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Valentine's Day

As this Valentine's Day comes around many in the community are asking some serious questions about love, romance and family. Traditionally Valentine's Day was one where sweethearts expressed their affection to each other and often popular music provided the soundtrack. Young love burned fiercely and old love burned steadily. We were a community that often did not have many material possessions but spouse and family made up for the deprivation.

Now the black family is facing an additional problem. Poverty is a problem for far too many still, but now there is a crisis in caring as well. Far too many black families consist of a woman and her children. Far too many parents are young girls searching for love with irresponsible boyfriends and unknowing babies. There are still many strong marriages and solid families in the black community, but too many members of that community feel unloved.

The change is reflected in popular culture. In times past there were sexually suggestive songs, but they did not predominate. Now children are weaned on songs that confuse sexual abandon for love.

Before many of our young can learn that love means respect, sharing, commitment and affection, they learn to market themselves in skin-tight jeans. Then they are surprised when all they reap from their marketing is sex without compassion.

One of the most important things that the black community can do for the Valentine season is to teach its young the meaning of love. This can be done through the adults setting an example first in the family and then teaching the children by speaking honestly with them. That is a real gift that the community can give to its young for Valentine's Day.

Seat belt bills

The fate of the numerous mandatory seat belt bills in the General Assembly does not look too good according to our sources down in Annapolis. It seems that legislators are not convinced yet that the state needs to force its inhabitants to buckle up.

Seatbelts have celebrity and noncelebrity endorsers. Many of these people agree that they would not be alive today if they had not buckled up. Television shows and movies diligently show actors buckling up as Hollywood jumps on the seatbelt bandwagon.

Those arguing against the law cite individual freedom, difficulty in enforcement and other plausible reasons why seatbelts should be an individual choice.

Many states have the law and attribute a decline in traffic fatalities to the laws since many more people are buckling up. Maryland has experienced an increase in fatalities on the highways and some legislators feel that the fatalities can be decreased by seat belt legislation.

Whether the bill pass or not, many more people have already started buckling up because of all the favorable publicity that seatbelts have received. Even if the bills fail to pass, the debate has raised public consciousness about the importance of buckling up.

Parren J. Mitchell

Reagan's sanctions: A flip-flop on international priorities

President Reagan must be something of a closet acrobat. That is the only way to explain his recent flip flop on the issue of sanctions. The president recently issued an Executive Order which banned all direct import and export trade within Libya.

He also froze all Libyan assets in U.S. banks. He even told those American citizens now in Libya that they had better leave or else suffer "appropriate penalties" when they returned to the states. Now that's what I call sanctions.

The Executive Order was issued even though, according to the Wall Street Journal, the State Department admitted that "the U.S. had only circumstantial evidence linking Libya" to the airport attack which killed five Americans.

But whether or not the Libyan government was involved in the attacks is really not the point. The real point is that the Reagan Administration quickly imposed sanctions against Libya, but it was like pulling teeth to get them to act against the dehumanizing regime of South Africa.

Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, attempted to explain the Administration's opposition to South African sanctions by saying, "As builders, we must stay engaged.

Being involved through our presence and our programs means having tools of influence . . . For us to throw matches into an already explosive and violent situation would be a betrayal of such men of peace as Bishop Desmond Tutu."

President Reagan, has openly stated that he "basically opposed the idea of punitive sanctions" against South Africa.

Since August 1984, the South African government has killed 1,000 black South Africans. It has arrested over 15,000 of its citizens, overwhelmingly black, since the state of emergency began in July of last year.

The same tolerance for oppressive regimes can be cited in the way the Administration responded when four American nuns were raped and brutally murdered in El Salvador in 1980.

President Reagan said nothing about sanctions against that country. He made no mention of freezing Salvadoran assets in the United States. In fact, families of the murdered churchwomen spoke primarily about the difficulties they encountered in trying to get the Administration to take any action at all in this case.

Once again, the Administration moved to protect its own interests, with no regard for the moral implications of their decisions. Just imagine what a difference it would have made if President Reagan had stopped all exports and imports between South Africa and this country, rather than enacting his toothless so - called sanctions against the apartheid regime.

Even his threatened ban on the sale of Krugerrands was just that—a mere threat. And his call for an Advisory Committee on South Africa to "encourage peaceful change" was done only to evade pressure created by protests in America.

Clearly the factor which determined U.S. action is not the atrocities performed by a country or whether American citizens are involved.

The determining factor is whether the offending country is deemed a "friend" of the United States and whether that country takes an appropriately hard anti - communist line. Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi is the latest example.

With the aid of a slick public relations campaign and enthusiastic support by conservative groups, Savimbi is seeking U.S. support for his battle against the leftist government in Angola.

Savimbi carried his message to the White House, to executive agencies, and to the halls of Congress. He has apparently won a guarantee from the Administration of at least some aid.

President Reagan in explaining his sanctions against Libya, has said "Civilized nations cannot continue to tolerate, in the name of material gain and self - interests, the murder of innocents." We could not have said it better ourselves.

I only wish he would be less tolerant of the savage and oppressive regimes which his Administration supports.

Letters

The deadly trap: The flight of America's black poor

By Alexander R. Jones

It's time to stop blaming the plight of America's black poor on forces, people and agencies outside of the black community. It's a notion without a solution — a dead end street.

Blaming others makes for good, emotional political speeches, but it never really helps people better their lives. No leaf in the wind ever steered its own course. No bottle in the current ever avoided being dashed on the rocks.

Blaming others for one's condition is simply not workable. If the other guy is responsible for the bad condition you are in, then you have assigned that guy control over your life. He, then, is one who has the power to make your life better, or worse, if he decides.

Likewise, the black community will never be able to handle its problems as long as its condition is blamed on racism, or President Reagan or President Carter, or the Ku Klux Klan or whatever. Black leaders, poor blacks, middle class blacks, we all must recognize the fact that each one of us is ultimately responsible for our own individual conditions. From there we can then move to accept responsibility for our condition as a group, and thereby improve that condition.

There are endless stories of black men and women who, faced with formidable obstacles, yet succeeded in their goal in life. They may have lived in a shack, and that goal may have been to send their child to college, but they did it despite all obstacles.

And there are bigger examples: examples where men like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. took responsibility not only for themselves, but for their group and the opposing group as well, and lifted all to a new level of understanding.

These great men realized that part of being responsible for your own condition involves handling society's influence on your life. If you completely ignore the problems in society, sooner or later its polluted waters will start to lap onto your own doorstep, harming you or your descendants. It is not enough to simply be a success. We must all do what we can to help lift others up to the point where they can improve their lives as well.

Alexander R. Jones is the Director of Minority and Third World Affairs for the Church of Scientology International.

The Fearless 'Seven'

On a cold January day
Many gathered to celebrate.
An ordinary schoolteacher interested
In the space program would participate.
Aboard the space shuttle Challenger
Were seven excited pioneers
Who were aware of the risks involved,
But proceeded without any fears.
The spacecraft launched
To explore the unknown,
But within a matter of seconds
Seven lives were gone.
It happened without warning.
So unexplained.
The shuttle disintergrated into bits
And into the Atlantic the debris rained.
There was a moment of silence
As joy turned to grief.
To have witnessed such a disaster
Is just beyond belief.
A teacher whose only mission
Was to teach from apace
Had suddenly vanished into thin air
Without any trace.
By an ordinary girl
Resulted in a tragedy
That stunned the world.
The impact this tragedy has on the nation
Words cannot express,
But man should even more so strive
To make the space program a success.

Olisha Evans

Dedicated to: "The Fearless Seven" whose bravery will always be remembered. May they rest in peace.

JUST THINKING: Jesse J. 'Purple' and Valentines

By Al Sweeney

On Jan. 4, 1986, this column's "State of the Nation" message concluded with a plea for "Black Men Unite."

My appeal was with one of those "tongue-in-cheek" efforts based on the swirling controversy over the movie "The Color Purple."

The movie is the box office hit and one of the nominees for industry's coveted "Oscar of the Year" award and many artists of its cast are in rushing for individual "Oscars."

There has been more discussion--and rather heated verbal exchanges — over the significance of the Hollywood production.

An example of counter views was published by the Washington Post's young black columnists.

On one side was Dorothy Gilliam, a very serious commentator usually espousing the concern of Blacks, with a heavy emphasis on women.

Gilliam called "Purple" a serious film about Blacks and wrote that she "stood up and cheered" when final credits reeled across the screen.

A negative opinion was written by Courtland Milloy who candidly observed:

"I get tired, long ago of white men publishing books by black women about how screwed up black men are. Those same white men get intimidated when a black man writes a book saying that the real problem is the white man."

Milloy concluded: Hollywood you make me sick in my stomach."

In calling for black men to unite against the assault of black women who are using the black man as the problem in the crisis of the vanishing black family, I agreed with Milloy.

Since that column, I have gotten more reaction than about anything I have written in these once-a-week pillars.

Some 98 percent of the brothers agreed with the enhanced comments about the attack on black men. Some 70 percent of my sisters gave me hell.

As a kid who grew up on the playgrounds of what sociologists call the ghetto, as a guy who spent sometime in the Navy and a guy who has placed an elbow on some of the toughest bars and have heard comics such as Redd Foxx, Nipsey Russell, Willie Bryant in the rawest x-rated comedy, I don't think that the purple prose that was hurled at me on defense of the "message" of the "Color Purple" topped this ad.

It was hurled by some of the nicest, well-tytored, literate, calm, sweet, delicate, well-bred black females whose estimate of the young black males would make "Gitlo" in Langston Hughes "Purlie Victoria" a saint.

I was really shook, I mean it, at the passionate obscenities of some of my black sisters.

They said in effect. You black men unite. Let us know when you convene. We will petition the White House to use the meeting site for nuclear bomb test, they said in a generic sense.

Many of them have had some sad erotic experiences. As Jesse Jackson, indicated last week in his "State" message at Nineteenth Street Baptist Church "it takes two to tango."

One of the young sisters tried to put the quick-thinking JJ on the spot, she asked his opinion of the young black men who refuse the responsibilities of fatherhood in the distressing rate of black unwed mothers.

Jackson explained that he has been selling all over this nation speaking to high school students in the inner city and in the suburbs on say:

"No," to drugs. "No," to alcohol. "No" to the smoking.

He went on to advise young women to say: "No" to sex. If the young girl says "No" to the pleads of boy, nothing happens.

He was not excusing the responsibilities of the boy in the erotic experience.

In other words, don't put all of the blame on the young black men.

Jackson seems to be tardy-prone. At his "State" meeting at Jerry Moore's 16th Street Church, Jackson showed up two hours late.

At the Carole Randolph Show, usually a live program, Jackson was provided limousine service to appear, but he was three minutes late.

The Channel Nine producers had to air a "canned" show to meet the strict time requirements of television.

Jackson was taped before a studio audience on his appearance was aired four days later. His television cast was a repetition of his meeting at the 16th street church.

The welfare system, as most of us know, is designed to break up the family.

When I was growing up, the county welfare worker would go into the home of a welfare client to uncover the "John Doe" or the "man" in the house. If an able bodied man was discovered on the premises the welfare check would be withheld to the welfare client.

More babies, the bigger check. No welfare client could afford to take a job, because the working wages were less than the welfare check. So, they stayed on welfare.

The so-called "welfare cheater" was the female client who did day's work or washed and ironed clothing to supplement her meager welfare check. Persons work to obtain some of the better things for her family faced grand jury indictments.

Originally, the New Deal programs for the poor was designed to assist the poverished work earned dollar. Programs like WPA, NYA and others were butts of jokes and were fought bitterly by labor as undermining the movement.

But, let's change the subject.

I really wanted to make this effort a salute to women, black, white, brown, the whole rainbow, with apologies to JJ.

In protecting the black male species, I am proud of the success of my black sisters. The stylish, professionals in the media such as J.C. Heyward, Maureen Bunyan, Kathy Hughes, Carole Randolph who are involved in several community efforts while fighting the competition in their trade; Joan Wallace, the Ag foreign expert; Gwen Baker, head of the YWCA movement, are this nation's best world ambassadors as they crisscross the globe for their respective agencies, last week Wallace was in Aimbabwe, Baker, in Moroccao; the very competent Joyce Payne, heading UDC's board of directors; Pat Cleman, chairman of DC's Public Utilities Commission; to Toni Ford, formerly of USIA, and Lenora C. Alexander of Labor, both casualties of the political system; those competent confidential secretaries found at Howard U., the AFRO, and the many offices of the personalities that make up my weekly columns. I am sorry it would take a phonebook to publicly name them, they are all wonderful deservedly Valentines.

To the women of my readership, Happy Valentine's Day. The hell with "Color Purple."

G. James Fleming

Haitians never learn from history

Of Haiti and its rulers it may be said quite fairly that "Nobody learns, or has learned, from history."

President after president, regime after regime has followed the same pattern: Accummulation of power in the hands of the president and/or the military; elevation of a few of the elite and neglect and serfdom for 80 percent of the rest of the nearly six million population: little schooling provided for children of school age; and too large a part of the national budget allocated to the military.

Most important, too much attention to politics and the frills of power and no emphasis on the economic development of the country.

Too little concern for those improvements that result in greater public health, more roads and highways, and better and more sanitary housing, especially for its rural people.

Too many of the ruling class of Haiti have been interested in feathering their own nests, in living in the high style of the French rulers of years past.

Too many have been playboys in France in their younger days and have never shifted gears into being uplifters and saviors of their people.

Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") Duvalier, now aged 34, dethroned and in exile, fitted this pattern to a "T." Although, perhaps he is more to be pitted than scorned.

He was only 19 years of age when, without benefit of election, he was picked by his father, the elder Duvalier, as his successor. A child president with no known particular training for government or apparently, for anything else.

Very soon, however, with the pushing of the "insiders" in his government — those who benefit from rulership in any country — he was talked into declaring himself "president - for - life," with all the rights and privileges of wielding the harshest torture against those who opposed him or seemed to oppose him. Even murder of his "enemies," without judge or jury, was charged to him.

He never learned. He believed his henchmen. He thought his army and his personnal, secret police (the Tontons Macoutes) could save him.

He believed, too, that if he kept his country out of the Cuba - Communist orbit, the United States would stand silently by for anything that he did or did not do.

"Baby Doc" Duvalier, as those before him, never agonized over the fact that, year after year, his country was classified as the "poorest" in the Western Hemisphere.

— —

Black Americans have historically had a special pride in, and attachment to, Haiti, as we have also had for Ethiopia and Liberia, the other independent nations governed by people of African descent.

We gloried in the fact that Haiti, in 1800, was the first country in Latin America to win its freedom from colonialism. Our orators used to pay eloquent tribute to Toussaint L'Ouverture, the ex-slave who led his rebel forces against the French and defeated them.

When the United States Marines occupied Haiti in 1915 and remained until 1934, knowledgeable Americans were aroused that the operation was not only "imperialism at its worst" against a small nation, but also racism.

In Haiti's latest breakdown of government, it is very clear that the nation's worst enemy is the topmost power structure, starting with whomever is president.

Now, the time has come — again — for all those who love their country and those who have succeeded the Duvalier dynasty to about - face from the deleterious practices of the past, and move forward towards serving the needs of their children, women and men; move towards fiscal responsibility and economic development, towards public education, and towards freedom and economic development, towards public education, and towards freedom of its people from unwarranted arrests and police lawlessness.

There should, eventually, be free elections, at some announced future date. There should never again be anyone who is declared "president - for - life," whether by edict or constitutional manipulation.

—AFRO SURVEY—

What makes your Valentine special to you?

Sheila Titus

Gregory Brockington

Sylvia Eads

Mara Amerson

This week the question to the man and woman in the street is, "What makes your Valentine special to you?"

Sheila Titus, 32, nurse, "I guess the years and the love behind them. He's honest caring. His being there when you need him. He doesn't talk much; he's not too romantic, but I'm a romantic, so I give enough romance for both of us."

Gregory Brockington, 30, utility worker, "It's many things that can't be summed up in words. It's a spiritual thing. Something that grows between us every day. It is not often that black persons have the peace of mind that having someone that you love gives you. So many things today cause one to be confused, that having someone who loves you and you love is a blessing in itself."

Sylvia Eads, 25, clerk, "Just being him—the thoughtful, sweet and helpful person he is. He has a sense of humor; he's there when I need him. He's my best friend."

Mara Amerson, 23, salesperson, "Unfortunately, I don't have a Valentine. Basically, I would want one who is understanding. Someone who loves you. A person who cares and is honest, somebody with whom you would like to be with."

Adrienne Shade, 28, cashier, "He's nice, kind, gentle and sweet. He does little things like helping me out around the house. He helps with the kids' homework and things like that."

Pam Glasgow, 20, sales, "I've never thought about this. This is the first Valentine's Day with this one. Sometimes he has all the right qualities... And sometimes he doesn't."

Cheryl Scott, 21, salesperson, "Because he's going to be with me on Valentine's Day. He's kind and all that. Plus, he has a sense of humor."

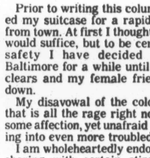
Robert Matthews, 17, student, "We both have a lot in common. We enjoy doing the same things. She has a great personality. She has an excellent sense of humor, that's the kicker, the thing that makes it great."

Adrienne Shads

Pam Glasgow

Cheryl Scott

Robert Matthews



Boo

R. B. Jones

Man sharing

Prior to writing this column, I packed my suitcase for a rapid departure from town. At first I thought a disguise would suffice, but to be certain of my safety I have decided to vacate Baltimore for a while until the smoke clears and my female friends cooled down.

My disavowal of the colored movie that is all the rage right now cost me some affection, yet unafraid I am plunging into even more troubled waters.

I am wholeheartedly endorsing mansharing with certain stipulations of course. The practice needs no endorsement since it is common practice, a fait acompli one might say already among blacks.

As a little boy I often had to accompany my Aunt Lucky to the beauty parlor and while waiting for her I heard things that the ladies thought I did not hear because I was supposedly engrossed with my toys and comic books.

I heard the tales of seemingly loyal unhip men having families on two sides of town. They told tales of wives learning at their husband's funeral that he had more than one outside woman.

When I got older I witnessed these things for myself. Men in my block who dared to have longterm, though discreet relationships with outside women who lived in the same block with them.

On occasion these liasons produced nasty domestic explosions but the wives seemed to take the attitude for the most part that as long as he took care of his home responsibilities and was discreet he could have his cake and eat it too.

In my travels south to ancestral homelands this was common practice. This sharing seems to be a carry over from the African practice of polygamy and a reaction to the frequent shortage of available men that afflicts the black community sometimes.

Frequently I hear women I know comment with more than a little anger that there are very few "good black men" who are available to them. I hear this from church women, worldly women, professional women and impoverished women.

They all lament the shortage of men who fit their criteria of good which generally means employed with a chance for advancement, passable in looks and dress, willing to wine them and dine them at the level to which they are accustomed, strong yet gentle, passionate but only to them and someone acceptable to their family and friends.

Some women get onto the list religious in the same faith that they are and still others are more specific about the looks and other superficial qualities.

Many women lament the fact that they cannot find these prize catches, yet the thought of mansharing horrifies them. Some cite the proliferation of sexually transmitted disease, religious beliefs or the desire to be the one and only object of a man's desire as reasons for objecting to man sharing.

And so many of them make bad choices out of desperation and loneliness and feel worse than before.

I would suggest principled mansharing as a possible solution. By principled mansharing I mean an honest relationship based on mutual respect, affection, support, growth and development, not based purely on sexuality. Momentary sexual encounters are not mansharing they are cases of giving in to the impulses of the moment.

Principled mansharing is based on the knowledge that there is a shortage of men in the black community who are positive elements in the community who are available for a one on one relationship.

Principled mansharing would involve men who work to strengthen the black community because they have a secure knowledge of self and a determination to create a better world for succeeding generations.

One of the reasons that many men in the black community are negative elements is that such behavior is rewarded. It is rewarded by the enemies of black progress and it is rewarded when women so weak and desperate for companionship reward men who never respect them or show the slightest inclination toward struggling against their internal weaknesses.

Isn't it better to share a man you can respect and admire who treats you with respect and affection than withering on the vine or subjecting yourself to a man who does not respect you for the sake of saying you have a man all your own?

Isn't it better for your children to be exposed to a positive male figure than none at all or a negative one? This function used to be filled by extended family members, but in our mad rush to assimilate a white culture that is a distortion of Europe we have become obsessed with the nuclear family model.

I realize that men make bad choices of women but the crisis is more acute for females because the disproportion of available men to women.

It is interesting in discussing this concept with many females, especially those who are community oriented that when this subject comes up their community orientation disappears. Some are quick to say that as long as they have their man they don't care about all the other black women who do or have men.

This sets up cutthroat competition for the men and illustrates how well we have absorbed the alienated individualistic values of western capitalist society while abandoning the African values that taught that we all have a responsibility for each other as members of society.

What these women were saying was that as long as they could exist in their dream world with their prince they did not care about the suffering of their sisters. This attitude translates into I don't care about the education of other black children as long as mine get theirs.

Self-possession only works in isolation from society. Otherwise survival is interrelated.

Principled mansharing also reinforces positive values in men who will see that the more positive they become the more affection and respect they will receive.

I am not saying that it will be easy to accomplish in a principled way, but it is an alternative for those women who find it hard to find a good man.

Half a loaf of good bread is better than a loaf full of poison and half a loaf sure will prevent starvation.

Walking the Hallowed Halls

Walking down the same road

By Clarence W. Hunter

WASHINGTON

I got a little something in the mail a couple of weeks ago from the American Council on Education which in light of the recently released Reagan budget tells me the administration is up-to its old tricks again.

And I for one am getting a little sick of it.

Every year the ACE, the lobby group for higher education issues, does an overview of the federal budget especially as it pertains to higher education. For the last five years, the organization has been especially hard what Reagan and his crew has presented pointing out — like everyone else had — what they consider viable cutback is going to reduce the number of minority students attending college and turn the entire educational system into something for the elite.

I haven't bothered to feature the ACE's overview in the past for the simple reason there is nothing really in there that I or anyone else haven't said in the past five years concerning the Reagan Administration's need to cut certain higher education programs.

But in light of the affect Gramm - Rudman will have on education in general and higher education in particular I think taking a look at the overview ACE presented this year might refresh everyone's memory as to what they're up against.

To hear the ACE analysis tell it, a "triple whammy" would be imposed on student aid programs with Reagan's request for major reductions for FY 1987. The whammies — as Charles Sunders, ACE vice president wrote — would threaten the collapse of the Guaranteed Student Loan Program, which accounts for 62 percent of the total federal financial assistance. The proposed changes might mean a pull out by banks if the allowance is reduced and the subsidy is eliminated.

The program—by the way—serves about 3 million students to the tune of $3 billion.

The other "whammies" is the loss of some 1.2 million students because they would either be dropped from eligibility for other programs or be hit by Gramm - Rudman which would triple the losses of all the programs.

Under the Gramm - Rudman gun the overview said reduction would hit the Pell Grants to the tune of 290,000 students at the middle income level and another 500,000 with low incomes. Recession would get rid of another 304,000 awards with the elimination of the State Student Incentive Grant program; 202,000 awards through the elimination of the capital contributions to the Direct Loan program; 217,000 through the slashing of the Supplement Grant program and 119,000 awards through the cutting of the College Work Study program.

If that wasn't enough, ACE said another 2,100 awards would be lost through the graduate fellowship program which serves 460,000 students.

Weird ain't it.

The third whammy is that 1987 budget itself. ACE's overview declared that because of the proposed reductions and the fact that all this would take place in the 1987-88 school year would mean 816,000 fewer students going to college under the Pell Grant; 681,000 fewer awards when the Supplemental Grants and the college work study fall by the way side and are replaced with a work/grant program.

The replacement of the Direct Loan program would mean 411,000 fewer students getting help this way, 619,000 of some 3.2 million students in the Guaranteed Loan program if the program is revised.

And if you want to take part in the graduate fellowship programs — forget it. These programs would be gone if Reagan gets his way.

This is a road I've been down before. None of the Reagan recommendations are new nor the views of ACE. It's just politics as usual between the two. Over the next several months the two will be going back and forth on Capital Hill in an attempt to get their own way.

It's really boring to tell you the truth.

Naturally I'm siding with ACE and others who think Ronnie's education proposals stink but I can't help but to wonder—again—what long term effect all this politicking is gonna have on the 90 percent of the minority students who depend on that financial aid.

Whatever it is, it won't be good.

AFRO welcomes letters

The AFRO welcomes letters from its readers. Letters should be brief and must bear the writer's name and address. All letters will be given consideration for publication.

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