Taming the Beast of Racism through Education, Understanding and Reform.

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"Their success is based on our failure" - Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quoa, former African Union Ambassador to the United States.

Thesis

The argument which I intend to make in this paper is that racism is a tool which was constructed for the maintenance of the status quo. My major point is that, through education, racism — as rigidly structured as it is — can be better understood and possibly maintained. It is my view, however, that racism is an indelible feature of the system, but it can be tamed and the taming process should follow a particular rubric. I revisit key readings of the Comparative Race Politics course, and others and conclude with suggestions on what a Racism Taming Rubric (RTR) could look like. The taming of racism, I, believe, will take a major multi-faceted effort, beginning with an introspective mindset, and tracing back to the roots or source of the race-making activity. Education, understanding, and reform are therefore key attributes of the RTR.

Introduction

Assuming that the great and omnipotent force of creation – *God* – may not have crafted prejudices and hate into the design of humankind, one must agree that those traits and tendencies evolved over time, and thus, was created by humans. In fact, there is a wide array of scholarly evidence which suggest how, when, where, and even why, the idea of race and racism surfaced, and irrespective to how one may wish to look at race and racism, and from which perspective(s) race and racism is viewed, and/or explained, the phenomenon is understood as being carefully built into the system's design. The question is not whether racism resides permanently in our society, because it does, but how best to understand the real extent of its impact. In attempting to answer this question, I have decided to envisage race as a rational engagement which is played out in irrational ways, for desired outcomes. Those desired outcomes all lead towards a quest to dominate. For this research essay, I would like to frame racism as an unwitting (or probably deliberate) byproduct which results from peoples' desires and ambitions to own the system of authority.

Racism was not necessarily created more than it was shaped into the human predisposition. Is Racism a Rational Construct? Yes and no. It is rational because the authorities see racism as rational, and racism is irrational because those who are subjected, or on the receiving end of racism (minorities), see it as such – irrational. This position on racism was arrived at after carefully analyzing the literature on racism in the leadup to crafting this essay. My search for a suitable essay topic took me all over the place, but a constant idea kept coming up, and it is that racism emerged and continues to emerge. Where racism emerged from is as important as its continued emergence, because the emergence cannot be explained and understood in the absence of a clear rationale of the origin. So, I will attempt to take the complete journey of racism before offering concluding suggestions.

First, let me share some of the topic ideas which I had to wrestle with before deciding on the framing for this essay, and they were received in the following order: *The Rational Construction of Racism with Irrational Reflections*; *Why does a look in the Racism mirror show Rational reflections*?; *Racism: The Irrational crop with Rational stock*; *Irrational seeds, Rational shoots and universal Fruits: the story of Global Racism and how it grows in every society*; *The Parasitic effect of Racism and why it may never be curtailed*; *The emergence of a world of Racism from the playbook of Colonial conquest*; *Racism as a tool of World Dominance: The Case of American Power and Western Hegemony*; *When Race becomes a Factor*; *Racial attitudes in a racially blinded world*; *Racism so clear, even the blind can see*; *Racism: the unintentional intent of the Hegemonic system of Colonialism*; *Birtherism and Racism is Contemporary America: how much lower can we get*; *Racism: a decorative image on the American Canvas*; *Taming the beast of Racism through education, understanding and reform*. I decided on the latter: *Taming the beast of Racism through education, understanding and reform*.

This topic was chosen because it brought all the ideas together and it is that one frame which best represents my passion to contribute to this racism debate. As my topic suggests, we may be able, only, to tame the racism beast, but that beast is forever present in the system, and like any beast, it can very easily be whipped into action by the simplest careless narrative far less for the more sophisticated and calculated actions. The latter is what Cohen (1999) refers to as categorical marginalization. The author explains categorical marginalization as the exclusion of "an entire class or group of people from any central control over dominant resources and institutions". If you observe, I have decided to use the term beast to refer to racism, not necessarily because I believe that the stereotypical beasts is bad or dangerous, but the word beast conjures up the right sort of action when one considers the characteristics of racism within the people of any society.

<u>Literature Review</u>

Alexander (2012) retraces racism to Slavery and possibly beyond. She does so by connecting Jim Crow regulations and laws to the malady of mass incarceration in contemporary America. Colorblindness is as savage a racist act as racism itself, and she calls for a much-needed conversation about the impact of racial divisiveness and the complicity of the American justice system in packing the penitentiary with minorities – especially as far as Blacks are concerned. The author also becries the state of racism as being carefully camouflaged beneath and within an unwritten code of disparity which targets blacks – or non-whites – as a minor category from as far back as can be traced. Alexander (2012) is making the argument which I seek to reiterate: that the system was created once and forever and a toppling of the system is simply misguided utopianism. The author is speaking here of education which is one of the three pillars of my research.

^{1.} The Boundaries of Blackness - AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics, Cohen, 1999, 55

Bonilla-Silver (2001), like Alexander (2012), deals with the timeline of racism – albeit in a more detailed narrative. He affirms that racism was constructed from race and that race is a concept of history and history fuels the system through the phenomenon of racism – the subjugation of a category of people. Bonilla-Silver (2001) says that it is important that people's understanding of racism is not trivialized because of the lack of a cohesive structure behind the scholarly narratives on racism. The author proposes that racism is part of an overall racialized social system, and that it had evolved and keeps evolving. Interestingly, Bonilla-Silver (2001) calls for an 'abandonment' of the traditional scholarly views of racism and replace this canon with works which are designed to achieve a better understanding of racism. The author stresses that racism is more systematic and enabling; racism determines economic, political, and social progress. Bonilla-Silver (2001) calls for a better understanding – the second pillar of my research – of the system and the role that racism plays in ensuring the system's efficacy.

Bonilla-Silver (2001) declares that there is no post-Civil Rights. The author further affirms that 'White Supremacy' is part and parcel of the global hegemonic system which is a continuous flow of authority. The scholar implores racialized categories to form logical allies – including forging relationships with white liberals – to stay-off the new racist tactics which the author refers to as old wine in a new bottle, packaged and labelled differently. Bonilla-Silver (2001) dismisses contemporize and past race theories, especially racial neutrality as a lullaby of color-blinded racism. Lullabies are southing sounds (songs) which are played for the underdeveloped or impressionable mind, giving them a fake sense of reality. Here we see the scholar is asking for reform – a radical one indeed, and this stands in line with the third pillar of my research.

Mills (2001) argues along similar lines with Bonilla-Silver (2001), but Mills (2001) actually rewrites the order of civility, and posits a new 'Racial Contract' which, the author believes,

delivers the point about the races more clearly. Mills (2001) touches my three pillars (education, understanding and reform) all at once; he speaks of the ideas and symbols which ground the contemporary notions of nationhood, stating that they are imbued in the past – a past that sees class, gender, and race as qualifiers in explaining the racial construction, supremacy and authority. Mills (2001), who can be referred to as a transformative philosopher, claims that people are knowingly or unknowingly bound to notions of society which grew out of, and is influenced by the history of white supremacist philosophy of past vintage and traditions. In short, the author places a check of medieval philosophy, but his most significant claim is that inequality is purposefully built into the system. The education system, which is one of the core institutional machinery of learning which was created by the system, is used as a tool to miseducate to mislead the people. Mills (2001) calls for a restart, the same sort of restart that I am attempting with this essay.

Cohen (1999) and Keohane (1986) bring an interesting perspective to the debate of race – stereotypes within minority communities. The authors believe that stereotypes, which are self-perpetuating tools division, were invented by the system and are used to empower minority groups to help the system of authority achieve its objective, and that objective is the denial of privileges to all branded categories. What I mean by this is that, stereotypes within minority communities keep all minorities in check, because those who brand and dismiss the branded are impacted just as much. Simply put, stereotypes divide people and retards progress. Cohen (1999) explains that there are 'boundaries of blackness' which are demarcated by differences of views and driven by misguided narratives. Keohane (1986) calls for an understanding of international systems and, foreign policy in particular. He says that there is a need for expert understanding of the distribution of power, because 'power' which gels global hegemony by creating sub categories – the footstools

for the global elites. Those categories are enabled by stereotypes of the system to stretch the idea of disunity within minority categories. Both scholars admit that a sound education of the propensity of the system is the best assets which minorities could possess over white supremacy. Education is therefore key, as I have argued. Then again, whose or what education?

Marx (1998), Omi & Winant (2015) and Paschel (2016) place the legal formulation of racism and the supporting mechanisms like democracy and globalism or globalization under the microscope. Marx (1998) speaks of the legal racial orders which goes into the making of nations and race as being created as a result of displacement of particular groups in the interest of the state. In my view, Marx (1998) is suggesting that judicial institutions are strongholds of authority. The scholar connects regions through the notion of democracy, claiming that democracy – in all its manifestations – actually lays the groundwork for people/voter disenfranchisement and advances segregation while bolstering white unity. Omi & Winant (2015) raise the concept of race as part of the theory of class domination, with the argument that race-making can be explained through a process called 'ordering' and that the categorization of people is not a simple calculation as some may think.

The race formulation calculation is by no means simple. A robust and non-traditional formula must therefore be introduced to understand racism and this is what Paschel (2016) espouses. She observes that there are several definitions and modes of institutionalization of blackness, and warns of new discoveries or mythical exploitations of colorblindness. The scholar seeks to redirect the debate on race and racism. She explains that claims of no-race politics are simply tools of manipulation which are adopted by the system to lure minorities into the supremacist trap of thinking that race is no longer an issue, and the best way to avoid being caught is to understand the ploy. The fact is, race has been and will continue to be an issue. Omi & Winant

(2015) define race as "a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests," and this illustrate a progression from fundamentals of the humanities to the constructed realities, where race-framing (or forming) is the constant practice – from the religious, to science, to the politics of global hegemony, and racism. This is yet another strong argument which supports the necessity for a new approach.

The system is responsible for the creation of race and racism. This means that there is a constant systematic dispute and Zepeda-Millán (2017) explains how such disputes may be addressed. After observing successful Latino immigrant activities, the researcher suggests that mobilization and collective activism helps in challenging the system. There is value in collective action, and such action cannot be possible if at first those who propose the action do not understand the magnitude of the systematic force which is against those actions. Just as the systems is connected, the author stresses, so too should be the aggressor(s), and it is only through activist connectedness that the ugliness of the system can be exposed. Zepeda-Millán (2017) suggests that taming of the system must not be necessarily violent, because violence breeds violence and revolution breed revolution. Though Zepeda-Millán (2017) does not speak about taming directly, he makes reference to the subtle uses of knowledge-driven tactics in addressing systematic threats. Sometimes the most subtle means are the most effective ones and subtlety is synonymous with taming. My RTR model calls for a new taming approach.

This matter of taming can be looked at against the background of the suggestions in the text, *Black Power*, by Carmichael (Kwame) and Hamilton (1967). The co-authors go all out with the message of black power, which is, black people taking care of the business of black people. But as has already been discussed, white supremacy strives on black oppression and if one were

^{2.} Racial Formation in the United States, Omi & Winant, 2015, 110

to follow the strict guidelines of Carmichael (Kwame) and Hamilton (1967), this opens up all sorts of conflicts. The political and economic wellbeing of blacks (or minorities) erodes the value of the supremacy class, and this change in balance from 'White Supremacy' to 'Black Power' is a perfect blue print for conflicts. This is what is being presented by Carmichael (Kwame) and Hamilton (1967), but I a slightly different approach to the endgame. I am of the view that radical black power authors are not proposing anything different from what I now propose. The strategies of education, understanding, and reform, in their work, and my idea are highly complementary; but I am offering a slightly different tactic. We should not seek to achieve the ambitious task of ending one system to start another.

My views can be extracted in the narrative by Carmichael (Kwame) and Hamilton (1967), who declare that white supremacy or society is the maintenance of an attitude of superiority which is deeply engrained into the fiber of society, and this conditionality seeks to infuse the entire functioning of the national consciousness³. The authors accept that the attainment of black power is a daunting task, which is best achieved by a face-up with white superiority, or even a clear and total dismantling of it. The question is: can white superiority be dismantled? Can the system which create all things be recreated? The answer to both questions is probably yes, but this cannot be easy. The task of combating racism cannot be one-dimensional. Alexander (2012), Bonilla-Silver (2001), Cohen (1999), Mills (2001), Cohen (1998), Keohane (1986), Marx (1998), Omi & Winant (2015); Paschel (2016), Zepeda-Millán (2017) and Carmichael (Kwame) and Hamilton (1967) provide the foundation on which my Racism Taming Rubric (RTR) is constructed, and the same is discussed in the second part of this essay.

^{3.} Black Power – The politics of Liberation, Carmichael (Kwame) & Hamilton, 1967, 31

Discussion

From the readings discussed in the literature review, I can conclude that racism is a selfperpetuating phenomenon. Metaphorically, however, I refer to racism as a beast; a beast which can
only be tamed. This taming process must be procedural, and it should be guided by the best
education and understanding of racism in order that reform is gained. Reform is the taming. By
the use of the term taming, in this essay, I mean the art of taking up the best accommodation within
an unattainable situation, racism, by confronting the issue from a more pragmatic standpoint.
What I mean is, racism evolves and is adapted to suit each particular era of human existence, so
efforts geared at appeasing the effects of racism should also evolve. Accommodation does not mean
acceptance; it means the awareness of an unassailable fact, or truth. Taming and not dismantling
is presented as the more feasible approach to dealing with systematic racism.

Racism may never disappear, but it can be tamed and such taming should follow a particular rubric. I will get to that Racism Taming Rubric (RTR) towards the conclusion, but let me reengage with the scholarship to further build the case for the RTR. Marx (1998) declares that "racial domination was perhaps then impelled by capital's efforts to maintain a split labor market" and I eliminate the word perhaps because, not only did racial domination drive the desire for capital, it created it. Bonilla-Silver (2001) stresses that there is a lacking in terms of a structural viewpoint of understanding racism to the point that this phenomenon is viewed through "a derivation of class structure," and this is a standard scholarly view with minor exceptions. Even Carmichael (Kwame) and Hamilton (1967), two of the most hard-hitting contributors on race relations, agree that approaches have been short, but their blueprint to attacking the issue is a long-shot. The authors concede that one of the tragedies of the struggle against racism is that, up to this

^{4.} Making Race and Nation. - A comparison of the United States, South Africa and Brazil, Marx, 1998, 183.

^{5.} White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era, Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 45

point there has not been a national organization to deal with racism. This coalition is hampered because of a lack of the "premises on which that coalition will be based". This I concur with this observation and suggest that such as effort must not be national or regional – it must be global.

I further stress that the conflict is not black against white, but is a deeper search for belonging to and in a system, which carefully chooses its players. Older racism battles are not comprehensively attractive and they are certainly not inclusive enough to create the groundswell of support which such movement need in order for the effort to be effective. It is as if each area has its own view on racial categorization and the intra-regional variance is even more complex. Black comes in varying sub-categories and what comes as white comes in one dominant category. Case in point, in the American system, there are several shades of blackness, endless minority groups and a number of contrasting narratives on racism. There is simply no coherence of a dominant race narrative. African Americans is a master category, but there are several subcategories with the African American heading. There are black elites, professional black, skilled blacks, suburban blacks, rural district blacks, non-skilled blacks, there are blacks who were born in America, Haitian American, Puerto Rican American, Cuban Blacks and lighter skinned, there are Jamaican Americans, Bahamian American, Trini-Americans Cubans, Black African immigrants, Blacks in the ghetto or projects and the list goes on. From my personal experience, all these groups respond to a slightly different race consciousness, and this splintering only weakens the effort.

If this occurs on every nation in each region (and it does), it would be practically impossible for there to be a oneness of message. The old Swahili proverb declares that unity is strength so when there is disunity there can be no strength. Zepeda-Millán (2017) relates findings of a Latino

^{6.} Black Power - The politics of Liberation, Carmichael (Kwame) & Hamilton, 1967, 77

immigrant mobilization survey in America, which, after enjoying some success because of its broad coalition, broke up into separate ideological divisions⁷. The disunity in anti-racism messengers and lack of continuity of minority narratives help to stretch the gap between the status quo and the entire marginalized categories. We need a new rubric.

The Racism Taming Rubric (RTR)

Ground zero for the fight against racism must begin from ground zero – Africa. The concept of race domination was popularized by western interests which mainly harvested human resource from Africa; they were categorized them as chattel Slaves and this, of course, was rooted in law. Slavery became the breeding ground for racism, and racism is essentially the extension of Slavery. Irrespective to how recent the scholarly framing of racism might be, it has old and very deep roots and contemporary shoots. I make this claim with support from Bonilla-Silva (1997) who observes that Benedict (1945) "was one of the first scholars to use the notion of racism" in a literary concept, and this relates to Keohane (1986) explanation that "self-sustained economic growth in the West was made possible by instituting efficient economic organizations". To say that someone from a racial category has never experienced or be exposed to racism is akin to the factual existence of unicorns.

One only knows what they never knew until they know what they never knew. A reconditioned mind should come up with different ideas of viewing anti-system issues, especially when those issues are explained exclusively through systematic institutions. I am not quite sure which of the two experience – my maiden trip to Cameroun on the west bank of Africa in 2007,

^{7.} Latino Mass Mobilization - Immigration, Racialization, and Activism, Zepeda-Millan, 2017, 119.

^{8.} White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era, Bonilla-Silver, 2001, 456

^{9.} Neoliberalism and its Critics, Keohane, 1986, 149

or this 2020 graduate Comparative Racial Politics course – weight heavier on me, but my understanding of racism has been adjusted.

Education

Education leads to an adjustment of thoughts. It is generally agreed that education is one of the first requirement in life, but education means little when it contrasts with the progressive and survival principles of the educated. The sort of education which is needed to successfully tame the beast of racism, cannot be the same one that the system of supremacy has designed. In other words, it may not be possible to change the constructed of society, so efforts geared at promoting Black Power in a White system are already dead on arrival. There is need for reeducation and realignment of the racial narratives, and probably a new canon of race and racism related scholarship should evolve. Such an evolution should not however negate past theories – they should extend from or complement each other. When this becomes the case, the beast of racism could be better tackled or tamed. The rationale is to change in the way we talk about the system and a deviation from the illusionary hopes that a new system will one day rise up to preside over the present system of supremacy. This may very well be a flawed understanding.

Understanding

With education comes understanding and better education produces better understanding. If we agree that the basis of education on race had been understood through systematic prisms of learning, peoples' idea of race is, therefore, trapped in the same systematic attitude. This raises the need for a sobering understanding of racism; one that will lead anti-racist practitioners to use the globe as one stage of the theatre of racism. There is need for a broadened vision which is sharply focused on what is possible in the fight against the system (the taming of the racial beast). In fact, the fight cannot be against the system – as I have stated earlier – the effort should be to get an

understanding of the system's ways and work within and around these ways. It is like a surfer who catches her balance at the crust of the wave, and glides across the turbulent pressures in the ocean beneath. But the overzealous surfer who tries navigating against the motion of the wave may not experience the same results. The rationale here is that, race relations activists must understand how to gage the tide and flow with it, because, like the surfer, the racism fighter will never be able to change the dynamics of the wave; but s/he can ride it if the pragmatic skills are employed.

Reform

If education leads to better understanding, when that understanding is realized then there should be obvious reform. It is my firm belief that there needs to be a fresher look at racism. Racism is like the perfect wave, which I alluded to earlier, and this wave is part of the ocean. Can the wave be taken away from the ocean? No. Can the strength of water which is contained within the wave and in the ocean below be exploited? Yes, in several ways, especially by the surfer. Just as the skilled surfer would have spent several hours, days, weeks, months and probably even years studying the ocean and the behavior of waves, so too should racism and race relations scholars carefully reexamine past approaches with the view to reforming the means of challenging the system. The system, we know, uses racism as its proxy. The rationale here is that there needs to be more deliberate and careful evaluation of racism; racism should be seen as what it truly is – an unavoidable aspect of life which will continue to characterize the way people live and die.

How the RTR works.

My functions of the RTR rubric is stated as follows:

Racism is more definable than it is changeable; education is the light which showsoff racism in all its element; understanding comes by way of proper teachings (education), and reform should be the obvious next step when the two pillars – education and understanding – are planted. When the three pillars of the RTR are satisfied, racism is brought under some control…it is tamed. The tenets of this rubric, while not novelty ideas, are presented differently from all other discussions that I have reviewed. My claim is that the processes of education, understanding, and reform, have been ongoing and the scholarly material on racism have been adequately developed. The matrix of racism awareness is what my RTR addresses and s shift is recommend. This shift is tied to the reality of racism as per my earlier discussions. I hope my RTR idea can at least be included in the onward conversation of systematic racism and minatory categories.

Conclusion

The roots of racism run deep. To end racism, all the shoots of racism must be uprooted along with the foundational precepts. This is not going to happen because there are far too many shoots of that parasitic phenomenon; they are literally everywhere. Most importantly, racism is embedded in the subconsciousness of the human person. Unless racism is totally uprooted, and in all its manifestations, racism will persist. But the growth of racism can be curtailed, the beast can be tamed, and how this can be done was discussed in the RTR rubric above. Power – as far as global hegemony goes – is White and White it shall remain, but progress is possible, and by progress I do not necessarily mean 'upward' mobility nor Black Power. Progress or mobility could go in any direction, and progress knows no color and boundaries. Most importantly – for blacks – progress begins with blacks dismissing the categorization of black. There must also be the awareness that the fight is not BLACK v WHITE, and if that continues to be the fight, White has a distinct and perpetual advantage, because the rules of the fight are written and shall always be rewritten by Whites – this is irrevocably built into the system of authority.

Black ascendancy in the power spectrum is, therefore, part of the White system's equation; black introspection/reeducation is needed to balance things off. Black introspection takes care of the coloring effects of black achievers. This is the same observation that Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) made. They declare that it is absolutely imperative that black people strive to form an independent base of political power first. When blacks can control their own communities—however large or small—then other groups will make overtures to them based on a wise calculation of self-interest. The blacks will have the mobilized ability to grant or withhold from coalition. Black people must set about to build those new forms of politics (Carmichael and Hamilton,1967, 96). Here we see the need for a serious ground-game, foundation building and coalition making across society as being the advisable modus operandi for black progress — not necessarily black power. If 'black' is removed from the racial concentration, whatever progress which is made will be indigenous to the peoples' efforts and not necessarily antagonistic to the authority — or it still might.

I conclude by stating that a possible approach (not a formula) for advancing the case of marginalized categories (of which black is given a specialized 'socialized' code), is to begin a fresh narrative and not necessarily an all or nothing fight-down of the system. A new and different *understanding* of the people through new *education* and timely *reform* of the marginalized peoples' mode of operation might be a good place to start. In fact, the same conversation has been had, time after time, with several gutsy efforts, but the methods applied to complement these efforts have yielded the results. As the years turn to decades and the decades turn to centuries, the issues of racism continue to soar. We could revisit the Haitian Revolution which occurred almost two hundred and twenty (220) years ago and ask: what gains have 'Black Power' made? Because

^{10.} Black Power - The politics of Liberation, Carmichael (Kwame) & Hamilton, 1967, 37

Haiti as sumed complete power when they kicked out the White supremacy class; today Haiti is known as the most impoverished nation in the Western Hemisphere. Why? Is Haiti really poor? Are the African nations poor? Who or what determines poverty?

It is the system of authority which determines who is *rich* or *poor*, and the scourge of poverty is felt greater by those who understand poverty based to the system's playbook, or those who – like Haiti – dare to topple the system's authority. With that said, I believe that poverty or what the word aims to depict is real, but what is sometimes paraded as poverty is actually *liviti* (the Rasta concept of righteous living and the essential belief that the almighty – *Jah* – exists within humans and things in the most simplistic way). I also agree that human ambition is unlimited, but there are real and challenging when one comes face to face with the might of a system' a system which is protected by the beast which guards it – racism. I believe that the beast of racism can be successfully tamed, but as long as the ambition is to replace the system, all such efforts could fail and many will be mortally wounded along the way.

As a final thought, the continent of Africa should be the foundation of black renaissance, and there are more than enough resources to support minority progress initiatives within the system of supremacy. Attempts at building such an awakening much be scattered throughout civil societies, across the spectrum of humanity, and wherever systems exist. The message of newness should also be coordinated and effected in unison; the agenda must be guided by an informed vision which is more focus and deliberate as that of the purveyors of the present system of authority. In short, a careful application of the RTR is the light on the path, and the stage on which this light must be focused should indeed be universal. For there to be such universality, however, there has to be a cause (or series of causes) and motivation for action which is resounding enough to capture the imagination of enough people across the universal spectrum.

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