

A TALE OF TWO MOVEMENTS: ADR AND THE GREENS

By Christa Daryl Slaton and Theodore L. Becker*

*Paper presented at the North American Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution, March 3, 1989, Montreal, Canada. This essay is the draft of a chapter in the book TRANSFORMATIONAL MEDIATION currently in progress by the authors. Please do not quote without express, written permission. Our address is:
128 Tal Heim Drive, Auburn, Alabama, USA 36830.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

CHRISTA DARYL SLATON was the co-founder and co-coordinator of the first neighborhood justice center in Hawaii, the Community Mediation Service. She was also the co-designer and co-trainer of the Honolulu Neighborhood Mediation Network of the City and County of Honolulu. Ms. Slaton subsequently became a co-organizer of the Hawaii Greens and is presently co-organizing the Auburn Greens in Auburn, Alabama. She is currently writing a book titled: TELEVOTE: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE QUANTUM AGE and is co-authoring TRANSFORMATIONAL MEDIATION.

THEODORE L. BECKER is Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science at Auburn University. The author of eight books on the legal system and American government, he was the Coordinator of the M.A. in Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii and a participating member of the Hawaii Greens. He is presently coordinating Green activities for the Transformational Politics Conference Group of the American Political Science Association and co-authoring TRANSFORMATIONAL MEDIATION with Ms. Slaton

A TALE OF TWO MOVEMENTS: ADR AND THE GREENS

By Christa Daryl Slaton, University of Hawaii
and Theodore L. Becker, Auburn University

In the past decade, we have been intimately acquainted with the problems, and suffered some of the growing pains, of two important global movements, what some call the "Alternative Dispute Resolution" movement (or ADR) and what many know as "The Green" movement, or in Germany as "Die Grünen." Each continues to expand in size and impact. Each is a substantial shift in process. Each has great potential to transform how society is shaped in the future. And each is plagued by a variety of splits amongst its theorists and practitioners, differences in what is conceived to be its ideology and how to best make that ideology work in the "real" world

Despite the good intentions and solid theoretical basis of both movements, people being people and movements being movements, rifts and factions appear almost immediately. Both movements sprung from a dissatisfaction with the way some aspects of society worked (and didn't work). The original ADR theorists were concerned with obvious malfunctions in the legal system and the original Green theorists were concerned with blatant dysfunctions in modern governance. Each

group of theorists saw a need for an entirely new way of doing things, a radical departure from the status quo.

Almost as soon as people began applying these theories, serious differences of opinions cropped up as to what direction each movement should go. In the ADR movement, one set of differences that emerged involved advocates of community-based mediation and those of court- and profession-based mediation. In the Greens, a growing division is between the "Fundis" and the "Realos." In each case, the former viewed by the latter as being too idealistic and ineffective and latter viewed by the former as being too eager to compromise important principles for the sake of gaining and using power for their own benefit, yes, "selling out the movement" and being part of the problem instead of the solution

There are several general opinions about the nature and future of these separations in the ranks. First, there are those of the cynics. They say such divisions are natural and that it is inevitable that the idealists will succumb to the pragmatists. Jerold Auerbach (1983), applying a theory of historical determinism to the development of conflict resolution processes in the United States, observes that various buds of community-based mediation and conciliation have periodically withered on the American vine and that the law profession has successfully managed to overcome or coopt such

utopian models regularly. In his view, it is all but certain that community mediation efforts in the U.S.A. are doomed to be overwhelmed by the irresistible power of the law profession. Similar prophecies of doom for the purist Greens are made and generally accepted as being inexorable

Another view is that these differences are indeed inevitable but that they are merely another expression of the universal principles of a socio-political dialectic. From this standpoint, these two factions in each movement are bound to exist and collide, but this tension and opposition will ultimately produce a synthesis that will be a profound step forward.

Whatever the future resolution of this ongoing, disharmony in the ADR and Green movements, we believe that it is interesting useful and perhaps important to identify, describe and analyze the points of confluence between the theories and ideologies emphasized chiefly by the two "purist" wings of these movements, because we see a dynamic and significant connection between them. We think the similarities are worth noting because each movement has a lot to learn from the other and each can help the other maintain a firm rooting despite the divergent directions in which major applications of the theory seem to be heading at the present time.

There are three major areas of similarity we wish to treat, two are obvious and one quite subtle. The clear interconnections in two central principles between some factions of the ADR and Green Movements are: (1) an emphasis on nonviolence and (2) a devotion to democracy. The less obvious similarity between the two movements is a deeper philosophical linkage whereby their new, radical departures in process are potential agents of, or bridges for, major social transformation.

The Principle of Nonviolence

(1) ADR

From the viewpoint of most ADR theorists, the major difference between such forms of ADR as mediation and conciliation versus that of litigation (plus arbitration) and the legal process is that the former is considered to be "non adversarial" and "non-confrontational" while the latter forms are deemed to be verbal warfare and symbolic battle that rely heavily on the use of power and coercion to achieve their purported objectives: the revelation of truth and the attainment of justice.

Consider also the major metaphors attached to practitioners in the mediation process and those in the legal system. We all know

lawyers are embroiled in what is an equivalent to a zero-sum game. The object of going to court is to "win" one for the client. Of course, a good attorney frequently must engage in what may sometimes be an extremely long negotiation process where he/she tries to maximize the settlement for her/his client without resorting to the travails and expense of a trial. However, the emphasis is still on right prevailing over wrong through the threat or use of the force and authority of the judicial process.

The ending of a dispute by the use of judicial fiat, a manifestation of force, often produces resistance and unintended results. For example, at the first Asia Pacific Organization of Mediators conference (in Manila, Philippines, 1985), the delegate from Papua New Guinea (a law school professor) used a then-recent situation there regarding a marital dispute to illustrate this very point.

A wife, unhappy with her culturally defined role, rebelled against the demands placed upon her to serve and care for her husband by leaving him and returning to her family. The matter went to court and the judge decided she must go back to her husband. Her family agreed and she was compelled to move back with her husband.

She was determined, however, to serve him no longer. So she smashed her hands with a rock making them useless for any more household tasks.

The American legal system is replete with similar failures of applied force--even at the systems level: criminal laws designed to deter crime do not seem to deter those bent on committing a crime; child support decrees are frequently ignored rather than obeyed; our forcible rehabilitation system often does not rehabilitate; our punishment system systematically educates people in criminal methods; etc.

Mediation and/or conciliation in the community mediation or purist model is a totally voluntary process with no coercion in the process whatsoever. Parties come to the mediation table because they have been educated to the knowledge that using the force of the legal system may well be counterproductive. They understand that they communicate with the other party (or parties) and reason with them in the hope of forging a mutually agreeable solution in which each wins something. The emphasis here is on a non-coercive process where desired outcome is some vestage of peace and harmony.

Moreover, the fact that the final decision is not imposed by authority and is an agreement worked out peacefully by the parties

themselves is believed to be one of the major factors behind the durability and longevity of voluntarily mediated decisions. Parties who have a long-standing or continuing relationship, who amicably settle a dispute by themselves, with the help of a third party, are not nearly so likely to violate it as those who have had a solution imposed on them.

There is some disagreement among those in the mediation movement, however, about the appropriateness and/or usefulness of having courts and/or other government agencies refer cases to mediation centers for resolution by compelling the disputants to mediate. It is pointed out by those who favor such that this is the only way to make mediation cost effective. Community mediation centers, it is well known, labor hard to convince disputants to try mediation. The case load is low and the amount of time and energy used to bring about a mediation is great.

Courts and other coercive government agencies, on the other hand, have lots of business and they are eager to farm it out in order to reduce their backlogs. Thus, mediation centers that rely heavily on cases coming in from them have much greater case loads. However, when parties come to mediation willingly, without being forced to do so, the mediation process itself is more effective, having a much higher rate of success in helping parties reach an agreement among themselves. Mediation centers that refuse to take

coerced referrals, however, are being consistent with the theory of nonviolence, a keystone in the theory of mediation

(2) The Greens

A major principle of the Green Movement is that nonviolent means must be used to achieve any and/or all political objectives. Nonviolence is thus a major end and means of all Green politics. As an end or goal of the Greens, nonviolence manifests itself in terms of a wide variety of political policy goals that Greens usually support, e.g., nuclear disarmament, disbanding military alliances, peace movements and initiatives, etc.

There is also an element of the Green nonviolence philosophy that believes that nonviolence is a way towards personal growth and existence and they try to apply it generally in all they think and do. This is consistent with the objectives of the mediation movement that speak to the personal empowerment aspects of being a mediator and a peacemaker, and applying what one learns in trying to help others resolve their conflict to one's own life, i.e., all aspects thereof. As one Green theorist puts it, the practice of the Green principle of nonviolence in daily life "can help develop the sense of personal empowerment that is needed to create a different kind of world." (Tokar, p. 123)

The particular methods of nonviolence that Greens preach and use in trying to achieve specific policy objectives include various techniques of non-cooperation and civil disobedience based in part on the principles and tactics developed by Mohatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. The aims of such campaigns are to educate the general populace on the inconsistency and counterproductivity of accepted use of government force to achieve such goals as peace and harmony. This is similar to the use of "reality testing" by mediators to convince parties to use mediation instead of litigation and to help them see the wisdom in settling amongst themselves rather than letting someone in authority dictate a decision to one of them.

(3) Green and ADR Nonviolent Philosophical Convergences

One of the fundamentals of Green thought is the belief in the interconnectedness and interdependence of all aspects of the universe. For the Greens, the adversarial process (whether political or legal) inappropriately dichotomizes right-wrong, winner-loser, good-bad. Such a process also often deepens antagonisms, hatreds, and a desire to fight for the maximization of narrowly defined self interests.

Mediation, on the other hand, incorporates the Green belief that winners and losers cannot be so neatly separated. Parties in any

sort of on-going relationship affect and are affected by the actions of each other. A "winner" in an adversarial situation rarely wins everything. There is always a price to pay. There are repercussions the winner must face even when the victor believes she/he has achieved absolute triumph. To think only of the verdict--and not probable or possible ramifications--is to be shortsighted and leaves one vulnerable to the ingenuity of those seeking ways out of traps or wanting revenge.

The first lesson for Greens in choosing a path to nonviolence then is to recognize that might does not make right and mandates of a higher authority do not guarantee peace. Furthermore, the apparent "powerless" are not always so lacking in power as they may appear. Examples abound throughout the world and throughout history that decisions of the powerful can seldom impose peace on those who feel victimized, abused, or ignored. The wounds will fester and turn into a boil until the problem is treated properly.

The path of nonviolence and towards a nonviolent world for Greens, therefore, incorporates the concept and theory of mediation. The mediation process does not impose decisions. Decisions are made by the disputing parties who listen and hear each other in the process of resolving the dispute. The consequences of actions are discussed, not overlooked, in mediation. In order to have a

successful resolution of the dispute, parties must face the reality of the interconnected and interdependent nature of all disputes and disputants

Taking seriously their principle of social and personal responsibility, Greens can also appreciate that mediation is not only a way to resolve disputes, but also a way of communicating, of listening better, of paying closer attention to the less articulate or the shy, and of modeling peaceful and nonviolent behavior.

Democratic Principles

(1) ADR

Within the ADR movement, those advocating community-based models (pure or hybrid) usually put less emphasis on cost efficiency and reduction of court caseloads than do those following the professional or court referral model. Instead, their emphasis is placed on (a) empowerment of the individuals (disputants mediators); (b) building of community; and (c) sharing in decision-making. Often the community-based models not only utilize non-professionals as mediators, but also involve the volunteers in staff work, outreach, training, and even occasionally in policy making, e.g., being on the board of directors or advisors

(a) All forms of mediation are more democratic in their structure than the judicial or arbitration processes. The heart of the legal system is the hierarchical relationship between the judge and all other actors in the courtroom drama. The judge sits on high, everyone must stand when he/she enters. All are dependent on her/his rulings on motions, objections, and on the relevant and guiding. In non-jury settings, the judge makes the final decision. The lawyers are in an intermediate position between the judge and the disputants, but they are a professional elite, speaking a strange tongue that the disputants barely and/or rarely understand. The people who actually are most involved in the dispute, the disputants, are bit players and nearly bystanders in the courtroom. They are at the bottom of the legal hierarchy, subjected to the professional expertise of their and the other counsel and to the officiousness, expertise and prejudices of the judge

In the mediation process, the disputants own the dispute and are the major players. What they say, what they feel, what they want, is the core of the hearing. The mediator is merely a facilitator of communication and an educator on and guide through the process. final decision belongs to the disputants. They, and only they, have the power to decide how to resolve the conflict, if at all. This is completely non-hierarchical and quintessentially democratic.

Theoretically, disputants are empowered in another way in the mediation process. By listening to the mediator(s) explain the process, they usually learn a new theory and process of resolving their own disputes, one they may utilize in the future. This process can help them deal with painful and sometimes dangerous conflict situations that previously they had to resort to outside assistance (usually professional help) to resolve. This new knowledge is a self-empowerment, and since the people who are coming into the mediation process are usually not professionals themselves, we find that ordinary people are being given important new skills--which is the heart of the democratic principle: power to the people. Consciously and systematically educating the parties in the stages of the mediation process is part of the program and the formal mediation hearing of at least one community mediation program, that of Community Boards in San Francisco.

The theory of community-based mediation also contains an aspect pertaining to the empowerment of the mediators and, in turn, empowerment of the community as well. First, the mediators are community people and they are learning and practicing the important theories and skills of conflict resolution. They absorb more of this than any disputant since they are intensively trained and experience first-hand many situations in which it is successfully applied.

Second, there is a rotation of mediators out of the center. Thus, more and more people in the community gain this knowledge and expertise and begin to utilize it in their own personal lives and in community settings. This further diffuses the skills of dispute resolution throughout the community lessening its dependence on the hierarchical and professionally run systems of conflict resolution like the law and arbitration. Essentially it is democratizing the system of conflict resolution in the community.

Another underlying theory of the Community Boards program is that a community-based mediation program can serve as a catalyst for democratic, grassroots organizing in a community. In other words, resolving individual disputes is not the be-all and end-all of the process. Instead, by rotating volunteers in and out of the program and by developing a community mediation newsletter and outreach program that discussed the nature of the disputes coming into the center for resolution, the community could be alerted to common problems facing it. Indeed, the mediation program becomes an informational clearinghouse on the underlying causes of numerous interpersonal disputes in the community, conflicts that individual people mistakenly think are peculiar to themselves

example, there may be a tremendous lack of parking spaces in a community. Many individual citizens may be fighting with their neighbors, or with people who come to work in the area during the

daytime, over the dearth of parking. These people are all unaware that this is happening regularly around the neighborhood. Under community-based mediation model, the newsletter and word-of-mouth from the center inform the community about the shared problem. This may spur the community to organize as an interest group that pressures its local government to do something about increasing municipal parking in the area. In such a case, the mediation program in the community helped catalyze a democratic, grassroots organization effort

(c) Another way in which community-based mediation programs have tried to promote and test new democratic forms of organization has been to place people from the community onto the policy-making apparatuses of the centers. One of the first to do this was the U.S. Department of Justice pilot project in Venice-Del Mar, California in the late 1970s.

In this project, it was decided to divide the Board Directors in half, with fifty percent comprised of lawyers (since the project co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Bar Association) and half composed of citizens from the Venice-Del Mar area and members of the center's staff. This worked for a while, but after a time the community people and staff stopped attending meetings of the Board of Directors because they felt they were overpowered by "the men in suits.

Another version of this was adopted by the Community Mediation Service of the University of Hawaii in 1979-80 (Slaton and Becker 1981) In this model, the entire Board of Directors was comprised of mediators and staff members of the center. All policy was made by those directly involved in the daily work of the program. Each meeting was chaired by a different member of the Board. All were equal in power, e.g., professors, students, community people. The system worked well and was adopted by the Honolulu Neighborhood Mediation Network, (City and County of Honolulu) in 1980

(2) The Greens

The Greens, who advocate direct democracy, argue that power must also be decentralized in order to allow the significant involvement of the people. It is not enough that the organization be founded on democratic principles, which may still permit control by an elite, but also that power must be dispersed enough so that the grassroots set the agenda and formulate the policies rather than merely endorsing decisions made at a higher level.

The emphasis for the Greens is empowerment of each individual In addressing the key value of "Grassroots Democracy" the Greens ask:

How can we develop systems that allow and encourage us to control the decisions that affect our lives?...How can we

encourage and assist the 'mediating institutions' - family, neighborhood organization, church group, voluntary association, ethnic club - to recover some of the functions now performed by government? How can we relearn the best insights from American traditions of civic vitality, voluntary action, and community responsibility?" (Spretnak, p. 78)

In their views on nonviolence, the German Green Party platform states that "humane goals cannot be achieved by inhumane means." (Programme of the German Green Party, p. 9) The same applies to the Green views on democracy. Democracy cannot be achieved through nondemocratic means. Therefore, not only in their policy platforms, but also in their organizing, the Greens strive to apply democratic principles.

One of their most famous organizing strategies is to rotate leadership or representative positions. They are also quite sensitive to cultural and societal advantages often given to Caucasian males (advantages that Caucasian males, even in the Greens, frequently fail to recognize.) As Cara Lamb of the East Bay Greens points out, studies have demonstrated that even when teachers in research situations have been told to deliberately give girls more attention than boys, actual tabulation shows the girls get 30%, while the boys get 70%. Her analysis is:

"most women grow up believing that what they say is not important, that they will not be listened to, and that they are entitled to much less air time than men are. Men grow up believing that what they say is important, and that they are entitled to say it." (East Bay Green Alliance, Vol. 4, No. 4, February-March, 1989, p. 4)

Minorities in society share in the experience of being ignored and overlooked throughout their socialization process.

Some of the more enlightened Greens have developed specific techniques to remedy culturally and socially established inequities. There are often requirements that representation or leadership roles be shared equally among females and males. Also recognizing Lamb's assertion that "open discussion" is not enough to offset years of training (that what one has to say is not worthwhile), speaking rotation practices are often utilized.

One rotation method passes a pipe to each person in the room. person holding the pipe is allowed to speak uninterrupted. In order to allow time to digest what has been said, sometimes a period of time (30 seconds or so) of silence is observed. The silence not only allows for reflection but also presents a more comfortable entry quiet people to participate. Intense verbal exchanges, where articulate or aggressive speakers fight for the floor, frequently

deter some thoughtful but non-aggressive people from expressing their views. Lamb describes another speaking rotation method, employed by a Green bioregional group, that addressed gender imbalance in discussions. The group has implemented a procedure of alternating between male and female speakers. Only a woman is allowed to speak after a male has spoken and vice versa. Using this procedure, Lamb maintains, forces everyone to be conscious of how much men have dominated meetings prior to the implementation of methods specifically designed to encourage and facilitate participation by women.

Betty Zisk, John Resenbrink, and Carla Dickstein have remarked on ways to keep Green organizations democratic and open to newcomers. (Green Letter, Vol. 4, No.1 One way is to hold orientation sessions prior to meetings to educate new members about the history and bring them up to date on the organization's procedures and policies. Without such support for potential participants, it is very easy for democracy to get lost and relapse into reliance on the experience and knowledge of the established members. Another means of promoting democracy and expanding participation is to rotate "housekeeping tasks" among the membership using a committee whose members serve for staggered terms. It allows new members to work with older members and to gain the expertise they will then pass on to others.

A key Green value, one also fundamental to their democratic principles, is the respect for (and not mere tolerance of) diversity. In order to demonstrate this respect, Greens do not presume to speak for all, or to homogenize, cultural differences. The best spokespeople for any group, from the Green perspective, is one of that group. Rather than lead the struggle for minorities, the oppressed, or the victimized, Greens are most consistent playing a supportive role by asking those they wish to help what their needs are and how the Greens can help. Learning to listen, rather than having all the answers, empowers and demonstrates respect for others. Both empowerment and mutual respect contribute to a healthy democratic environment.

(3) Green and ADR Democratic Philosophical Convergences

Once again we find that in both the Green and ADR movements, the same central philosophical principle is intertwined as both an end and a mean. As with the principle of nonviolence being both the goal and the process of the Greens and the ADR movement, so it is with democracy too. However, in this case, it is only the community-based mediation model that works in this way.

Of course, the heart and soul of the mediation process, in all its models and variations, comes in the lateral (rather than

vertical) power relationships that constitute the hearing itself
mediators, in their introduction, are supposed to tell the
disputants that they will have equal time to vent their emotions,
explain their version of the dispute, and present their opinion as to
how the dispute can be best resolved. Mediators are aware that they
should try to encourage those who are too quiet to speak up and those
feel in a lesser power relationship to understand, appreciate and
the power they have in the mediation process itself

At the same time, the community mediation movement's goals are
to democratize community processes through empowering its mediators
and disputants, and informing and germinating democratic organization
in the community. In this part of the ADR movement, the democratic
aspects of the process converge with its ends. They are part of and
and the same.

Similarly with the Green Movement--democracy is a means to a
democratic end. The learning and utilization of mediation skills is
extremely useful for Greens to integrate a number of their key
principles: grassroots democracy, respect for diversity, personal and
social responsibility, nonviolence, decentralization, and
postpatriarchal values. Mediation not only can provide the skills
but also the method for democratic organizationa and the promotion of
democratic values

In order to advance the Green vision of democracy, one must learn to listen, as well as speak; to hear, not merely listen; to work toward consensus, not get stuck into self-righteous positions; to empower others, not decide or act for them; and to practice democracy, not merely preach it. The practices of community-based mediation provide the tools for the task.

Agents of Transformation

We have been told by many respected and perceptive observers analysts over the past few decades that we are living in a transformational period, an epoch of drastic change, a "paradigm shift," that comes but infrequently in human history. Conventional mores, systems and technologies are being challenged by the drag and weight of their own dysfunctions as well as by new mores, systems technologies that portend potential solutions to the problems caused by the ancient regime

There can be little doubt that humankind presently is confronted by a host of severe, if not critical, situations--a plague of crises. By way of example: Acid rain is killing forests and lakes throughout the Northern hemisphere; gaping holes are being eaten into the ozone layer by manmade chemicals and gasses; a "greenhouse effect" threatens a global warming trend that is the gateway to unimaginable

catastrophes; the oceans and aquifers are being polluted at an increasing rate; the global population explosion continues; there are swelling mountains of nuclear waste and toxic wastes with nowhere to put them; rainforests are being depleted and deserts are expanding; incomprehensible sums are expended on military hardware and applications; third world nations go deeper and deeper into unpayable debt; worldwide drug addiction grows exponentially; and on and on.

All this combined, places mounting strain on the biosphere and all polities, taxing their ability to sustain and support human life and commerce as we have known it for centuries. This places vast multitudes of the earth's populace at great risk of their health safety and survival and in increasingly inflammable conflictual situations, from the interpersonal to the international levels of human interaction

At the same time, there are new technologies being invented and designed that have some power to alleviate many of these crises. Sadly, though, they aren't utilized sufficiently to do so. Existing socio-economic-political structures appear to be incapable or unwilling to promote their development, deployment and employment and thus of lessening the amount or degree of suffering and/or crises. Nevertheless, a growing number of people, who understand that something drastically different needs be done urgently are dedicated

to the testing of and experimentation with new social technologies that are capable of ameliorating and coping with these problems if, and only if, they are understood and accepted by large publics and applied universally and massively.

Much of this work is transformational in character. Those involved in such enterprises are conceptualizing ideas and innovating techniques that can help the human race pass through these perilous times into a safer, more peaceful, healthier age. Yet, the work they do now is useful under present circumstances even though it is seen as oddball, wrongheaded, utopian, marginal and/or impractical by those who cling to the status quo and are conditioned by the values, habits and perspectives of a failing past.

Unfortunately, the work these people are doing takes so much to seed and nurture, and the odds against it succeeding in the inhospitable clime of the present are so slim, that persons collaborating transformationally in one area are often unaware of else is being done in other fields of endeavor as well as the common bonds of principle, and of struggle, that they share with one another.

We have done a great deal of work in the field of conflict resolution and we have been intimately acquainted with the growing

pains of two Green organizations in the United States. We have had many close interactions with persons in both areas and have come to realize how little those who toil in conflict resolution know about the Greens and vice versa. And this despite the fact, as we have noted in this essay, that there are so many crucial points of intersection in their principles and goals.

This essay, then, is our first effort to strengthen the transformational elements in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution and those in the Green movement by demonstrating to them both that they are not working alone and that, indeed, a parallel movement exists. Each has much to learn from the other's successes and each can take heart in the fact that other good things are happening. The transformational movement is an emerging mosaic. This essay simply draws attention to the numerous attractions between two disengaged parts that need an introduction.

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