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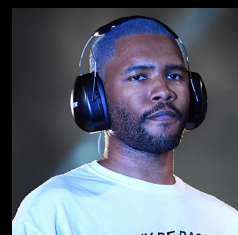
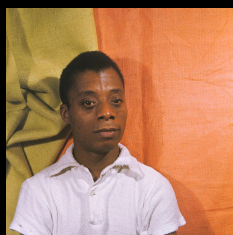


# OUR PRIDE



# WON'T STOP

Highlighting Pioneers  
and Champions of the  
LGBTQIA+ Movement



By Dwayne Ashley, Sylvia White, Tashion Macon, Ph.D., and Jennifer Jiles



# Introduction

**“Before there was the movement for gay rights, there was the movement for civil rights.  
Without the lessons of one, there could not have been the other.”**

Four years before the landmark Stonewall uprising of 1969, managers of the Dewey's coffee shop chain in Philadelphia triggered a smaller but significant gay rights rebellion. They were fearful that the tolerance for one of Dewey's franchise owners, in the heart of the city's "gay ghetto," would have a domino effect. As a result, the coffee shop chain denied service to "a large number of homosexuals and persons wearing non-conformist clothing."

On April 25, 1965, more than 150 protesters—gay, lesbian, and transgender members of both the Black and White communities—staged a peaceful sit-in to demand that the chain rescind the policy. The police arrived, and three teenagers were arrested for failing to disperse. Undeterred, members of a gay rights group protested outside for five straight days. On May 2, a second sit-in was staged. This time, the police backed down, and management agreed to end the ban.

It was a stunning victory. That sit-in and others like it, however, did not happen by accident. They were the products of the protests in 1960 by Black college students at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Those student protesters fought for six months, challenging the establishment's racial segregation policy before they achieved victory.

"Influence can be the influence of ideas, and specifically ideologies, the influence of strategies," San Francisco State history professor Marc Stein told NBC News. "Influence can also come in the form of people who move between movements, or who are engaged in multiple movements. There are examples of many such people in the early LGBTQ movement.

Consequently, despite these historic hard-won triumphs, the ends of the two struggles are nowhere in sight. Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin may have received 22½ years in prison for murdering George Floyd with a knee to the neck for more than nine minutes, but African Americans are still murdered and jailed by police at a far higher rate than Whites...and they still face other discriminations including in employment, education, housing, and healthcare.

With regards to the LGBTQ community, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) reported in 2020 at least 37 transgender and gender-nonconforming people were murdered. HRC further reported that this increase in murders was more than in any other year since it began tracking data in 2013.

Although the LGBTQ equal rights fight had made some significant gains -- same-sex marriage was legalized by a Supreme Court decision in 2015 -- the LGBTQ community has experienced decidedly mixed outcomes in the right-leaning court since, including a June 17, 2021 decision that a Catholic foster care agency in Philadelphia is permitted to turn away gay and lesbian couples as clients."

While the struggle continues, fortunately, there is no shortage of those willing to fight. At Bridge Philanthropic Consulting (BPC), we know that the fight cannot only be about money. Philanthropy is also about those who are willing to sacrifice, often at great personal cost, but for the greater good. Many African Americans among the LGBTQ community have fought for gay rights, yet rarely get the recognition deserved. We celebrate Pride Month by saluting them here.

Dwayne Ashley, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bridge Philanthropic Consulting





Image from NBC News

# Introduction

To be gay in America is difficult enough. To be Black and gay is to fight a two-front war in a nation where to be conforming and comfortable is to be White and straight. The challenge is even more daunting when considering that many Black churches have been unwelcoming to those of a different sexual orientation or gender identity in their community.

*“The motto of the Black church seems to be ‘don’t name it, don’t claim it,’”* says Mandy Carter, a founder of the progressive organization Southerners on New Ground. Carter offers this observation in an article in the Human Rights Campaign, examining the issue of religion and coming out for Black Americans.

It requires a special brand of fortitude to sail against those prevailing winds. Yet in recent decades, enormous strides have been made by many in our country in understanding that love is love, whether it involves a man and a woman, or members of the same sex. The courage of early pioneers in LGBTQ rights such as Marsha P. Johnson, an activist drag queen at the 1969 Stonewall uprising, must be recognized. Bayard Rustin was arrested in 1953 for having consensual sex with two men but later became a key adviser to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Both Johnson and Rustin paved the way for famed African Americans of today such as Robin Roberts and Don Lemon to come out. Others, like RuPaul, are flamboyant enough to probably have made their mark in any era.

**Bridge Philanthropic Consulting** recognizes that philanthropy and social justice are inextricably intertwined. As we honor and remember Pride Month, we proudly share the stories of some of the bravest and finest pioneers and champions of LGBTQIA+ rights.



# Robin Roberts

*Robin Roberts, an anchor of "Good Morning America" for 16 years, has been a warrior for a long time. In 2008, she went public in her battle against breast cancer, and again in 2012 when she underwent a bone marrow transplant to treat a rare blood disorder called myelodysplastic syndrome.*

But what wasn't expected was for her to go public at the end of 2013 in a matter-of-fact Facebook post with the words: "I am grateful for my entire family, my long-time girlfriend, Amber, and friends as we prepare to celebrate a glorious new year together."

Since that moment, Roberts has been a source of pride to the LGBTQ community, using her platform to raise awareness and acceptance. After a recent GMA report on abusive gay "conversion" camps, she talked about her gratitude for the acceptance of her parents. "No one was more religious than my parents," she said. "I'm so grateful, especially after seeing this, how supportive they were of me as a gay woman and my family and friends, and I'll never forget my mother saying, 'God loves you because of who He is, not because of anything you do or don't do.'"

Roberts, 60, has been honored with the Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Journalism, inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame as well as the Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame, and was voted the "Most Trusted Person on Television" by a Reader's Digest poll in 2013. She also has been honored by the Human Rights Campaign for battling on behalf of the LGBTQIA+ community.

In addition, Roberts is a philanthropist in the traditional sense of the word, supporting the American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, and Stand Up to Cancer among other organizations.



Image from People

# Don Lemon

**CNN news anchor Don Lemon** and host of “Don Lemon Tonight,” knows the mindset of being gay and African American well. “It’s quite different for an African-American male,” he told The New York Times. “It’s about the worst thing you can be in Black culture. You’re taught you have to be a man; you have to be masculine. In the Black community, they think you can pray the gay away.”

Yet in 2011, he decided he had no choice if he wanted to live in truth. He was approached by a publisher’s representative to write an inspirational book after participating on a panel called “The Black Man in the Age of Obama.” If he was going to tell one truth, about the reality of living in the United States as an African American, he decided he was going to have to tell the rest. But his reasoning went beyond himself. Tyler Clementi, a White student at Rutgers University, had recently committed suicide by jumping off the George Washington Bridge after college mates secretly broadcast his sexual encounter with another man on the internet. Lemon wanted to prevent more deaths like Clementi’s.

“I abhor hypocrisy,” he told The Times. “I think if you’re going to be in the business of news, and telling people the truth, of trying to shed light in dark places, then you’ve got to be honest. You’ve got to have the same rules for yourself as you do for everyone else.”

Lemon was honored by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) in 2017 for promoting equality and acceptance for the LGBTQ community. In 2009, *Ebony* named him as one of its Power 150. He has won an Edward R. Murrow Award and an Emmy for his reporting. Lemon, 55, has been a leading voice for CNN, guiding viewers through the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, the summer of nationwide protests and riots in 2020, and through the trial and sentencing of the police officer found guilty of George Floyd’s murder on April 20 and June 25, 2021, respectively.

Lemon is an avid supporter of civil rights, children’s rights, LGBTQ rights, and is an outspoken advocate for mental health.





# Rupaul

**RuPaul is nationally known for his flamboyancy** and for not taking himself too seriously. But in doing so, he has been a pioneer Black celebrity all the same, and one with a message. RuPaul broke ground as the first openly gay national TV host on “The RuPaul Show,” on VH1 in 1996. Currently, as the host of “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” he has given more than 100 drag queens the platform for career liftoff. Through it all, he has had a message. On the “Drag Race,” he tells fans and contestants, “If you can’t love yourself, how the hell are you going to love someone else?”

His flawless looks and extroverted personality have guided him to success throughout his nearly 40 years in entertainment. Being in drag has allowed him to deflect anger from many about his daringness in being different. “Look I’m fun, I can have a sense of humor about life because I’m in drag. I acknowledge Black rage, but we’re going to have some fun. So then, people are like, ‘Oh, OK, so we can laugh together.’”

RuPaul was the first face of M.A.C. Cosmetics and, as its spokesperson, helped raise money for the AIDs epidemic awareness. The fund has raised more than \$400 million.



Image from Patch



# Wanda Sykes

*Wanda Sykes, a comedy dynamo during the early 2000s, was named by Entertainment Weekly as one of the 25 funniest people in America in 2004. Four years later, however, she caught the public by surprise by not only coming out as a lesbian but sharing she had married a French woman named Alex Niedbalski a month earlier.*

Sykes, who divorced her husband of seven years in 1998, had spoken about gay rights early in her career. But the passage of Proposition 8 in California, banning gay marriage before being overturned in court, was too much. “We took a huge leap forward and then got dragged 12 feet back. I felt like I was being attacked, personally attacked—our community was attacked,” she told a Las Vegas rally.

Sykes has supported several LGBTQ rights charities, including GLAAD, the Los Angeles LGBT Center, and The Trevor Project, which provides crisis prevention services.

# James Baldwin

*James Baldwin was one of the groundbreaking authors of the 20th century, exploring racial and social issues with an honesty that still resonates today, including in the renowned Go Tell It on the Mountain. Yet he also broke taboos by exploring homosexuality in 1954 in Giovanni’s Room, telling the story of an American living in Paris. He explored love between men again in 1978 in Just Above My Heart.*

Baldwin, who was open about his homosexuality, offered a radical clarity on topics of race and sexuality. Michelle Gordon, now a senior lecturer on African American studies at Emory University, says it was Baldwin’s intersectional identity that made him an “outsider” and unique voice.

“All of that shapes his message and his life experiences and his interpretation of his life experiences,” Gordon told “NBC Out.” “Being Black in America. Being Black and gay in America. Being a Black American in Europe. Being Black and gay in the world. It all gives him outsider status, which allows him the ability to see the world so clearly because he did not quite fit.”

Baldwin wrote several essays on the civil rights movement, which were published in magazines including Harper’s, The New Yorker, and Mademoiselle. Baldwin later joined the Congress of Racial Equality and traveled across the American South lecturing on his views of racial inequality and civil rights.

Image from Los Angeles Times



Image from Great Big Story

# Bayard Rustin



**Bayard Rustin had everything against him.** He was arrested in 1953 for “lewd conduct” and “vagrancy” in Pasadena, California, for a sexual act involving two white men in a car. His reputation also was damaged due to ties to the Communist Party.

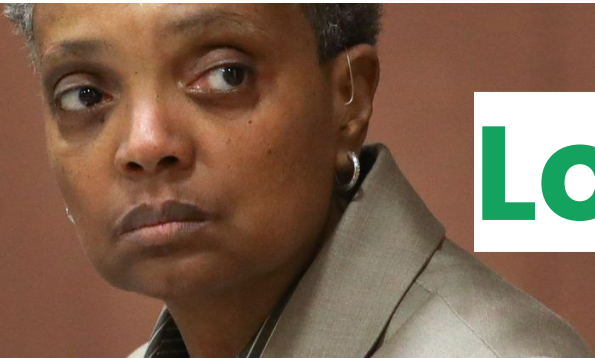
While he much preferred staying out of the spotlight, Mr. Rustin became a champion of the civil rights movement. He lent support to Dr. King in Alabama during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He also introduced the civil rights leader to the teachings of Gandhi on nonviolent protest, which

became the pillar of Dr. King’s success. Then in his crowning moment, Rustin was the organizational genius behind the 1963 March on Washington.

His leadership in the civil rights movement predated Dr. King. He initiated a 1947 Freedom Ride to challenge racial segregation in interstate busing. It wasn’t until the final years before his death in 1987 that Rustin finally acknowledged his sexuality. He spent some of those years bringing the AIDS crisis to the attention of the NAACP.

Image from USA Today

# Lori Lightfoot



**When Lori Lightfoot captured the job of mayor of Chicago in 2019,** the Windy City became the largest in the United States ever to have an openly LGBTQ mayor, let alone a Black female one. She is only the second woman, and the third African American, to lead the city.

Lightfoot, who is married to educational consultant Amy Eshelman—with whom she has a daughter—says she found race, gender, and sexual orientation were none issues in the campaign—a true testament to the progress made in recent years.

“I hope my presence in this race serves as an important reminder of the progress we’ve made in inequality and inclusion,” Lightfoot said.

Lightfoot’s most recent philanthropic effort is the Together We Rise initiative, aimed to help communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative will be led by a steering committee that will distribute more than \$25 million in philanthropic contributions. She is spearheading the initiative with Chicago leaders and Chicago Community Trust.





Image from  
Gay City  
News



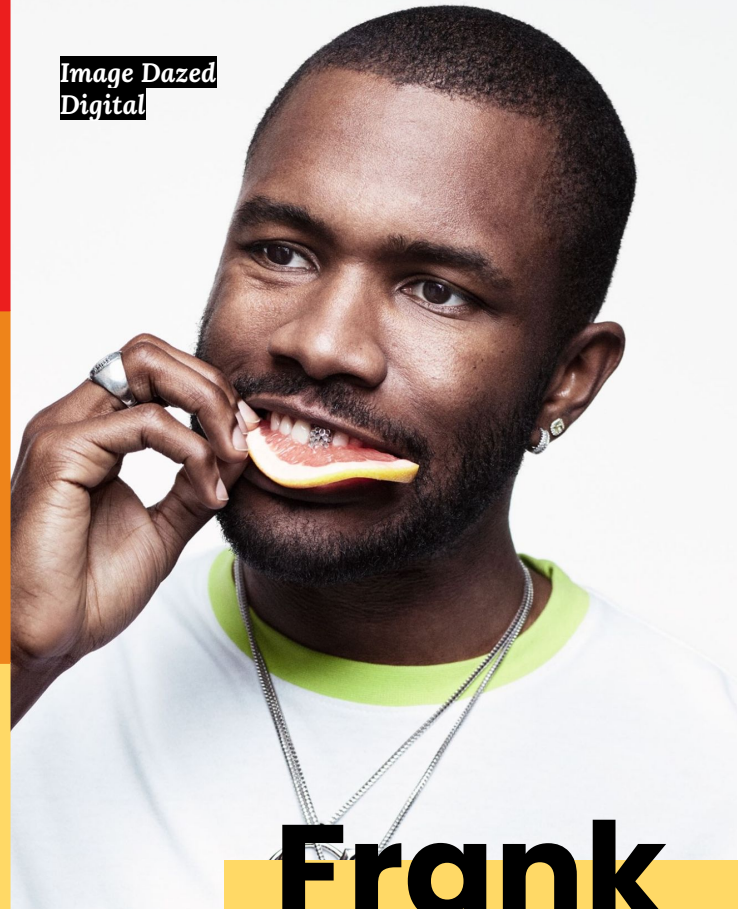
# Alphonso David

*Alphonso David, a nationally recognized LGBTQ civil rights lawyer and advocate, is the president of the Human Rights Campaign. He is the first civil rights lawyer and the first person of color to serve as president of HRC in the organization's nearly 40-year history.*

Among his other achievements were four years as the first openly gay man to serve as chief counsel to the governor of New York. Before working in the public sector, he served as a staff attorney at the Lambda Legal Defense and Educational Fund. He worked on New York's first marriage equality case, *Hernandez v. Robles*. They won at the trial court but lost on appeal. He then became the state's first deputy secretary for civil rights. In that role, he helped pave the way for the 2011 act that brought marriage equality to New York, four years before *Obergefell v. Hodges* made it law nationwide.

David has received several awards and recognitions for his public service, civil rights advocacy, and advocacy for equality for all people.

Image Dazed  
Digital



# Frank Ocean

If, as Don Lemon says, being gay and Black are about the worst thing you can face in African American culture, the degree of difficulty is significantly higher for a product of urban music—where masculinity is very much tied into the genre. Yet **R&B star Frank Ocean** did it, coming out about his bisexuality in 2012 at age 24.

“Ten or 15 years ago Frank Ocean could never have come out,” Mark Anthony Neal, a professor of African American studies at Duke University, told *The New York Times*. “It would have been death to his career.” Ocean's announcement about loving a man barely caused a stir, it turned out, and his music reflects that courage. His album, *Channel Orange*, was full of lyrics addressed to a male love object.

The singer has given generously to victims of gun violence and their families. Ocean also supports causes such as disaster relief, human rights, the environment, and at-risk youth.



# Emil Wilbekin

**Emil Wilbekin, 54**, is the founder of Native Son Now, an organization dedicated to letting Black gay men know that they have a rightful place in society both culturally and in business. “It’s important how we see each other,” Wilbekin told Out magazine. “And that we’re able to see each other in beautiful spaces because we’re worthy.”

The journalist has been a powerhouse in his field. He is the former editor-in-chief of Vibe, editor-at-large at Essence, and chief content officer of Afropunk.

Wilbekin has been recognized by organizations such as GLAAD and the Boy Scouts of America for his support and contributions to their missions and work.



# Marsha P. Johnson

**Marsha P. Johnson** was a drag queen who was a trans-rights activist and a key figure during the Stonewall Inn uprising in June 1969. The then-23-year-old resisted arrest, and in the following days led a series of protests and riots demanding gay rights. A month later, the first openly gay march took place in New York.

She was nicknamed the “Saint of Christopher Street” (where the Stonewall Inn is located), because of her generosity, including tireless efforts on behalf of sex workers, prisoners, and individuals with AIDS. Johnson went on to found STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), an organization to support gay and trans individuals who had been left homeless.

She went missing in 1992, with her body found six days later. In 2002, Johnson’s death was reclassified as “undetermined.” Twenty years later, in 2012, the case was reopened after a spirited effort by activist Mariah Lopez to investigate Johnson’s case as a possible murder. No one has been arrested in the case and it remains unsolved.

Multiple tributes have been paid to Johnson in the years since her death, including two documentaries, a posthumous obituary in The New York Times, and a mural in Dallas.



# Barbara Smith

*Barbara Smith*, 74, has been a leader in the struggle for the rights of Black women in general as well as for lesbians. She was a leader of the 1979 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. At the second national march in 1987, she was one of eight major speakers, giving remarks before nearly 1 million people.

Also, in 1974, she co-founded the Combahee River Collective, a force behind lesbian-inclusive Black feminist politics. She and Audre Lorde co-founded Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, giving women of color who were often shunned by the mainstream publishing industry an alternative for getting into print.



Image from Times Union

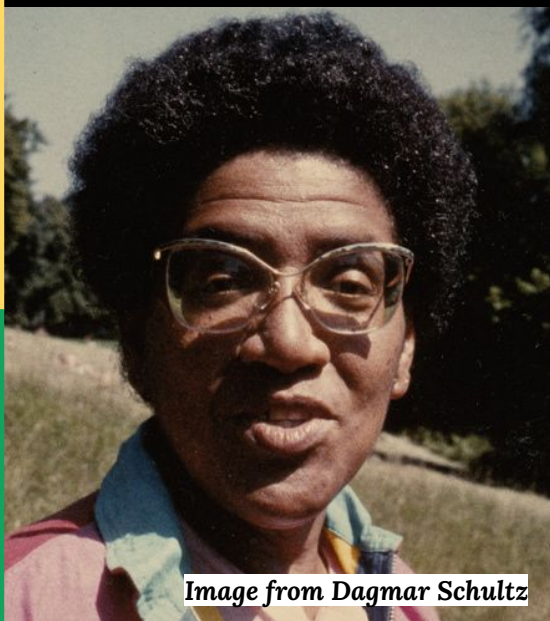


Image from Dagmar Schultz

# Audre Lorde

*Audre Lorde* worked closely with *Barbara Smith*, speaking at the 1979 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights as well as at Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. Lorde, a prolific writer, was State Poet of New York when breast cancer claimed her life in 1992.

Her impact was wide-ranging. She was active in the anti-apartheid movement, serving as a founding member of Sisters of Support in South Africa. She also was a fearless feminist and published a powerful piece entitled “Breast Cancer: Power vs. Prosthesis” in *The Cancer Journals*.

# Storme DeLarverie

*Stormé DeLarverie*, who passed away in 2014 at age 93, was one of the first and fiercest members of the modern gay rights movement. She may or may not have thrown the first punch at Stonewall.

The singer, cross-dresser, and bouncer patrolled lower Seventh and Eighth avenues with her gun, checking in at lesbian bars. DeLarverie toured the Black theater circuit as emcee—and only drag king—of the Jewel Box Revue, the first racially integrated drag revue in North America. She also organized and performed fundraisers for women who suffered from domestic violence.



Image from Rogers A. Hunt



# The Authors

## **Dwayne Ashley** *Founder and Chief Executive Officer*

Dwayne Ashley is renowned for his bold, strategic thinking and wise counsel in philanthropy. He is a successful entrepreneur. In the course of his career, he raised more than \$750 million. A fearless and authentic solicitor, he is committed to social justice and helping organizations of color maximize their fundraising success. He advises non-profit, philanthropists and influencers globally.

A powerhouse of energy and a passion for fundraising, Dwayne has managed capital and annual campaigns and spearheaded development for such notable organizations as the Jazz at Lincoln Center, Success for Kids, 100 Black Men of America, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the United Negro College Fund,

and the United Way of Texas Gulf Coast, among many others.

Dwayne is a thought-leader in the field and he has shared valuable concepts in numerous articles and in four books. They include *Eight Steps to Raising Money: Measuring Your Fundraising Impact*, *Word for Word Publishing*; *8 Winning Steps to Creating a Successful Special Event* with Carol Campbell, Director of Events at Prairie View A&M University; *I'll Find A Way or Make One: A Tribute to HBCUs* with noted journalist Juan Williams and *Dream Internships: It's Not Who You Know, But What You Know!* He is an alumnus of Wiley College and the University of Pennsylvania Fels School of Government.

## **Tashion Macon, Ph.D** *Partner, Culturalist*

With almost twenty years of exceptional achievements in both the for-purpose and for-profit realms, Tashion Macon is widely known as a leading marcom and traditional/transmedia expert with an unwavering emphasis on results. A true visionary, Tashion sees changes and trends in the market before anyone else, frequently finding extraordinary and lucrative opportunities by innately recognizing what can be different and better. After she predicts the future, she gets in front of it. A gifted and highly respected culturalist and strategist, she regularly originates marketing and communications strategies that dramatically influence new consumer realms. She helms pace-setting marketing initiatives that generate multi-million-dollar profits

and successfully managed and navigated \$400MM media budgets to drive double digit percentage boosts in ROI. With a rare meteoric mind and transformational ability to galvanize like-minded people, she collaborates with corporate and client leaders to mobilize cross-functional teams. She is regularly sought out as a subject matter expert in pop culture, global social enterprise, philanthropy, politics/policies and impact programming and crafts important conversations that become part of the social lexicon.

Tashion holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology and a Master of Business Administration in Strategic Marketing. She has a number of professional affiliations and associations.

## **Jennifer Jiles** *Partner, Professor*

Jennifer Jiles is an award-winning strategic communicator, writer, magazine editor, producer, and college educator. She has held managerial or senior level positions across private industry, nonprofit organizations, higher education, and arts and entertainment. Her areas of expertise include strategic planning, campaigns, editorial, media, crises, and change management. Over the years, Jennifer has also built an appreciable track record in fundraising communications strategies. Most recently, she was

a member of the Global IT vice president's leadership team for Dell SecureWorks, a leading cyber intelligence company. Jennifer led the global corporate communication function for the company. She has worked with more than 25 organizations, including AT&T, UPS, Walmart, BET, and Jazz at Lincoln Center. Jennifer has been faculty at Georgia State University since 1999. She holds membership in the Technology Association of Georgia and the Public Relations Society of America.



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