

The art of the Black man

Photographer's work depicts more than just provocative pictures. Greg McNeal seeks to provide positive images and breakdown stereotypes of the Black male.



...to town this weekend to sign copies of his poster series. Shown: An image from his Lost Legends Series.

by Tim Butler
Tri-State Defender Entertainment Editor

Greg McNeal, an African-American photographer living in Los Angeles, will make two appearances in Memphis this weekend. First up is a poster-signing at Club Allusions on Friday night at 7 p.m., followed by a series of workshops from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Saturday. (For more information, contact Anthony Hardaway at 274-0163.)

McNeal is a Black, gay male, self-taught master of the lens. Although some of his images drip with sensuality and eroticism, there is much more to McNeal than simply the remarkable ability to capture the Black male figure in evocative poses.

McNeal is an ardent believer in the power of photography - art in fact - that can promote a more positive image of the Black male to an audience that can use this medium as a way to uplift the race.

Reached by telephone at his home in Los Angeles on Sunday, Sept. 7, McNeal explained how he was troubled with the images he found which depicted the Black male. This was when he first moved to Los Angeles about twelve years ago. "I was checking out Black images of us one day," he said as he remembers thumbing through magazines and watching television. "There were no positive images of us"

This was during a time period when crack cocaine and gangs were prevalent in the City of Angeles and were among the main things which helped shape the media's image of Black men. Everywhere you turned there were Black men in gangs or victims of gangs and Black men whose lives were ruined by drugs. Over on the fashion front, things were not much different - there were virtually no positive images of Black men. For McNeal, this was unacceptable.

Lucky to catch up with the photographer before he was off to celebrate his 38th birthday on Sunday, McNeal told me he was subsequently inspired to do something about offering a more uplifting image of the Black male. He therefore, taught himself how to shoot pictures and went about his way doing what he could to change the way the world saw the Black man.

Around 1994, he told me nobody wanted to photograph the Black man. And when he talked to professionals about the situation, they told him that nobody was interested in the Black male. The Black male was not worth it. How could this be?

As a native of South Fulton, Tenn. McNeal said he was shocked by some of the things he saw when he first moved to Los Angeles. And he had a perfect vantage point, as he did an assortment of odd jobs to pay the rent at first. In South Central he explained it was sad to see how we as Black men saw ourselves. The lure of getting money at the expense of all else was one of the things that troubled him. Where would this leave the future of the Black man? "It was kind of hard getting through some days seeing the kinds of things I saw."

One of the problems was the attitude of some Black men only caring about what they could achieve financially with little regard for the rest of the race. "God blessed some people so that they could give back," McNeal believes; but this was not happening. The underlying problem as he saw it was that Black men didn't value their own lives - consequently they couldn't care about anyone else's. We must change the way the world - and particularly our own people - see the Black male.

Disturbed by what he saw as stereotypical images of the Black male in the media, McNeal chose the Black man as his subject matter. A lot of times, according to this photographer, when a White man turns his camera lens on a Black man the resulting photograph features poses that are somewhat feminine and too flamboyant. "I often wondered why we can't see a strong Black man from a Black perspective."

As a result, he set about teaching himself how to take pictures. He chose photography as his medium because photography depicts real life and is of the moment - unlike sculpture or

painting or what have you. Photography has a timeless quality that he likes.

"We have to start to see the real of who we are - not cartoon characters," McNeal points out. He taught himself the profession of photography because, "there was something I wanted my pictures to say and nobody could teach me that." McNeal wanted to display such qualities as unity, strength and pride with his work. And he's still learning. "Everyday I learn something new," he says.

In the late 90s, McNeal's reputation grew due to a series of public service campaigns for Los Angeles- and San Francisco-based AIDS organizations. In July 2000, he was chosen as the photojournalist to cover the XXIII International Conference on HIV and AIDS in Durban, South Africa. In addition, he shot a series of projects for The African-American AIDS Policy and Training Institute and other organizations, including STOP AIDS, Minority AIDS Project, Spectrum & Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science.

"We have to start to see a work of art in everyday people," McNeal says of what he does. "By doing so, it's hard to put a bullet in the back of someone's head" - as you would then value that person's life. And this is what he tries to convey - the beauty of everyday, common Black men.

McNeal says most of his subjects are not gay but straight men, married with wives and children. But they all are everyday, ordinary men that work in the grocery store...deliver packages...deliver pizza - whatever. "I wanted to make that person a work of art." They are not professional models. But yet these men deliver star status when McNeal's lens captures them on film.

McNeal wants his photos to overcome stereotypes and break down taboos. "Black men fear being homo-sexual in art and we shouldn't fear that," he says. Additionally, there is a fear of being too strong...too sexy when it comes to Black men. And we need to overcome that, too. More than anything, he says, "we need to change the way we see each other. We have to give value back to each other."

His photos help to deliver this message. McNeal admits he wants his work to be timeless. "We have to put images out there that kids can look at 100 years from now and say, 'Now, that's what unity...strength...pride looks like'." As he explains it, "My work is a blue print. There will be others to follow that will do greater things" based on his work. And that's the whole purpose.

In fact, "everybody should be finding their own way of helping these kids," he admonishes. But we are afraid that they will be better than we are. Which is tragic. On the other hand, "White people always inspire their own future." But sadly we don't.

What is it like being a Black gay man today? By and large, he says, Black gay men are facing the same stereotypes as before. In fact, some men have gone further into the closet, he believes. Bisexuality has become vogue because it is often easier for a Black gay man to declare himself as bisexual rather than gay. "It's more acceptable being bisexual...it's cooler. It's better than being completely gay," he says some men believe. And this shouldn't be the case.

For some reason, McNeal believes, "we have been trained to be afraid of that which looks most like us." Sadly, the church plays a big part in perpetuating this image. "Most of us go here to hide," the photographer notes. "But we need to quit hiding behind the church because God isn't going to allow us to do it anymore. People can only hide for so long."

It's time Black gay men stood up for what and who they are. "The battle you don't fight today your children will fight tomorrow."

"Freedom can't come unless you start to trust each other," he believes. And that's what we must learn to do - trust each other to be who and what we are.

The man behind the man - photographer Greg McNeal



RANDOM NOTES

by Tim Butler
Entertainment Editor

Football kicks off with concert



Franklin

It's that time again - football's back! And the first game of the new season made a big splash, introduced with a pre-game music fest broadcast last Thursday originating from the National Mall in Washington, D.C. But for all of the hype - and there was plenty - NFL Kick-off Live failed to deliver.

Looking nowhere near as garish as we're accustomed to seeing, **Mary J. Blige** provided a true highlight. Has she lost weight? She looked much thinner than on previous occasions - and she was better made-up. She practically sparkled!

Anyway, wearing a pair of killer black stiletto boots and blue jeans, Blige stirred it up for the crowd in fine fashion, proving again there's plenty of talent underneath that rough exterior - which is beginning to show signs of softening.

Could those itty-bitty micro-shorts **Britney Spears** wore underneath her longer pants have been any shorter? (Answer: No...and not have the show still be a family program!)

Attired better than we've seen her look in a long, long time (read MORE COVERED UP) the always excellent sounding **Aretha Franklin** delivered the goods and then some. Sadly, she only sang one song, while all of the other artists on the program sang more than one. And Ms. Franklin came on last! Show organizers are probably to blame. No one of Franklin's stature in the business should be relegated to only one song and have it seemingly eclipsed at the tail-end of any show!! Perhaps, true Aretha fans will get some satisfaction when the Queen of Soul's new album drops soon.

Suit settled over Aaliyah's death?

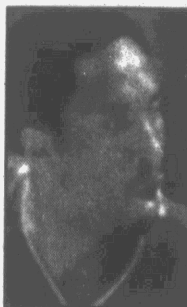
Though it won't bring Aaliyah back, reportedly her parents, Michael and Diane Haughton, have reached a settlement in wrongful death suits against her label, Virgin Records, as well as several video production companies and the owner/operator of the twin-engine Cessna plane that crashed with Aaliyah on board in August 2001.

Word is the suits were tentatively settled earlier this summer. A family spokesperson says he expects everything to be finalized soon and (naturally) filed under terms not to be made public.

It's not much consolation, but it must be difficult drawing a line that determines a human being's worth when they die prematurely. And it's got to be more difficult when it appears the deceased is as popular in death as she was when she was living...and was making movies and records and such!

(The world is such a funny place and when you throw the legal system into the equation, life becomes even more strange!)

Here comes the judge; there goes the cameras



Bryant

The judge says cameras will NOT be allowed in the courtroom during Kobe Bryant's Oct. 9 preliminary hearing.

At that time, prosecutors will outline their case against the L.A. Lakers star accused of sexual assault. It will also be determined at that time whether or not there's enough evidence to take the case to trial.

You can be sure of one thing, though, if it does go to trial the question of allowing cameras into the courtroom will most assuredly come up again. (What's truly interesting is the fact that if this was simply "Joe Blow Ordinary Citizen" being accused of sexual assault instead of an internationally known NBA basketball player with star charisma and a net worth in the millions of dollars - would anybody care about the outcome let alone whether or not cameras should be allowed in the courtroom to cover the action? The answer: NO. Will celebrity worship ever end in a world where so much money can be made putting people up on pedestals and then knocking them off? The answer: NO)

MUSIC WORLD

by Tim Butler
Entertainment Editor

Come taste their Ice Cream flavors



The Johnsons

Once the background singers for the Isley Brothers, new R&B duo JS has a debut album, *Ice Cream*, and a concert tour to their credit. The sisters, Kandy and Kim Johnson, are opening for the R. Kelly

concert tour, which visits Memphis Friday at the Mid-South Coliseum.

Ice Cream, the first radio track off the CD, was produced, written and arranged by R. Kelly - as were the second radio song, *Love Angel, Bye-Bye, Slow Grind, Half, Stay Right Here, Sister*, and *Ice Cream (Remix)*.

While still in elementary school, the two Los Angeles natives began performing together as The Johnson Sisters. Their musical training stretches back to the church choirs they've graded since they first learned to sing.

It was the Isleys' musical director that had heard about JS through persistent word of mouth. "The Isley Brothers needed background singers for a tour, and we were asked to audition," Kandy recalls. "During the audition, Ronald Isley came into the room. He listened to us sing for a while, and then he hired us on the spot. We were so excited!"

But having grown a reputation singing gospel, the switch to R&B was a bit off-putting for the girls and their parents. They got used to the notion and subsequently launched their own careers as a solo act, apart from background group.

For their inspiration, JS says they looked to their longtime idols in the music business: Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder.

Music that's really out of this world!



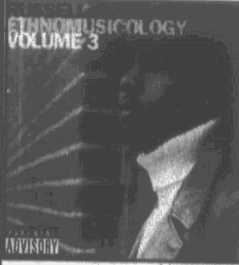
Humankind's interest in space has been ongoing since the beginning of time. The dream of exploring space was shared by generations long before that

first memorable flight. Greek myths like that of Daedalus and Icarus flying too close to the sun on wings made of wax, the adventures of Jules Verne and the imagination of H.G. Wells have helped inspire us along the way. Likewise, the questions regarding life on other planets, Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) and extraterrestrials have been mystifying us for eons. Stories of the "Foo-fighters" in the early 1940s to the later files of the U.S. Government's "Project Blue Book" have kept our interests piqued.

Music for Little People is leaving the history to the experts...and is taking the more humorous approach to the space issue, by releasing the light-hearted *Hey, Mr. Spaceman*.

Many of these silly favorites are culled from history itself, including *We're Going UFO-ing* (Jimmy Durante), *Mr. Spaceman* (The Byrds), *Humans From Earth* (T-Bone Burnett), *Flying Saucer Attack* (The Rezillos), *Two Little Men in a Flying Saucer* (Ella Fitzgerald), and *Planet Claire* (B-52s).

Blending jazz with hip-hop



Nominated for a Grammy, trumpeter/composer Russell Gunn is back with another dose of *Ethnomusicology* - this time it's Volume 3.

Gunn was born in Chicago on Oct. 20, 1971. In 1980, the Gunn family relocated to East St. Louis, Ill. Russell began to play the trumpet in the fourth grade. His cousin Anthony Wiggins was the lead trumpeter in the school band, and he encouraged Russell to join up.

Although he soon developed a yen for the band's jazz repertoire, Russell's true passion was hip-hop, the music of his generation. For

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Students outraged with administration

Student leaders speak out, plan to stage protests
 Alison C. Moxley
 Staff Writer

An emergency student issues forum was held on campus last week, and an emergency press conference was held Saturday to develop a plan of action to overturn decisions by former Provost William Swart. Representatives from the Pitt County Coalition Against Racism, ECU chapter of the NAACP and the Black Student Union expressed their outrage about unethical hiring practices, corruption and suspicious raises in the office of the provost. The main issue at the forum was the reassignment of the former Director of the Ledonia Wright Cultural Center, Nell Lewis. Lewis served as director for three years but was abruptly reassigned in April by Swart. "She was given one day and three hours to pack up years of tireless service and exit the cultural center," said Knick Dixon, president of the Black Student Union.

Lewis was reassigned to the position of outreach liaison for Joyner Library. "They put her in a corner on the second floor of the library behind a stack of books," said Charmaine Ford, president of the ECU chapter of the NAACP. The position of outreach liaison is a new position that was created when Lewis was assigned to it. In April protests over Lewis' reassignment were heard from organizations and professional colleagues all over the country who praised her for her accomplishments. "Since she took over as director of the Ledonia Wright Cultural Center, ECU has been acknowledged as having one of the premier centers in the country," said Fred Hord, executive director of the Association for Black Cultural Centers. Lewis remains positive about her misfortune and hopes to continue to lead by example. "I have spent my entire professional career as an educator helping to prepare young people to successfully experience life's challenges, and one of the best

ways to teach them is to let them see me do it," said Lewis. During the press conference, students discussed forming a truth commission that would investigate administrative wrong doings and meet with the Chancellor to discuss resolutions. Student leaders were also outraged at the appointment of Bertus Ferreira to serve as the director of international affairs. He took over after the reassignment of the former director, Rita Gonzales. Ferreira served with the South African police in the 1970's during the system of racial segregation known as apartheid. "Nobody who participated in a system as awful and inhumane as apartheid can be expected to carry out the mission of the Office of International Affairs," said Randy B. Royal, chairperson of PCCAR. Ferreira no longer serves as the director of international affairs, but teaches in the criminal justice department. Ford also described an incident where the ECU police stormed a Students Working Against Trials and Tribulations meeting,

blocked all exits, and required the students to sign their names before leaving the building. William Worthington, Jr. who is on the executive board of the Pitt County NAACP was present at the raid. "They detained me and Ms. Lewis for over 30 minutes," Worthington said. "She was bringing positive exposure to the ECU campus at time of her reassignment. We have no one to fear in the pursuit of justice in this matter. Members of the NAACP and BSU are looking to reverse the actions taken by Swart during his time as provost. It has been reported that Swart actively recruited Staff from ODU to ECU. During the press conference, it was alleged that Swart more than doubled their salaries and increased his own salary from \$175,000 to \$200,000 at a time when there was no state money available for raises. UNC system. President Molly Broad approved the \$25,000 increase in Swart's salary. Swart was reassigned Friday to a faculty Position and replaced by

James Smith, executive assistant to the chancellor and philosophy professor. Dennis Mitchell, a senior and the President Of the Independent Movement of Independent Thinkers, said that student leaders will not back down from the issues. "We're not going to back down until we get a resolution, Mitchell said. Mitchell said students have already sent certified letters to the vice chancellor of student life and other administrators asking for the reinstatement of Lewis to her former position as well as a number of other requests. They plan to stage nonviolent protests. "If we don't get a response from our request we plan to go to any means necessary to get what we want," Mitchell said.

This writer can be contacted at news@theeastcarolinian.com

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Althea Gibson Tennis Pioneer Dies at 76

AP Photo
 Gibson, a sports pioneer who broke tennis' color barrier in the 1950s as the first black entrant and champion at Wimbledon and the U.S. national tournament, died Sunday. She was 76.

Gibson, also the first black player on the LPGA Tour, helped pave the way for later stars such as Arthur Ashe, Venus and Serena Williams, and Tiger Woods.

"I am grateful to Althea Gibson for having the strength and courage to break through the racial barriers in tennis," Venus Williams said Sunday. "Her accomplishments set the stage for my success, and through players like myself, Serena, and many others to come, her legacy will live on."

President Bush issued a statement Monday praising Gibson's spirit, determination, and skill.

"In breaking the racial barrier in championship tennis, she furthered America's progress in recognizing individuals for their character and abilities, not their skin color," he said.

Gibson, seriously ill for several years, died of complications from a severe infection and respiratory illness, according to a spokesman at East Orange General Hospital.

As health problems plagued Gibson in recent years, she isolated herself and spoke to few people. She didn't attend a ceremony marking her 75th birthday at last year's U.S. Open or the 1997 dedication of that tournament's new Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Black Politics

continued from front page

According to Dr. Jeffries, the captains of American industry had begun to realize that Blacks were turning the corner on achieving true Black political power, which had very little to do with voting in Black politicians. "Voting is not politics, it is just an aspect of the political

process," he said. "We arrived in the 1900s believing that a vote could get us into the mainstream of American life, and that is because our analysis of the great compromises of 1775, when Jefferson decided on the side of slavery, and the compromise of 1876, when during the Hays-Tilden election, there was an agreement fashioned to take political power away from Blacks. He said what

really happened was that Whites decided how to fashion our politics to give them more power, and how to design our economics, so it would work for them.

"We are still not understanding the political dynamics of Booker T. Washington, who told Teddy Roosevelt, give us the means to earn a living, and we won't argue for social quality, and W.E.B. DuBois, who said no way do we

take a backseat on the issue of social equality."

"We are not understanding the political dynamic of Marcus Garvey and the godfather of Black political thought in America, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, who said own your businesses, own your schools, control your community and your families," Dr. Jeffries stressed.

He said that it was the Black

Power movement of the early 1900s that led to the political dynamics that brought Adam Clayton Powell Jr. to Congress in 1945, and later was the driving force to Minister Louis Farrakhan's call for the Million Man March in 1995.

(This article is the first in a two-part series. Next week: The Institutionalization of the Black Agenda: Adam Clayton Powell Jr. to 2003.)

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Visit from the Motherland . . . pictured above is Pastor James Jamin from Africa, (far left) who delivered an 8am morning message at the Philippi Church where the Pasto is Bishop R. Royal. (far right). Joining them (center) is Sister Helen Bryant who was instrumental in Pastor Jamin's arrival.
 photo by Bro Jim Rouse

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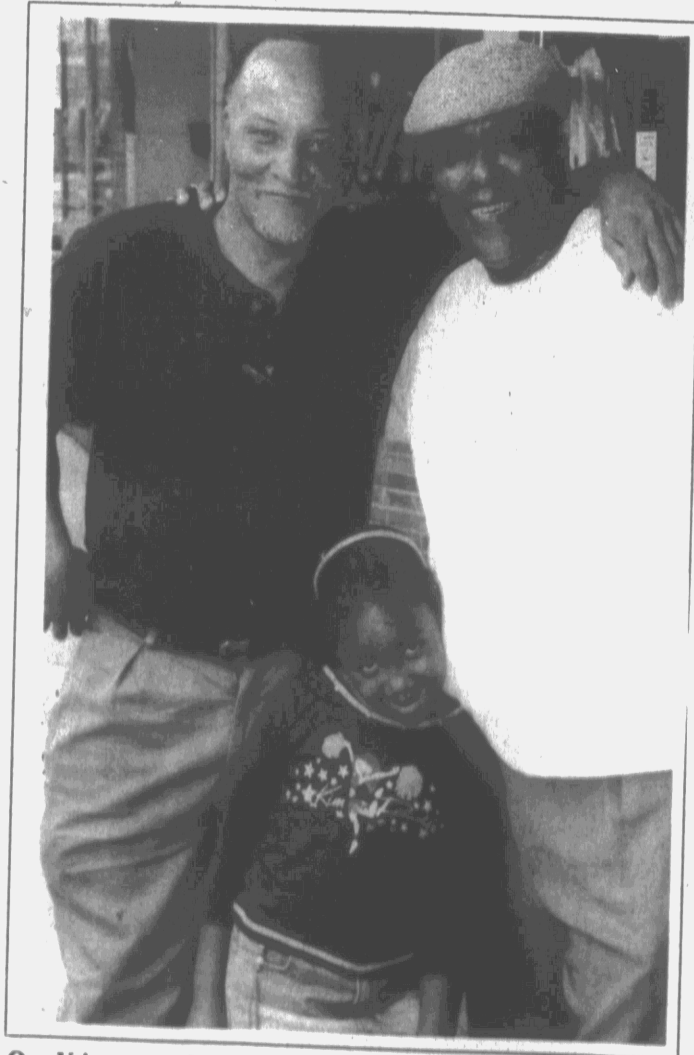
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Our Voices . . . Guy Simms (left) and Lorenzo Bryant have both been voices of distinction on the air ways of Joy 1340. Simms, now editor of River City News and Minister Bryant, video music producer, Minority Voice TV Show, are continuing to be dynamic voices for us as little Ms Dominique (Bryant's daughter) gives us a precious little smile between.
 photo by Bro Michael Adams

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From The Desk Of Mrs Beatrice Maye



Mrs. Beatrice Maye

To the editor,
Happiness is still home made. Home is the Polar point of civilization around which all else revolves. When home is strong and vital, schools, churches, and government will be strong and vigorous. But when the homes of any community are riddled with immorality, lack of discipline, evidence no real love, depend on material values alone, fail to teach respect for people, then there is little that schools and churches and government can do. No nation has ever been able to survive the breakdown of the family. Nations survive military defeat,

depression, famine, flood, fire, governmental changes, but when homes breakdown, so do schools, churches, government, and everything else that is worthwhile.

Home is the beginning point of everything. Here life makes up its mind. It is not the beginning place of biological life, but of moral, ethical, mental, spiritual, and emotional life as well. Parents have the very first chance to affect the feelings, the beliefs, the ideas of the child. Someone has wisely said that parents have done at least half of all they can do for their child by the time he is six! The home fulfills many functions, but there are three primary ones: it provides sustenance for children and teaches them the essential art of self-preservation; it provides the first lessons in social living; it gives an education in fundamental values. Home is where life makes up its mind. The home is where love is learned. All people need love, and all people want love. It is on the basis of love that the ills of the world and the family will be solved. Without love, we lose the will to live.

Do You Know Your A B C S?

1. ACCEPT YOUR GOODNESS, YOUR BEAUTY, YOUR VALUE, AND YOUR WORTH!
2. BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.
3. CHOOSE FOR YOURSELF ONLY THOSE THINGS THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOU!
4. DISCIPLINE YOURSELF TO ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST AND TO DO IT ON TIME!
5. EXCELLENCE, NOT EXCESS, IS THE KEY!
6. FAITH AND FEARLESSNESS FUEL YOUR DREAMS.
7. GREATNESS IS THE STUFF YOU ARE MADE OF, ACT LIKE YOU KNOW!
8. HONESTY KEEPS YOU FREE OF GUILT AND SHAME!
9. INTUITION IS THE TEACHING FROM WITHIN; PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU FEEL!

10. JOY IS WHAT YOU FEEL WHEN YOU LOVE YOURSELF FIRST!
11. KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO FREEDOM!
12. LOVE IS WHAT YOU ARE, NOT WHAT YOU GIVE OR GET!
13. MISTAKES ARE LESSONS THAT YOU NEED TO LEARN!
14. NEVER SAY NEVER! NEW DAYS BRING NEW IDEAS AND NEW BEGINNINGS!
15. ORDER IS THE LAW THAT PUTS YOU WHERE YOU NEED TO BE - WHEN YOU NEED TO BE THERE!
16. PLAN PRAYERFULLY. PREPARE PURPOSEFULLY. PURSUE PERSISTENTLY!
17. QUIET TIME IS NECESSARY FOR A POWERFUL MIND!
18. RESPECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS WILL DO THE SAME!

19. SELF IS THE MOST IMPORTANT YOU HAVE TO GIVE!
20. TRUST YOURSELF AND THE PROCESS IF LIFE!
21. UNEXPECTED DOORS ARE OPEN!
22. VICTORY IF THE PRIZE!
23. WISDOM IS USING WHAT YOU HAVE!
24. EXPECT THE BEST ALWAYS!
25. YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!
26. ZEALOUSLY NURTURE, HONOR, AND LOVE YOURSELF!

4. Life's Rules
Love yourself.
Tell yourself the truth.
Tell the truth to everyone all of the time. Take care of yourself first. Don't stay mad more than five minutes. Do all things in love.
When I play by the rules I win.
5. Today, I am willing to CHILL! To be alone and grow in a special way.
6. Chillin' is quiet time that you spend getting in touch with how you feel and what you want.
7. Find a quiet place where you know you will not be disturbed for at least 15 minutes.
8. The All Powerful, All Knowing, Creator of All Life, sees You just as You are.
9. Do I see the real me, or do I see what others think about me?
10. It only takes a Dream! When you have a dream, good things happen through You, to You, and All Around You!

FROM: DON'T GIVE IT AWAY! By Iyanla Vanzant Remember:

1. Being alone is a special time.
2. Stay in peace, not in pieces.
3. Where the mind goes, the behind follows

Not content with "cornering the market" on the funeral business here in Memphis, Wilburn then set about the business of expanding into other markets. (Courtesy photos)

The life of Emma Currin Wilburn 1876 - 1937

She was all about business



by Arthur L. Webb
Special to the Tri-State Defender

It is unlikely that former slaves, Hudson and Harriet Currin, ever had any idea that Emma, the eighth born of their 13 children, would go on to become one of the most successful and astute businesswomen in the southern United States. The elder Currins were tenant farmers who lived just outside Halls, Tenn., and died soon after their youngest children reached adulthood — before they could see what adult life would hold for any of them.

By the time Emma, who was born June 27, 1876, reached the age of 35, she had become the mother of five children but had also been widowed twice. Unlike her parents, however, who never experienced material prosperity or owned property, the industrious Emma had become proprietress of a small hotel in Halls by 1910.

Also around 1910, Jacob Currin, one of Emma's nephews moved to Memphis and soon became associated with the Life & Casualty Insurance Company of Tennessee. Possibly encouraged by the beginnings of success experienced by her nephew in the big city, Emma, moved here around 1911 with her five children Hudson, Sadie B. and Curtis Barbee, Minnie and Johnson Rideout.

Soon after arriving here, she found employment with the Zion Cemetery Company. The president of the company was Henry Shepard and the vice president was Harry Wilburn, Sr. As a result of her affiliation with the company, Emma met a relative of Wilburn's, Andrew Wilburn. The two began dating and married in 1912.

Emma Wilburn continued her employment with the Zion organization after her marriage but then tragedy struck again. Her husband, Andrew, was employed with the Illinois Central Railroad and had been involved in a feud with a fellow employee of the railroad company. On September 10, 1914, the feud came to a head and Emma's husband was shot and killed by the co-worker, Charles Hill.

Saddened by the loss of her third husband, but undaunted in her pursuit of success, Ms. Wilburn combined the insurance proceeds she received as a result of her late husbands with savings she had accumulated from her job at the cemetery company and in 1918 bought out the interest in the Carson Funeral Company owned by Samuel Carson. The company had been in business for approximately 13 years and had become one of the most successful businesses of its kind in the city.

Ms. Wilburn acquired a property that had formerly housed a grocery business run by Italian immigrant, Frank Bononcini, at the northeast corner of Georgia Avenue and South Orleans Street. For the next two years Wilburn operated her business at that location. Her eldest son, Hudson Barbee who received his training with the firm of Campbell & Wiggins, went to work for his mother as the funeral establishment's embalmer.

In 1920, Ms. Wilburn acquired a property at 913 Mississippi Blvd. which also served as the family residence and was joined in the business by her other children, Sadie Barbee and Minnie, Johnson H. and Curtis Rideout.

By the early 1930s, the Emma Wilburn Funeral Home had become one of the most successful businesses of its kind in Memphis. In addition, her son, Hudson, was now operating a related business that she helped him establish, the Barbee Casket Company, which had become very successful. By all accounts,

Wilburn's business was giving the more recognized firm of T.H. Hayes & Sons as well as that of his nephew, S.W. Qualls (Qualls was the son of Hayes' sister), "a run for their money."

The Emma Wilburn trademark was her method of funeral escort. She owned a beautiful white horse that she personally rode, complete with full riding habit, in front of each procession as it made its way to the final resting place of the deceased.

In 1932, Ms. Wilburn further broadened her influence in the funeral business by assisting her daughter, Cutis, in establishing the Cutis Thomas Funeral Home that was located on South Lauderdale Street.

In January of 1933 she sold the Emma Wilburn Funeral Home to National Burial Association, a White-owned insurance operation which in turn chartered Southern Funeral Home and operated at the Mississippi Blvd. location for a few years before relocation to the present location on Vance Avenue. For many years, African Americans have questioned whether this funeral home is Black-owned. Within the lines of this story lies the answer.

Wilburn then completed her package two months later by acquiring 75 acres of land on Horn Lake Road in southwest Shelby County and established New Park Cemetery.

Not content with "cornering the market" on the funeral business here in Memphis, Wilburn then set about the business of expanding into other markets. In 1935, she helped her son Johnson Rideout, open a funeral home in California. During her preparation to fly to Los Angeles for the grand opening another side of Wilburn became evident. When she attempted to purchase her ticket and board an American Airlines plane, she was told that African Americans were not allowed to travel from Memphis on that airline. Refusing to accept this blatant discrimination, she immediately wired the airline headquarters complaining of the racist treatment and was subsequently allowed to board the flight.

Emma Wilburn died on April 13, 1937, but the family, continued to operate their various businesses for a number of years. In fact, the family even diversified their business interests. A part of the acreage that was purchased on which to establish the cemetery was reserved for the family estate. This the family converted to what became known as the Barbee Ranch. Located on Horn Lake Road this pastoral estate served to accommodate (on a rental basis) numerous African-American social functions held by fraternities, sororities, civic and church organizations and other groups.

During the 1970s the family sold the cemetery to the Westminster corporation, a company then headed up by hotel developer and founder of Holiday Inns of America, Kemmons Wilson. As the children of Emma Wilburn began to reach advanced age and grandchildren moved away the tragic pattern of "no one being left to run the business" had come into effect.

Still, however, New Park Cemetery and even the existence of Southern Funeral Home both stand as monuments to the "can do" spirit of this daughter of slaves. Emma Currin Wilburn, a Black woman, three times a widow, and a single parent during most of her children's formative years, was a shining example of "can do" — the epitome of strength, ingenuity and fortitude.

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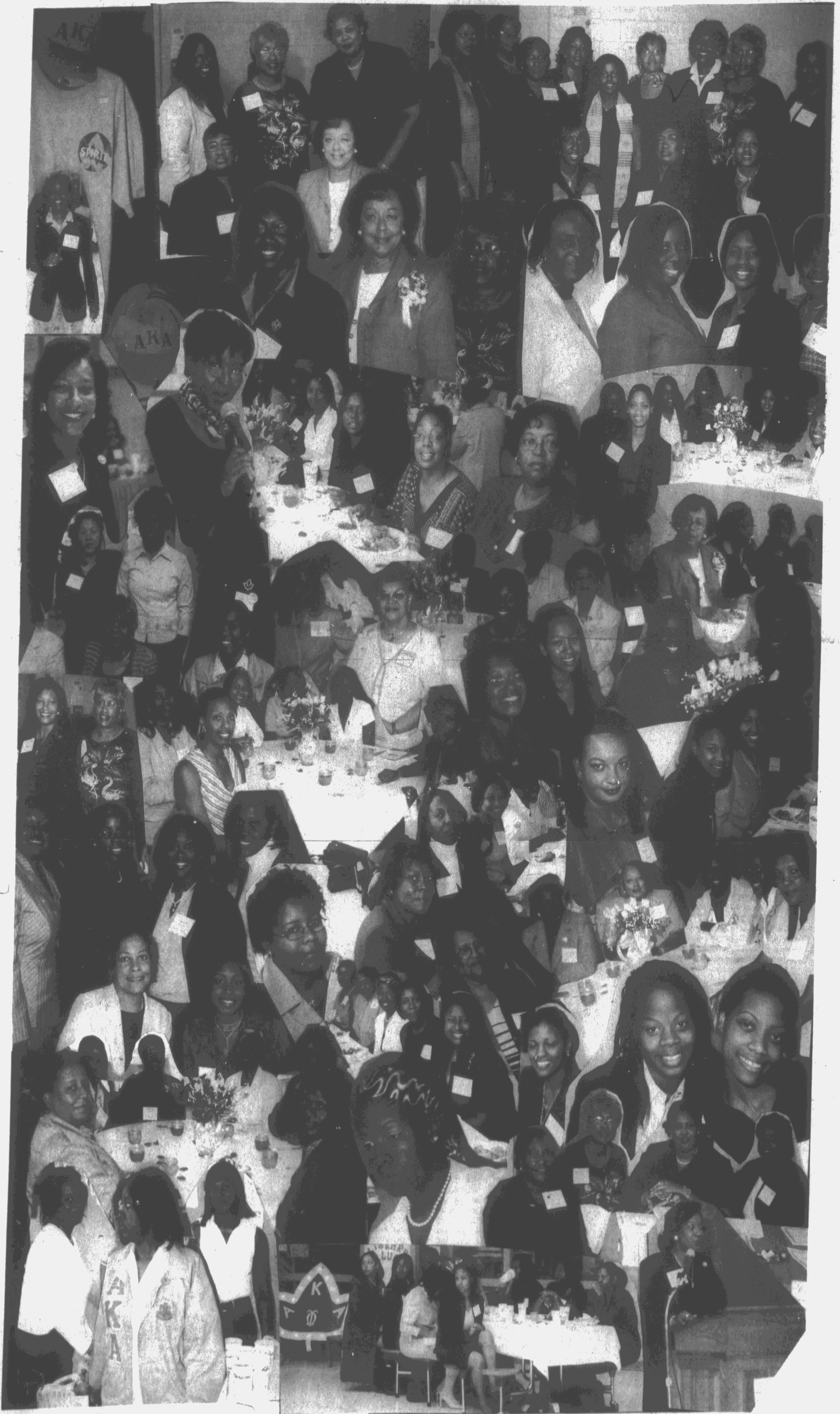
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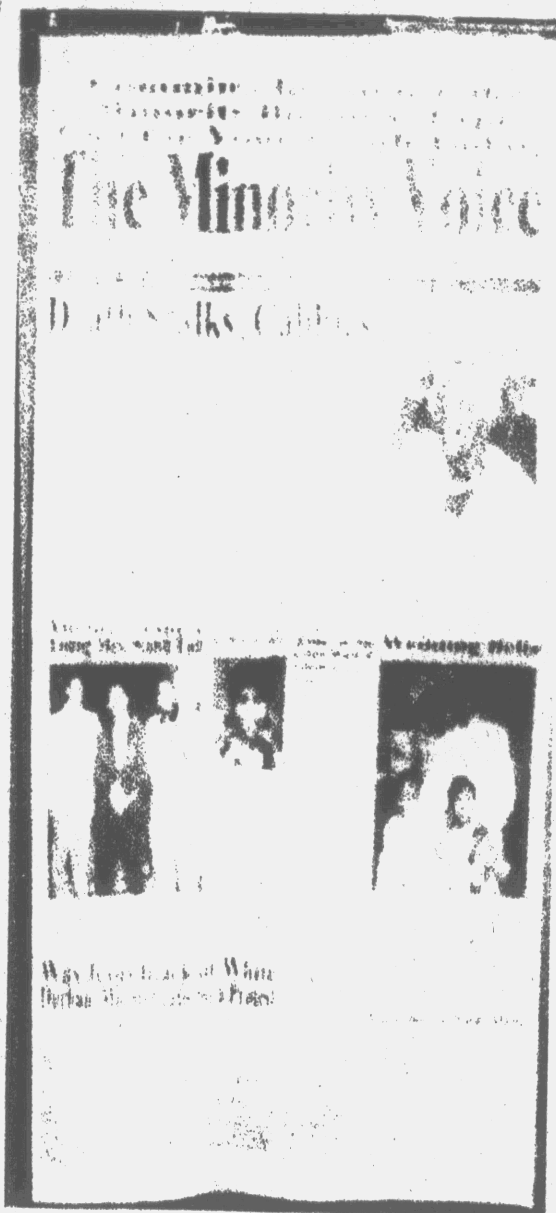
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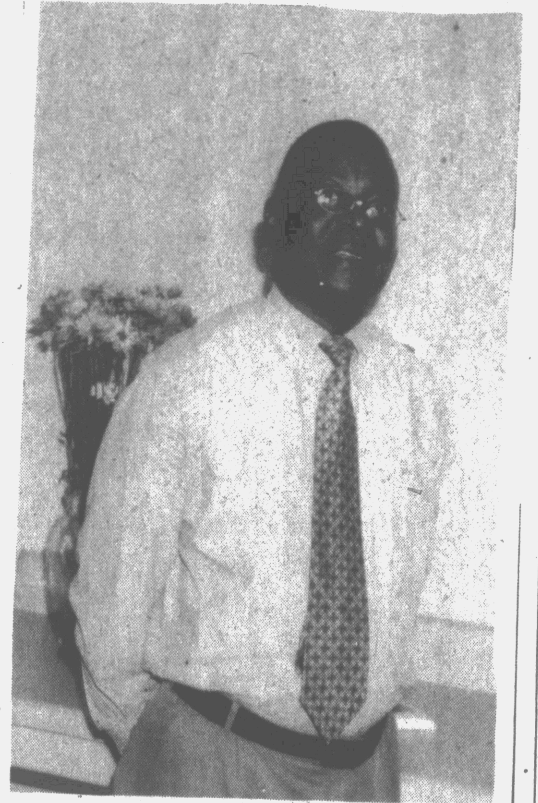
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Mr David L. Lawrence Appointed General Manager Hamilton Inn & Conference Center of Greenville N.C.

The Hamilton Inn and Conference Center, 702 South Memorial Drive, Greenville, North Carolina is now under New Management. Mr. David L. Lawrence has been appointed the General Manager. Mr. Lawrence is a native of Western North Carolina with ten (10) years experience in the hotel business. He has served in all capacities relevant to the hotel business and is very familiar with introducing change in this industry. Mr. Lawrence has served as a Elementary, Middle and High School Teacher, Employment Consultant and Coordinator for the Iredell Statesville School System.

Mr. Lawrence is a graduate of Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, North Carolina with a BA in Social Science and Human Services. He also is a graduate of Mitchell Community College, with an Associate Degree in Pre-Liberal Arts. He is a Master Mason and member of the First Baptist Church, Statesville North Carolina. He is the son of Mrs. Betty Lawrence of Statesville, North Carolina and the father of two sons, David Jr., and Arthur.



The Corporate Staff of JAM, Investments, LLC, invite the general public to stop by and visit with Mr. Lawrence.



SPECIAL NOTICE CITY OF GREENVILLE

ATTENTION GREENVILLE RESIDENTS BECOME INVOLVED IN CITY GOVERNMENT

The Mayor and City Council will soon be considering appointments to the Board of Adjustment, Community Appearance Commission, Human Relations Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Police Community Relations Committee, Sheppard Memorial Library and Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC). The EAC appointees will be considered for the following categories (1) a building contractor, land developer, or someone familiar with construction techniques and (2) a lawyer. If you live inside the city limits of Greenville and would like to be considered for an appointment, please call 329-4423 to obtain a talent bank form to indicate your interest or send a written request to the City Clerk's Office, P. O. Box 2707, Greenville, NC 27835.

Also, you can access a talent bank form on the web at <http://ci.greenville.nc.us/>.

"YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO VOLUNTEER YOUR PARTICIPATION IN CITY GOVERNMENT!"

SAWYER'S LAND DEVELOPING, INC

Sawyer's Land Developing, Inc. is solicitation DBE Subcontractor quotations for the 2003 Airfield Improvements--Global TransPark Authority, Kinston, NC. Items of work include: Trucking, fencing, storm drainage, erosion control, seeding and pavement marking. Please forward quotations to Len Hunt @ 252-943-2154, fax: 252-943-3325.

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Apartment CEO

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