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Sarah's Hope

WE COME TO HONOR THOSE WHO

PAID THE PRICE, RISKED THEIR LIVES & MADE SACRIFICES

SO THAT WE CAN BE WHERE WE ARE TODAY.

2nd Annual

Standing ON THE Shoulders



Honoring Board of Educators of Public Schools and Community Colleges

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

6:00 p.m.

Pitser Garrison Civic Center

601 NORTH SECOND STREET | LUFKIN, TEXAS

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Welcome from The Board of Directors

Greetings and Welcome to the 2nd Annual Standing on the Shoulders Banquet to honor those who have come before us, paid the price, risked their lives, and made sacrifices to be where we are today. The Board of Directors would like to extend our heartfelt thank you for your generous support of our recognition and fundraising banquet. Your presence and contribution have made this event a resounding success, and we are truly grateful for your dedication to our mission.

This evening, we will testify to the power of our community coming together to support a common cause. Your presence at this banquet not only demonstrates your commitment to our ancestors but also to our more current and recent unsung heroes in the deep piney woods of East Texas. Our prayer is that they will inspire others to join our efforts to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

Thank you to all of you who attended the banquet this evening, to our dedicated and amazing volunteers, and to the event sponsors and supporters who made the evening possible. Together, we are taking a step towards keeping the memories of those who have given all to Deep East Texas alive and thriving!

We look forward to many years of honoring those who have given to us so that we might have shoulders to stand on!

Sincerely,

Sarah's Hope Board of Directors

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Program

Joseph Meeks Violinist	Musical Selection
Nerissa Williams Scott Chair BOD – Sarah's Hope Charitable and Educational Foundation, Inc	Welcome/Greetings
Dr. Sena Whitaker Author & First Lady of New Life Church of Lufkin, Texas	Prayer "Lift Every Voice and Sing"
Sarah's Hope Children's Choir	Music selection
Dinner	"Stand Up"
First Lady Stacy Hopkins	Introduction to Guest Speaker
Lady Psiyina L. Davis Therapist & First Lady of the El Salvador Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ	Words of Encouragement
Nerissa Williams Scott	Recognition of Special Guests & City Officials
Dr. Michael J. Simon President of Angelina College	Greetings
Dr. James Hockenberry Superintendent of Lufkin Independent Schools	
Mr. Brian Bowman Superintendent of Diboll Independent Schools	
Nerissa Williams Scott	Award Presentations
Mrs. Demitira Harrell	Legacy Award Tribute
Larry Kegler	Closing Remarks

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Awardees

Lufkin Independent School District	Dr. Cedric Allen
	Ms. Willie Mae Burley
	Mr. Joe Douglas
	Mr. Larry Kegler
	Rev. Andro Branch
	Dr. Odis Rhodes
Diboll Independent School District	Dr. Dallas Pierre
	Mr. James Rhone
	Mr. Ronnie Coleman
	Ms. Schman Faye Jones
Angelina Community College	Mr. Joe Deason
	Mrs. Bonnie Denmon
	Mr. Malcolm Deason

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Committee Members:

Dr. Guessipina Bonner

Nerissa Williams Scott

Keisha Williams

Sydney Benamon

Jurlene Sparks

Benita Sheffield Duffield

Robbie Jenkins

Sarah's Hope Childrens' Choir Directors

Ms. Debbie Haas

Ms. Larenthia Harrell

Ms. Maria DeLa Cruz

Lufkin Dunbar Alumni Association

Ms. Vrenda Williams

Ms. Julia Roberson

Ms. Effie Ross

Sarah's Hope

Vision Statement:

Sarah's Hope Foundation envisions creative and confident youth who have a global outlook, who are academically well-prepared and who are equipped with life skills that will enable their upward mobility.

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Mistress of Ceremony
Nerissa Williams-Scott



Nerissa Williams-Scott, CEO of That Child Got Talent Entertainment, inc., Boston, MA, (www.tcgtentertainment.com) is a dedicated professor in the Film/Video Department at Massachusetts College of Art and the Night Manager for the Emerson College Paramount Center Film Sound Stage in Boston, MA.

Nerissa graduated from Hampton University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Fine and Performing Arts. She then received her Master of Fine Arts in Film Production (emphasis in Producing) from Emerson College. Her career experience includes over thirty years of working and learning in performing and media art. She began on stage and worked her way up to the position of Creative Producer for Film, TV, Live Events, Theatre, and Music Videos.

Nerissa's travels have set her apart in the Creative Producer role as she strives to balance and maneuver the jobs of Line Producing, Production Management, and Creative Producer. She looks forward to the ongoing forward momentum of TCGT Entertainment, inc. Her favorite quote:

"Education survives when what has been learned has been forgotten."

---B.F. Skinner, Psy.

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Speaker

Lady Psiyina L. Davis



Psiyina [sigh-YE-nuh] is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She earned the Master of Arts in Christian Counseling and the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy. She has a private practice, Psiyina L. Davis, PLLC, and is a Clinician at The Armstrong Center for Hope. She assists individuals, couples, and families in achieving their mental health goals.

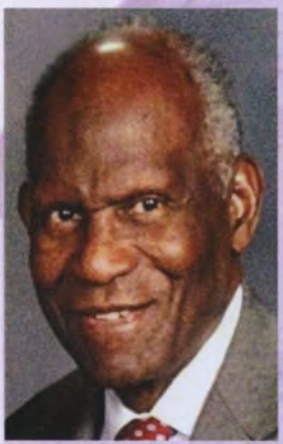
She educates communities on the importance of maintaining psychological, physiological, and spiritual health by conducting workshops and seminars on soul care, mental wellness, premarital/marital relationship health, and other topics on mental health.

Lady Psiyina is the leader of the multicultural Nehemiah Church COGIC and the First Lady of the El Salvador Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ. She also serves in a team leadership role as the Pastor of Congregational Care (providing the congregation with spiritual and psychological support during life transitions, grief, and hospitalization). Lady Davis has been a Licensed Evangelist in COGIC since 2000.

Psiyina is a native of Detroit, Michigan, and resides with her husband in Durham, NC. They are the proud parents of four adult daughters and a son-in-love.

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Awardee
Dr. Cedric Allen



Dr. Cedric Allen was a native of Jamaica, West Indies. His professional education began when he received his B.A. from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. He then went on to get his medical degree from Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California. Dr. Allen established his medical practice in 1959 in Lufkin, Texas, and he specialized in family practice for over 40 years.

Dr. Allen held memberships in the Angelina County Medical Society, Texas Medical Association, American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Practitioners, and the Texas Academy of Family Practitioners. He served as the Chief of Staff of Woodland Heights General Hospital, Chief of Medicine and Credentials at Memorial Hospital, and President of the Angelina County Medical Society.

Dr. Allen also committed to the Lufkin community and served three terms on the Lufkin ISD school board, where he held the offices of secretary, vice president, and president. He co-founded Pinewood Park Apartments and served as President of the Citizens Chamber of Commerce for seven years. Dr. Allen was awarded the prestigious Angelina Award in 1985 by the Angelina County Chamber of Commerce for his outstanding commitment to community service in Lufkin. Dr. Allen was an active man who enjoyed golfing, gardening, and reading poetry. He also enjoyed spectator sports of boxing and cricket.

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Awardee
Mrs. Willie Mae Burley



Mrs. Burley attended Anderson High School in Austin, Texas, and received her Bachelor of Science from Prairie View A&M University. She then earned her Master of Education degree from Stephen F. Austin University and continued her advanced study at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. She was employed with A. M. Story High School, Palestine, Texas; Clemons High School, Neches, Texas; Dunbar High School, Lufkin, Texas; and Lufkin High School, Lufkin, Texas. She retired from Lufkin High School in 1987 after twenty dedicated years. She was involved in many professional, religious, civic, and social organizations, too many to name. Most notably, she served as a member of First Missionary Baptist Church, Texas Retired Teachers Association, Lufkin ISD School Board, Volunteer Auxiliary at Memorial Health System, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Mrs. Burley, her track teams, and her athletes received many local and statewide coaching awards. She was most proud of the recognitions given by former students at A. M. Story, Dunbar, and Lufkin High Schools. In 2006, the Texas State Board of Education recognized her as a Hero for Children for her work as an educator and with programs like HOSTS and GEAR-UP. Mrs. Burley was the endower of many scholarships for a great number of children through the E. C. Burley Scholarship.

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Awardee
Mr. Larry Kegler



A community servant: He was among the first to serve on the Lufkin School District's Tri Ethnic Committee, appointed by the late Federal Judge (William Wayne Justus) to assist LISD during the time of the desegregation order.

He served the city of Lufkin as a councilman for Ward #3 for three years. While serving as City Councilman for Ward #3, he spearheaded getting homes painted, construction completed, and developing The Lufkin Land Park on Dale Street in Lufkin.

Mr. Kegler served 18 years on the Lufkin ISD Board of Trustees. During his tenure, he was instrumental in supporting and helping to pass two bond elections totaling over eighty million dollars. He served as President, Vice President, and Secretary. During his tenure on the LISD Board, the District received state recognition as the School Board of the Year for the State of Texas.

Mr. Kegler has many FIRSTs here in Lufkin: Among the first Black students to attend Lufkin High School and graduate from Lufkin High School. One of the first Black students to play football at Lufkin High School. One of the first students to attend the newly established Angelina Jr. College.

He was drafted into the US Army and stationed in Anchorage, Alaska. Family is essential to Mr. Kegler, so he continues to desire to make Lufkin the best place to live, worship, and go to school.

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Awardee
Mr. Joe Douglas



Joe Douglas is the Chief Executive Officer and Owner of Angelina Logistic LLC in Lufkin and a Texas Realtor. Retired from the ITEX Group Property Management, Inc. as Regional Manager in East Texas and Shreveport, Louisiana. He is a graduate and a life member of Leadership Lukin Class of 2002. He earned his Associate of Science in Business Degree from Angelina College and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance from Stephen F. Austin State University, a member of the University of Texas System.

He is a member and Trustee of Long Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church and served as Chairman of General Solicitation for the Angelina County United Way. President of the Angelina County Citizens Chamber of Commerce, President of Lufkin Independent School District, President of the Affordable Housing Management Association of East Texas, Inc., and elected National Delegate to Texas Senate District 3 representing 17 East Texas Counties.

He has served on the Deep East Texas Council of Government Family Self Sufficiency advisory boards, Angelina College Child and Family Development, Angelina County Vision 2020, the Lufkin State Supported Living Center Advocacy Program, and various others. Joe is married to Yevette Douglas, a Stephen F. Austin State University graduate. Joe and Yevette have two children, Matthew, a graduate of Lufkin High School and Texas A&M University, and Elizabeth, a graduate of Angelina College, Pineywoods Community Academy Early College High School, and a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Texas State University.

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Awardee

Rev. Andro Branch



Andro Branch is a dedicated leader with deep roots in the Apple Springs Independent School District, where he graduated in 1983. He furthered his education at Tyler Junior College, Angelina College, and Stephen F. Austin State University, earning a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in General Business in 1994.

With a passion for service, Andro has obtained several professional certifications, including a Licensed Bachelor of Social Worker, Certified Anger Resolution Therapist, Certified Grief Counselor, and Certified Paralegal. His leadership was notably exemplified during his six-year tenure as President of the NAACP, where he played a pivotal role in fostering peace during the James Byrd incident. He also facilitated the settlement of the 1970 Desecration Court Order and established scholarships for Black students to attend colleges and universities. His work addressed critical issues such as racial profiling, police brutality, and unemployment in Deep East Texas.

Andro Branch dedicated 16 years to the Lufkin Independent School District Board of Trustees. Among his many accomplishments, he takes great pride in the successful passage of a $75 million bond during his final year, which funded the construction of a new middle school, gymnasium, multipurpose building, and baseball and softball complexes.

In his spiritual life, Elder Andro Branch has served as Pastor of Our Father's House of Faith Apostolic Church for 14 years. He is also Chairman of the Board for the Lufkin Christian Leadership Coalition, Treasurer for the Men's Department of the Texas State Council Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, and Program Director for the Eastern District Pentecostal Assemblies of the World.

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Awardee
Dr. Odis Rhodes



Dr. Odis Rhodes was born on January 23rd, 1931, in Wintershill, Texas, and died on April 17, 2015, in Lufkin, Texas, at 84. He attended school in Wintershill and later transferred to E.J. Campbell High School in Macadocious, Texas. After moving to Lufkin, Rhodes completed his public education at Lufkin's Dunbar High School, graduating in 1950. He received an undergraduate biology and physical education degree from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas.

Dr. Rhodes was initiated into Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, incorporated in 1952, through the Alpha Sigma Chapter seated at Wyland College. He later completed his master's degree at Texas Southern University in Houston and received his doctorate in education from the University of Houston.

Dr. Rhodes completed postdoctoral studies at the University of Indiana. He's a lifelong educator serving as principal at Garrett Elementary in the early 1960s. In 1968, he became the first African American professor at Stephen at Austin State University. Still, most notably, Dr. Rhodes was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated and a member of the Lufkin ISD School Board. He retired in June 2012 after a long tenure as a professor at Stephen F. Austin University. The Gentlemen of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Iota Mu chapter seated at Stephen F. Austin State University established the memorial scholarship honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Otis Rhode. His legacy will never be forgotten.

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Awardee
Dr. Dallas Pierre



Dr. Dallas Pierre, 90, was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, community leader, and dentist. Dr. Pierre was born in Charenton, Louisiana. After graduating from Lincoln High School in Port Arthur, Texas, Dallas obtained his Bachelor of Science Degree from Prairie View A&M University, Master of Science Degree from Texas Southern University, and Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree from the University of Texas Dental Branch in Houston, Texas.

Upon graduating from dental school, Dallas relocated to Lufkin, where he became the community's only black dentist. For 40 years, he was in private practice, caring for patients across the region.

He was a Life Member of the American and Texas Dental Associations, The East Texas Dental Society, where he became the organization's first minority member, and served as past president of the Gulf State Dental Association. Additionally, he was a past member of the Lufkin ISD School Board, a Golden Heritage Member of the NAACP, and a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated. Dr. Pierre also frequently contributed to the Opinion Page of the Lufkin Daily News. For his civic service, the Angelina County Citizens Chamber of Commerce awarded Dallas its highest honor, The Eagle Award, for his lifetime contributions to the community. Dr. Dallas Pierre left an indelible mark and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

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Awardee

Mr. James Rhone



James Elton Rhone was born on April 23, 1931, to a loving mother and father, Luella Triplett and Morris Rhone, Sr., in Long Leaf, Louisiana. He was the oldest of 12 children. He was a graduate of HG Temple High in Diboll, Texas, and after graduating, he attended Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas.

He worked for Temple Industries as an industrial worker.

From there, he became the superintendent of the Road Truck Shop, where he held this position until his retirement after 45 years.He was also an entrepreneur and started his businesses "Home Care Fix It Service" and J & M Catering Service.

James also served on several boards in the community and abroad. He was the first blackboard member of the Diboll Independent School District and, for a few years, president of the Board of Education for DISD. James was appointed to the Angelia County Advisory Council, Pineywoods Transportation Club, Temple Library Board, Varnett Academy School Board President, Diboll Housing Authority, and Deep East Texas MHMR Advisory Council. He also worked for Sabine Investments.

At an early age, James gave his life to Christ and was a devoted Christian until his death. He was a faithful member and Head Deacon at Pine Hill Baptist Church in Corrigan, Texas. He loved his family, church family, and helping others.

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Awardee
Mr. Ronnie Coleman

A man with a big personality and a huge heart for all.



Ronnie Edward Coleman, Sr. was the sixth son born to Samuel Sr. and Shirley Coleman. The Coleman family moved from Livingston to Diboll, where Ronnie attended Diboll public schools and graduated from Diboll High School in 1983. Ronnie moved back to the East Texas Area in his early 20s and was employed by Temple-Inland until he became disabled from a back injury.

During every opportunity he was given, he would speak to young people about how the citizens of Diboll were a "family" and should be treated as such. Ronnie was dedicated to his home church in Diboll until he became the proud pastor of Providence #1 Baptist Church in Leggett, TX. Ronnie never ceased his commitment to the Diboll Community. He has served fourteen years on the Diboll ISD Board of Trustees, Deep East Texas Boys & Girls Club Regional Board of Directors, and Diboll Boys & Girls Club Board of Directors. He considered it an honor to volunteer to serve with Diboll Jackbackers and often visited the school campus Agriculture and Culinary Arts Departments and the band program. He also helped coach Little Dribblers Basketball, Diboll Youth Baseball, and Youth Football when his health allowed. Pastor Coleman also served on the Angelina County Appraisal District Board.

Ronnie was an amazing father, husband, pastor, brother, son, friend to all, and community leader. He made a major impact in the Diboll community and is greatly missed by his family, friends, and the "Diboll Family." His earthly assignment has been completed, but his work continues through others he was able to influence and encourage, including his wife, LaMona, who finished a term on the Diboll ISD Board of Trustees.

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Awardee

Ms. Schman Faye Jones



Schman Faye Jones graduated from Diboll High School in 1985. She has been married for five years and is a proud mother of three and an even more proud grandmother of one granddaughter.

She retired from Temple-Inland in 2008. After retirement, Ms. Shaman Jones-Whitfield became more involved in my community because of her love for helping people in any way possible. She also served as a member of the Board of Trustees for Diboll Isd.

During that time on the board, she was honored to be part of the approval for the new HG Temple Elementary School that was built. She has been a substitute teacher for the Diboll school district for the past five years.

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Awardee

Mr. Joe Deason



Joe Deason was born on February 25th, 1947, in Nigton, Texas. He was the seventh of ten children and attended elementary school in Nigton. He attended high school at H.G. Temple High School in Diboll, Texas, and graduated with honors in 1964.

Mr. Deason received his bachelor's degree in elementary education from Prairie View A&M University, graduating with cum laude honors.

He enrolled in the Army ROTC program and served as a commissioned officer in the United States Army from 1969 to 1971. He also served one year of active duty as a tank commander in South Vietnam. In 1972, Mr. Deason received a master's in guidance and counseling from Prairie View A&M University. He was a teacher, coach, and counselor in the City-Fair Independent School District from 1972 to 1976. 1982, Mr. Deason received his mid-management certification from Praire View A&M University. From 1982 until 2003, Mr. Deason was a teacher, counselor, and principal in the Lufkin Independent School District.

Mr. Deason Served as a personnel recruiter from the Lufkin Independent School District from 2003 until 2015, when he retired. Mr. Deason has been involved with many committees and organizations throughout his career. He served on the board of directors at Woodland Height Medical Center for five years. He was also on the board of directors for Angelina College, the Angelina Neches River Authority, the Salvation Army, the Boys and Girls Club, the Family Practice Residency Advisory Committee, and the Naranjo Museum of Natural History.

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Awardee

Mrs. Bonnie Denmon



Bonnie Denmon, a staff nurse, emergency services director, education director, and adjunct faculty member, has retired from active employment. She remains active in the community, serving on a board and developing the Wells ISD health science program part-time.

She graduated as the first African American student from Central High School, earned her Licensed Vocational Certification from Lufkin Memorial Hospital, and began her long nursing career.

Denmon received her associate degree in nursing from Angelina College and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Stephen F. Austin State University.

Throughout her nursing career, Denmon held several administrative positions while balancing her roles as wife and mother. She was director of the emergency service at Lufkin's Woodland Heights Medical Center for more than 10 years and director of education at Memorial Health System until her retirement in 2004.
Since retirement, Denmon has taught Medical Terminology as an adjuster faculty member at Angelina College and volunteered as a patient advocate. Currently, Denmon works part-time for Wells ISD, Developing their Health Science Program.

She served for several years on the Central ISD school board, is a past member and president of the Angelina College Board of Trustees, and has also served on the boards of the Deep East Texas Workforce, Stubblefield Learning Center, Lotus Lane Foundation, Hospice in the Pines, Goodwill, United Way, and the Angelina County Chamber of Commerce.

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Awardee
Mr. Malcom J. Deason



Malcolm was born on November 3, 1975, and left us on April 10, 2024. He attended Lufkin Independent School District, where he was known for his outgoing and caring spirit. Malcolm obtained his bachelor's degree in accounting from Prairie View A&M University. He attended Stephen F. Austin State University for a bachelor's in Business Administration and Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He received a Master's in banking because he treasured a quality education.

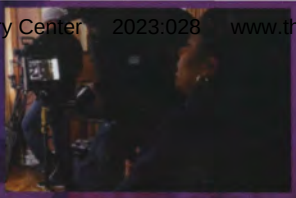
Malcolm was a servant leader who participated in everything progressive in the city "Lufkin" he purposely called home. He was a faithful First Missionary Baptist Church member who sang in the male chorus and taught the men's Sunday school class. Malcolm loved being a coach during Malcolm Jr.'s all-star Little League career. Malcolm was the Lufkin Market President for Cadence Bank.

Malcolm served on the Boards of Angelina College and Citizen Chamber and was a member of the Lions Club. He has also served on the boards of many local organizations and held state board positions over his career.

To Malcolm, his wife, children, siblings, and caring parents meant the world to him and elevated his success. Yet, we all know that his host of friends felt closer than brothers because of his unwavering affection, from those associated with his lifelong banking career to his outdoor hobbies. His family shared his love with the entire community, and we are so incredibly fortunate to have known and loved him.

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Angelina College
Lufkin Independent School District
Diboll Independent School District
Lufkin Dunbar Alumni Association
The History Center in Diboll
Brant Lee and the staff of Lufkin Convention Center

This wouldn't have been possible without your kindness and support!

"We are in this life, this preciously shared space, to give and to love, to do the work we're called to perform and to nurture each other with the gift of our personhood. I don't know what else we live for."

Peter Anastas

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THE LUFKIN DAILY NEWS

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