role models; and there is little or no access to support services or employment opportunities. However, when South Dakota attempted to declare abortion unconstitutional, the Oglala Sioux Tribe’s first female president, Cecilia Firethunder, became a role model for young women on the reservation by standing up for the reproductive rights of all women in South Dakota.

(Continued on page 2)
The first official event was the day-long YP4 workshop, which was open to the first 50 registrants. YP4 challenged and encouraged activists-in-training to examine their internal views on particular issues.

Following the Friday evening opening plenary, local group African Sanke performed tribal dance and music before participants enjoyed a reception in Memorial Union.

Lynn Paltrow kicked off Saturday’s activities with her keynote address. Participants had a number of panels from which to choose during each session.

“Queering Reproductive Justice” was an insightful and moving panel. Participants Ricky Hill, Noreen Khimji, and Coya Whitehat-Artichoker each spoke out on their experiences as a queer individual working within the reproductive justice movement. The audience was able to make a better connection between reproductive justice and queer justice, thanks to this session.

During the lunch hour, organizations had the opportunity to table and display their group’s literature.

“Cross-Movement Collaborations: Environmental and Reproductive Justice,” with speakers Yucca Westrup and Casey Camp-Horinek, provoked the audience to think about the various way environmental justice intersects with reproductive justice.

The last session included a panel on domestic violence called “Fighting Violence in Our Communities.” OU senior Valarie Lambert, who would later receive the 2014 Carol Mason Student Activism Award, gave a thought-provoking and well-conceived presentation on the data she collected regarding women in Oklahoma who experienced domestic violence. The room was packed and Okla. State Sen. Connie Johnson gave an impromptu talk on the legislation that affects individuals who are victims and survivors of domestic violence. Kathy Moxley of the OU Women’s Outreach Center and Kristy Stewart of the Norman Women’s Resource Center also were on hand to discuss on-campus and community resources for victims and survivors of domestic violence. Activist Deon Haywood closed the event with an incredibly powerful and moving talk.

“The Take Root” 2014 brought an awesome turnout of excited activists and supporters to Norman from all over the nation more than doubling the number of participants from the previous year. The Women’s and Gender Studies Center looks forward to hosting the fifth annual “Take Root: Red State Perspectives on Reproductive Justice” conference Feb. 20 and 21, 2015!

Faculty Spotlight: Susan Sharp

Susan Sharp received the 2014 Women’s and Gender Studies Faculty Research Award. She has been involved in WGS several years and teaches two upper-division courses: “Women, Girls and Crime” and “Race, Class and Gender.” Her interest in WGS stems from her own research, which has stressed gender differences in crime, deviance and the criminal justice system, beginning with her dissertation research.

She conducted her doctoral work at the University of Texas, Austin, studying female drug users and their AIDS risk behaviors. “During the 1990s, the focus was primarily on the risk of men who had sex with men and men who injected drugs. However, the fastest growing group in the AIDS epidemic was women. I felt it was important to document the behaviors that put them at risk so that interventions could be devised. I had a friend who was dying of AIDS, and I promised her that I would help educate other women” Sharp said.

(Continued on page 3)
Faculty Spotlight: Susan Sharp (continued)

When she interviewed at OU, a male faculty member pointed out that Oklahoma had the highest female incarceration rate in the country, which he attributed to having “mean women.” Sharp was appalled at first, but she came to the conclusion that her voice was needed in this state. Since she arrived in 1996, her research has focused primarily on women and the criminal justice system and the impacts of criminal justice policies on the families of offenders.

She believes that students learn best through experiences, and she brings that philosophy into both of the WGS courses that she teaches. In “Women, Girls and Crime,” she sends students out into the community to interview employers, landlords, law enforcement personnel and average citizens about their feelings about women returning to the community from prison. “Hearing firsthand from individuals in the community helps the students understand the barriers these women face in a way that lectures and books never will.”

She uses a poverty simulation in “Race, Class and Gender” to allow students to vicariously experience what it is like to be poor. This semester, the course became the first OU course to be involved in the Inside-Out Prison Exchange program. Fifteen OU students and 15 women prisoners meet together in the Mabel Bassett Correctional Center several times a semester. Sharp said, “It is life-changing for all involved – the exchange of information between the inside and outside students is just incredible.”

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Shelly Perkins Promotes Higher Education for Women at Oklahoma State Capitol

By Shelly Perkins

As a Women's and Genders Studies Minor class ’14, I was chosen as one of 44 student delegates to represent OU on Higher Education Day in February. I was among undergraduate and graduate students from universities and colleges across Oklahoma, lobbying for higher education funding for the state’s academic institutions. While there, I also spoke to various members of the state congress about the importance of women’s programs in higher education. I visited with my state senator and state representative to stress the importance of Oklahoma women to receive additional education after high school.

Only one in seven Oklahoma women earns a bachelor’s degree. Over 166,000 Oklahoma homes are led by single female head of households. It takes much longer for single parents to complete college, and only 10 percent earn their degrees in a timely fashion.

The primary barriers for single mothers earning a degree are costs, reliable transportation, affordable childcare and lack of support. Children of college graduates are 50 percent more likely to attend college themselves.

I am a non-traditional student. I am married with three daughters. I returned to college to earn an undergraduate degree in media with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. I wanted to set an example for my daughters, empowering them to be strong, independent women.
Center for Social Justice Hosts “War on Drugs” Symposium

By Ashley Nicole McCray

On Jan. 23, OU’s Women’s and Gender Studies Center for Social Justice organizers hosted a roundtable discussion titled “The War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration.” The roundtable was moderated by OU’s Center for Social Justice Activist-in-Residence Gwendolyn Field and was part of a larger symposium that focused on Oklahoma’s prison system and social justice. Participants on this panel included Sen. Connie Johnson of District 48; Justin Jones, former director of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections; Susan Sharp, David Ross Boyd Professor of Sociology; Neil Franklin, executive director of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition; and Ryan Keisel, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma. Other events taking place in conjunction with the symposium included a panel with Moms Fight Back; and an art exhibition featuring photographs by Sarah Warmker during the filming of Amina Benalioulhaj’s 2011 documentary, “Women Behind Bars.” The day-long symposium ended with a screening of Eugene Jarecki’s new documentary, “The House I live In.” All events were open to the public.

WGS Hosts Activist Miriam Yeung

By Conner Ferguson

In preparation for the annual “Take Root” Conference, the Women’s and Gender Studies Program brought in activist Miriam Yeung. During her time in Norman, Miriam spoke in several Women’s and Gender Studies classes. She also accompanied a few capstone students to lunch and was hosted at a coffee and conversation event. Born in Hong Kong but raised in Brooklyn, New York, Yeung is the executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum. Prior to her work with NAPAWF, she worked in a variety of positions at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in New York City.

NAPAWF offices are located in New York City and Washington, D.C., and it has 11 chapters throughout the country. The organization currently focuses on rights for immigrant women, making nail salons safer for workers, and working on campaigns to help stop human trafficking. In 2003, the documentary “I Look Up to the Sky Now” was released, with Yung as the co-producer. This documentary focuses on 12 New York City LGBTQ youth, and the issues of homophobia, racism, gender discrimination and ageism.

As a student, it was an absolute joy to spend the day with Yeung. Her engagement with students and people of my generation speaks volumes of her desire to see change not only in my generation, but generations to come. In our Capstone class, Yeung gave a brief survey of reproductive history in Western society, specifically within the United States. It was an eye-opening experience learning about the struggle for reproductive rights throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and seeing how women still face reproductive injustice to this day.

Miriam Yeung is a proud queer Asian American immigrant who is committed to building movements of social justice. She currently resides in Brooklyn with her two daughters.
The members of the Clyde Snow Social Justice Award Committee are pleased to announce that this year’s awardee is the Agrupación de Familiares de Ejecutados y Detenidos Desaparecidos de Calama (the Association of Relatives of Executed and Missing Political Prisoners of Calama). This group of women has been searching for the remains of their murdered husbands, fathers and sons in Chile’s Atacama Desert for over four decades.

During his career, Snow worked in Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Croatia, Kurdistan, Iraq, Zimbabwe, The Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, The Phillipines, and many other places. Long before the exacting standards of forensic science were developed, Snow used his skills to expose mass graves and human rights abuses while bringing justice to many lost and unidentified persons through the stories their bones continued to tell. Snow used his forensic knowledge to identify the remains of loved ones, and provided independently obtained evidence for use in legal proceedings.

The WGS Center for Social Justice awarded the first Clyde Snow Social Justice Award on May 18, 2012, to Snow. This bi-annual award goes to a person or groups whose work contributes to the re-humanization of victims of human rights abuses in keeping with Snow’s work. This September, the Center for Social Justice will award the second Clyde Snow Social Justice Award and honor the memory, work and mission of this exceptional individual.

Grassroots Chilean Group to Receive Clyde Snow Social Justice Award

By Misha Klein

The members of the Clyde Snow Social Justice Award Committee are pleased to announce that this year’s awardee is the Agrupación de Familiares de Ejecutados y Detenidos Desaparecidos de Calama (the Association of Relatives of Executed and Missing Political Prisoners of Calama). This group of women has been searching for the remains of their murdered husbands, fathers and sons in Chile’s Atacama Desert for over four decades.

Their search in the driest and most desolate place on Earth, and the pressure that they put on authorities to release information about their loved ones began barely a month after the military coup in Chile on Sept. 11, 1973. On Oct. 19, a group of working men from Calama disappeared as part of a program to suppress dissent that became known as the Caravan of Death.

In spite of the danger to themselves and their families, and in spite of years of stonewalling and lies, the Agrupación did not relent in the search for their loved ones’ remains, nor in the search for the truth about what happened to them. What began as a group of strangers thrown together by incomprehensible circumstances became an organization that now includes three generations of relatives. Whether digging in the desert with their bare hands, filing legal action against the country’s military leaders, going on a hunger strike, leading a silent vigil during mass commemorations, or flinging flowers into the desert because they did not know where their loved ones were buried, the Agrupación has provided inspiration and a moral focal point for their country.

The Clyde Snow Social Justice Committee feels that this group embodies the spirit of the awards. This Sept. we will host representatives of the Agrupación, who will travel from Chile to receive the award and share their powerful story. The committee is planning an award ceremony and related events which will be announced in the near future.

More information about the Clyde Snow Social Justice Award can be found on the Center for Social Justice website. There you may also find information about making donations to help sustain the award.
By Kelsey Kolbe and Alex Ruggiers

We had the honor of being selected to attend the prestigious National Young Feminist Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., this past March. It was an incredible experience and allowed us the opportunity to connect with some amazing speakers, activists and fellow feminists across the country. We were able to learn from women and men who actively are working to address issues of social justice, such as reproductive justice, voting issues, workers rights, immigration reform, and sexual violence. Specifically, we attended some extremely interesting and enlightening panel discussions, such as "Rape Is Rape: Combating Sexual Violence on College Campuses," "Turning Religious Liberty Upside Down: Attacks on LGBT Rights and Family Planning" and "Inclusivity and Intersectionality: Organizing in Your Campus and Community." The panel discussions featured both representatives from national feminist and queer organizations as well as student leaders. This allowed us to gain unique perspectives from a wide range of voices. It was especially inspiring to hear from student leaders who are actively working to effect positive change in their campus communities because it provided us with a model of how we can be better activists here at OU.

Another highlight of the conference was the Queer Issues Caucus that occurred on Saturday afternoon. It was structured in a way that allowed participants to have an open discussion about queer issues, particularly in regards to issues that they faced in their specific region.

In addition to the conference, this trip also provided us with the incredible opportunity to explore Washington, D.C., and to learn from the amazing historical and cultural institutions that are in place in our nation’s capital. Most significantly, we attended the National Museum of Women in the Arts, which proved to be a truly extraordinary experience. The museum features the work of female artists from different time periods and across multiple mediums, and in doing so, emphasizes the need for recognition of female forms of expression in male-dominated fields. Some of the artists featured include Frida Kahlo, Alice Neel, Amy Sherald, Kiki Smith and Maria Friberg, among many others. This museum was one of the highlights of the entire trip and provided us with an important perspective that would otherwise have been absent from our knowledge of American history and culture.

We are extremely grateful that we were given the opportunity to attend NYFLC this spring. We returned to Oklahoma at the end of the conference with a newfound sense of what it truly means to be a feminist, as well as how to use that knowledge to be better activists in our communities. In addition to this, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, we also gained a deeper appreciation for the WGS Department and the Center for Social Justice here at OU. In comparing our school’s initiatives and programs with those of schools around the nation, we realized that the amazing things happening on OU’s campus (such as the After Trayvon event, Playing the Race Card, and the Art and Activism class with Claudia Bernardi, to name a few) are some of the most progressive, innovative, and important activist work being done in the entire country. And finally, we would like to extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to the sponsors of this scholarship award who made this remarkable learning experience possible. We are so grateful to have had this experience and again, we are honored that we had the opportunity to represent OU in this way.
Claudia Bernardi is an internationally known artist who works in the fields of art, human rights, and social justice. In her work over the past two decades, she has combined installation, sculpture, painting and printmaking, and most recently, she has focused her artistic endeavors in community and collaborative art projects working with and in communities that have suffered state terror, violence and human rights violations.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Bernardi lived through the Argentine military junta that ruled the country from 1976 to 1983. As a result of this system of repression, more than 30,000 Argentine citizens disappeared. The desaparecidos are the victims of the so-called “Dirty War.” She left Argentina in 1979.

In 1984, a forensic anthropology team was established under the new government in Argentina to supply evidence of violations of human rights carried out against civilian populations. Clyde Snow conducted the first exhumations in Argentina training the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team in the rigorous methods of traditional archaeology to examine, document and publicly expose mass burial graves. Returning to Argentina and impacted by the AFAT, Bernardi learned the meticulous scientific methods of handling human remains. Part of Bernardi’s responsibilities included the creation of the archaeological maps, transcribing the testimonies of families of the “disappeared ones.” Here, Bernardi realized that art could be used to educate, elucidate and articulate the communal memories of survivors of human rights atrocities.

Bernardi is the creator and director of the School of Art and Open Studio of Perquin in Morazán, El Salvador, serving children, youth, adults and the elderly. The approach of this unprecedented art, education and human rights initiative is rooted in the partnership created between art, artists and local institutions and NGOs. The art projects are designed and created in response to the demands, hopes and desires of the members of the community. This model of education and community building through art has been implanted in Colombia, Guatemala, Canada and Argentina.

Bernardi is a professor of community arts at the California College of the Arts. During her time at OU as Activist-in-Residence with the Center for Social Justice, Bernardi taught a one-hour credit course, “Activism and Art” dual listed in Women’s and Gender Studies and Art History. As part of #JusticeWeek, Bernardi gave a public lecture, “Art and Activism,” discussing the role art plays in healing communities that have experienced human rights atrocities. Bernardi also spoke at the Center for the Americas’ Latin Americanist Lunch, met with students during a meet and greet, and visited 10 classes while on campus.
I really love the community in WGS
WGS shows me how to look differently at media and everyday life
I want to found my own nonprofit that focuses on relational aggression
I want to help empower women to be leaders
WGS helps me better read others
The WGS major provides continuous overlap with all my other subjects
It furthers my growth and knowledge as a feminist
It combines my love of academic scholarship and my passion for social justice
It opens the door to important dialogues
My WGS courses have provided me with a new lens to see the world
The world of gender analysis has become an everyday part of my life
It will help me express queer ideology to my friends
It really opened my eyes to important social issues
WGS fired up the activist in my spirit
Students, you are amazing writers, scholars and thinkers. Many of you are members of the Honors College. You do extremely well in your classes. It was very difficult choosing the outstanding senior this year, given that so many of you have near-perfect GPAs. And, in keeping with the WGS tradition of having at least one Phi Beta Kappa among its ranks, this year Anna Przebinda was inducted into the honors society. You are a pleasure to teach.

But it is what you do outside the classroom that really sets you apart. You have organized against sweatshop labor and gotten the university to change its purchasing policies. You have worked on sexual assault prevention and helped organize the very first social justice conference here on campus. You have produced art on behalf of activism and continued the conversation about LGBTQ rights and equality. You have brought serious and sustained conversation about reproductive justice to the region, more than doubling the number of people attending the “Take Root” conference. You have raised awareness about the appalling rate of female incarceration in this state, drawing hundreds of members of the university and wider communities to events on this topic throughout the year.

So, I don’t know what you will say the next time someone asks you what you do with a WGS major or minor, but I’d like to leave with you with the words of the feminist and queer theorist Jack Halberstam, who said at the WGS graduation at UC Berkeley last year: “A women’s and gender studies student knows that transformation not accommodation is the real goal.” Go forth and transform, but know that you always have a home here at the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at OU. We hope you will always stay in touch.
Congratulations, WGS Majors, Minors, SJ Minors and Graduate Certificate Recipients!

Bachelor of Arts in Women’s and Gender Studies:
Sami Adhikari, Jordan Beagle, Lily Coleman, Conner Ferguson, Rachel Kammen, Valarie Lambert, Anna Przebinda and Kylie Shelley

Minor in Social Justice:
Brittani Bobek, Jennifer Booe, Dalton Brasington, Shelby Brown, Tegan Burkhard, Emily Farris, Aberleigh Jewart, Michelle Johnston, Valarie Lambert, Rebekah Martin, Katherine McPherson, Shelley Perkins, Anna Przebinda, Rosanne Salus, Alexis Taitel and Kirsten Therkelson

Minor in Women’s and Gender Studies:
Rhyker Benavidez, Natali Castellanos, Theresa Dorffler, Zohal Heidari, Kelly Koupash, Logan Lower, Sydney Miller, Brandon Ranallo, Kaitlin Reeves, Katelyn Roberson, Lyndsey Smith, Melanie Walker, Kaitlynn Wilkinson and Samantha Williams

Graduate Certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies:
Jean Mertz-Edwards, Margaret Giada, Tammy Hayes, Dorothy Nkhata, Robin Thornton and Sula You

2013-2014 WGS Award Winners!

Alice Mary Robertson Award:
Jean Mertz-Edwards and Cindy Vincent

Betty Baum and Norman Hirschfield Award:
Jessica Black, Mackenzie Jacobson, and Rita Thompson

Civil Liberties and Public Policy Conference Travel Scholarship:
Bliss Brown and Kylie Shelley

Excellence of Spirit (EOS) Award:
Shanon Buckingham and Autumn Wilkins

Faculty Research Award:
Susan Sharp

Graduate College Staff Award Recognition:
Tanya Miller

Maril Law Scholarship:
Rebekah Martin

National Young Feminist Leadership Conference Travel Scholarship:
Kelsey Kolbe and Alex Ruggiers

Rita A. McClaskey Outstanding Senior Award:
Valarie Lambert and Brandon Ranallo

Robert D. Lemon Social Justice Award:
Kasey Catlett (student), Moira Ozias (staff), and Ami Stearns (faculty or graduate student instructor)
Spotlight on Graduating Seniors

Sami Adhikari will graduate this summer with a bachelor of arts degree in women’s and gender studies. After graduation, Adhikari will serve one year with City Year in Rhode Island.

Brittoni Bobek graduated this May with a minor in social justice. She currently is interning at the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs in Oklahoma City, and will continue to work there through the summer and beyond.

Conner Ferguson will graduate this December with a bachelor of arts degree in women’s and gender studies and a minor in Psychology. Long-term plans for Ferguson include graduate school for International Disaster Psychology. After graduation, Ferguson plans on buying a one-way ticket to Ireland and working his way east.

Zohal Heidari graduated this May with a minor in women’s and gender studies. After graduation, Heidari plans to work at the OU Health Sciences Center as a research assistant, working with the data for the Preschool Children with Problematic Sexual Behaviors Therapy Groups and for a home visitation parenting program. In fall of 2015, Heidari will be applying to a clinical psychology Ph.D. program, focusing on eating disorders and obesity.

Kelly Koupash graduated this May with a minor in women’s and gender studies. Koupash plans on obtaining a master of art history, and wants to focus on feminist criticism and art after 1960.

Valarie Lambert graduated this May with a bachelor of arts degree in women’s and gender studies. After graduation, Lambert will begin the Master in Human Relations program at OU this fall. She will continue to work, attend school and spend time with her daughter. She wants to make Oklahoma a better place for women and girls.

Logan Lower will graduate this summer and plans on attending nursing school.

Katherine McPherson graduated this May with a minor in social justice. After graduation, she will serve for a year in the Episcopal Service Corps, where she will work full time in a social justice agency in a community on the East Coast.

Brandon Ranallo graduated this May. Ranallo will pursue a doctoral degree, in Public Administration and Policy Analysis from American University in Washington, D.C.

Kaitlin Reeves graduated this May with a bachelor of arts degree in human relations and a minor in women’s and gender studies. After graduation, Reeves will begin working full time for her parents’ homebuilding company.

Kylie Shelley will graduate this summer with a bachelor of arts degree in women’s and gender studies and a minor in philosophy. After graduation, Shelley is starting an abortion doula collective in Oklahoma City. She also hopes to continue to work for Provide, an organization she had the opportunity to intern with last summer.

Lyndsey Smith graduated this May with a bachelor of arts degree in human relations, and a minor in women’s and gender studies. After graduation, Smith will be beginning the master of human relations program at OU, and continue to work for the Community After School Program in Norman as a tutor coordinator.

Alexis Taitel will graduate this December, and plans to intern at the Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence in Reno, Nevada, this summer. She will study abroad in South Korea and Turkey later this year, and will defend her master’s thesis at OU this December. After she graduates, she plans to begin her career as a human rights advocate in Washington, D.C.
Faculty News and Publications

Katie Barwick-Snell was named the Provost's Outstanding Faculty Advisor.


Eric Bosse published a short-short story, “The Day I Came Home,” in *New World Writing*. The story deals with literary representations of female characters, and in an odd way it interrogates or challenges some aspects of the traditional role of the father.

Jennifer Davis Cline received the Arts and Humanities Faculty Fellowship from the Vice President of Research. She intends to use the fellowship to research libertines in early modern France and its American colonies from 1623-1804.

Lisa Frey presented her research on Relational-Cultural Therapy at the Jean Baker Miller Intensive Training Conference at Wellesley College in June. She will give two presentations at the American Psychological Association Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., in August ([a] Latino transgender asylum seekers in the US: Documenting a history of social exclusion, sexual violence, and resulting post-traumatic stress disorder (with Dorton, D., Cheney, M., et al., and [b] Universities and Gender Equity: Agents of, or Obstacles to, Change? (with Beesley, D., Hurst, R., & Johnson, S.).

Catherine Hobbs is retiring from her position as professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies Affiliate faculty.

Sherri Irvin was awarded a 2014 NEH Summer Stipend to support work on her book *Immaterial: A Philosophy of Contemporary Art*.

The Board of Regents approved the promotion of Jill Irvine to full professor.


Jennifer Saltzstein was awarded the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend to support research on her second book, *Medieval Learning and Vernacular Music: The Songs of the Cleric-Trouvères*. She also was awarded the OU Vice President for Research Award for Outstanding Research Impact.


The Board of Regents approved the tenure and promotion of Meredith Worthen to associate professor of sociology.
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