

# The Post-Abortion Review

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## Persecution of Women and Unborn Children Continues Around the World

State Department Reports on Violations as Senate Seeks to Overturn Mexico City Policy

On March 7, the U.S. Senate voted once again to overturn the Mexico City policy, which bans U.S. funding for organizations that promote or perform abortions in other countries. First initiated by President Reagan in 1984, the policy was rescinded by President Clinton and then reinstated by President Bush in 2001. Although the House is expected to uphold the ban, abortion advocates continue to fight to overturn it.

Revealingly, the most recent Senate vote came just days after the state department issued a report accusing China and North Korea of human rights violations against pregnant women and their unborn children. Pro-life advocates rightly question whether abortion advocates really care about women, or are simply pushing their population control agenda.

The evidence would seem to point to the latter view. According to the state department report, China continues to engage in “numerous and serious” human rights abuses involving “violence against women, including imposition of a coercive birth limitation policy that resulted in instances of forced abortion and forced sterilization.”

Yet when the U.S. House International Relations Committee held hearings in Dec. 2004 on the abuses of China’s one-child policy, pro-life observers noted that none of the so-called “feminist” groups, such as NARAL and the National Organization for Women, sent representatives or even mentioned the hearings on their web sites.

### Human Rights Violations Continue in Asia

According to the state department report, China’s national family planning office reported investigating 10,000 complaints in 2002 alone from people who claimed their rights were violated under the one child policy. Among the cases reported by the state department:

- a woman who committed suicide after her relatives were detained in “population schools” to compel them to accept

the one-child policy,

- a woman who was injured after she jumped out of a hospital window in an attempt to avoid being sterilized, and
- a case in which authorities forced a woman who was convicted on a drug charge to undergo an abortion so she could be executed. The woman’s life was spared after international human rights groups protested the action.

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**“Pro-choice” groups have remained silent about the abuse of women under China’s one-child policy.**

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The state department also found that “psychological and economic pressure were very common; during unauthorized pregnancies, women sometimes were visited by birth planning workers who used threats, including that of social

compensation fees, to pressure women to terminate their pregnancies. . . . The country’s population control policy relied on education, propaganda, and economic incentives, as well as on more coercive measures such as the threat of job loss or demotion and social compensation fees.”

Despite this abuse of women and their families, population control apologists continue to praise China’s one-child program—or at least to point to claims by the Chinese government that it is cracking down on coercive practices. However, the state department report pointed out that the Chinese government does not consider administrative punishments such as “social compensation fees” to be coercive, despite the fact such fees/fines can equal several year’s income.

### Elements of the One-Child Policy

A case in Canada in which a Chinese “family planning” worker was denied asylum showcases some of the abuses of the one-child policy. During the investigation for her asylum petition, Li Min Lai, who worked as a family planning manager at a bus company, admitted that she enforced the one-child policy and that she coerced a fellow employee into aborting her seven-month-old unborn child.

Lai admitted that in 2000, she discovered that the daughter-in-law of the bus company manager was six months pregnant. Lai camped out at the woman’s home for three to six hours every day,

threatening her and her husband with fines and job loss. She said she eventually got the woman to abort by threatening to have her arrested.

Canadian federal court Justice Sandra Simpson upheld a ruling by Canada's refugee board that Lai's actions had contravened the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, saying that "it is clear from her own evidence that with her relentless, and highly abusive, tactics, [Lai] forced pregnant women . . . to have abortions."

Ironically, at the same time that the Canadian courts decided to deny Lai asylum, the Canadian government—along with other Western governments—was giving millions of dollars to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, which has been accused of complying with the one-child campaign.

The U.S. withdrew support for UNFPA after deciding that its "support of, and involvement in, China's population planning activities allows the Chinese government to implement more effectively its program of coercive abortion." The Canadian government, on the other hand, announced during a visit by Bush last fall that it was increasing its \$13.1 million annual contribution to UNFPA by \$67 million over four years.

One of the most notorious cases of recent abuse in China is that of Mao Hengfeng, who was sentenced earlier this year to 18 months in a labor camp for protesting the one-child policy. Mao "reportedly was held with drug addicts who were allowed to abuse her, was strapped to her bed for hours at time, was force-fed an unidentified medicine that turned her mouth black, and, on one occasion, had her limbs pulled in different directions for a period of 2 days," the state department report said. The case has caught the attention not only of the state department but also of international human rights organizations, many of whom have been largely silent about the abuse of women under the one-child policy in the past.

While news organizations outside of China have recently reported that China is softening the coercive elements of its program, experts at December's house committee hearings painted a different picture. John Aird, a former Senior Research Specialist on China at the U.S. Census Bureau and author of *Slaughter of the Innocents: Coercive Birth Control in China*, testified that "articles in Chinese professional journals and statements by high Chinese officials indicate that the program remains coercive."

"In the last four or five years, foreign journalists in China have

cited instances of violent family planning measures more extreme than any reported previously in the one-child policy's 25-year history," Aird said.

U.S. officials allow up to 1,000 asylum slots to be granted each year to Chinese refugees who are fleeing persecution under the one-child policy. Recently, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a man whose wife was forcibly sterilized after the couple had a child without a birth permit could remain in the U.S., stating

that forced sterilization constitutes a "permanent and continuing act of persecution."

The court ruled that "involuntary sterilization irrevocably strips persons of one of the important liberties we possess as humans:

our reproductive freedom." Last September, the court also granted asylum to a man whose wife underwent a forced abortion in China.

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## Cases of violence under the one-child policy have recently become even more extreme.

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### Gender Imbalance in China

One cause of concern that is getting some attention even from the secular western media is a growing gender imbalance in China. Male offspring are generally considered more "valuable" than female offspring in China, since boys not only carry on the family name and work farms but are also responsible for supporting elderly parents. Girls, on the other hand, become part of their husband's family on marriage and don't contribute to their parents' support.

This preference for boys has led many Chinese couples, especially those in rural areas, to abort unborn girls in hopes of "trying again" for a boy. Infanticide and abandonment of baby girls is also common in China. According to the 2000 census, there were about 117 males to 100 females in China and the latest government statistics show it at 119 to 100. For second births, occasionally allowed in rural areas, the national ratio was about 152 to 100.

In an effort to correct the resulting gender imbalance, China has banned sex selection abortions and officials in some provinces have prohibited the use of ultrasounds to determine the sex of unborn children.

However, there is no sign of the practice slowing down. *New York Times* writer Howard W. French has noted that although the program has been successful in reducing China's population, "Chinese planners appear to have underestimated the urge of couples to have sons. . . . [T]he result has been a human and public health disaster: the large-scale abortion of female fetuses and the routine killing or abandonment of baby girls."

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## Abortion and Infanticide in North Korea

The state department also reported on conditions in prisons and detention centers in North Korea, stating that “pregnant female prisoners reportedly underwent forced abortions, and in other cases babies reportedly were killed upon birth in prisons.”

North Korean defectors have reported that pregnant women fleeing the one-child policy in China are often tortured and that women repatriated from China are forced to watch as their newly born children are killed. “The reason given for this policy was to prevent the birth of half-Chinese children,” the report said.

At an international conference on human rights abuses, held in March, one former prisoner testifying under the name Park Sun-ja described witnessing the infanticide of a newly born infant:

“[At the hospital] I heard the cries of both mother and child through the curtain. And through the partially open curtain, I witnessed the nurse covering the infant’s face with a wet towel on a table, suffocating it. . . . The baby stopped crying about ten minutes later.”

Park, who was granted asylum in South Korea in 2002, said that during the two months she spent in a detention camp in 2000 she found that many women were given injections to abort their babies. “All the prisoners there believed that all infants were killed immediately upon delivery and wrapped up in a piece of cloth before being buried at a nearby hill,” she said.

Park also testified that she and other prisoners were beaten, poorly fed, and forced to perform hard labor and live in cells infested with vermin. The North Korean government has refused to allow human rights monitors to visit prisons there and one North Korean delegate told the U.N. that reports of abuses were propaganda from “egotistic” and “hostile forces” seeking to undermine the country’s sovereignty.

### More Abuses

While the state department report focused on China and North Korea, other countries are also experiencing abusive population control programs. The French magazine *L’Express* reported last year that 300,000 women in Peru were sterilized between 1996 and 2000, often against their will. The magazine stated that the government “family planning” program, which was funded by UNFPA and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), “quickly got out of hand.”

In the Philippines, a predominantly Catholic country where rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted disease are low due to the small incidence of promiscuous behavior, a congressional committee has approved a “two-child policy” that would mobilize health workers to conduct door-to-door interviews with couples on their fertility control methods and create a master list of the families interviewed. Couples who decide to have only two children would be eligible to receive government aid.

The program would target some two million people, including couples, adolescents, and people from poor and indigenous

communities. Critics say the program violates the rights of couples to make their own decisions about having children.

Even more alarming, says Archbishop Fernando Capalla, chairman of Philippine’s Catholic Bishops Conference, the program “imposes fines and imprisonment for parents, spouses, and health professionals who impede ‘sexual and reproductive rights’.” Church officials and pro-life advocates are calling on the government to respect the rights of families, while the mayor of Manila has denounced the bill as an “alibi” for the government’s failure to address poverty.

## Conclusion

The abuse of women and their families in countries such as China, North Korea, and elsewhere is a crime, aided and abetted by population control groups, abortion advocates, and so-called “women’s organizations” in the West that conceal, defend, and aid these abusive programs.

Denying funds to organizations under the Mexico City policy is a good place to start, but much more needs to be done to protect the rights of women and their families. If women’s groups and human rights organizations really care about women, they should be calling on the international community to apply pressure to abusive countries to change their policies and prosecute those who violate the rights of women.

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To read the state department’s report on China and North Korea, visit [www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41640.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41640.htm).

## Be “Courageously Pro-Woman,” Wrote Pope John Paul II

In his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II wrote:

*“In firmly rejecting ‘pro-choice’ it is necessary to become courageously ‘pro-woman,’ promoting a choice that is truly in favor of woman. It is precisely the woman, in fact, who pays the highest price, not only for her motherhood, but even more for its destruction, for the suppression of the life of the child who has been conceived. The only honest stance, in these cases, is that of radical solidarity with the woman. It is not right to leave her alone. The experiences of many counseling centers show that the woman does not want to suppress the life of the child she carries within her. If she is supported in this attitude, and if at the same time she is freed from the intimidation of those around her, then she is even capable of heroism. As I have said, numerous counseling centers are witness to this . . .”*

(pp. 206-207)

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# Do You Know Where Your Children Are?

Parents and Teens Suffer as Consent Laws Are Ignored, Overturned

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The parents of a 14-year-old Ohio girl have filed a lawsuit against Planned Parenthood for performing an abortion on their daughter without notifying the parents, in violation of Ohio's parental notification law.

The county prosecutor says he plans to launch an investigation into why Planned Parenthood of the Southwest Ohio Region did not contact the girl's parents as required by law, in spite of the fact that the teen gave them her father's name and contact information. The parents also say the girl's 21-year-old boyfriend, who was sentenced to three years in prison for statutory rape of the girl, coerced her into the abortion and paid for the procedure, posing as the girl's stepbrother at the clinic.

The case comes after the U.S. Supreme Court refused without comment to hear a case involving Idaho's parental consent law. A lower court had overturned the law, saying that a provision allowing abortions to be performed without parental consent only in cases where "sudden and unexpected" physical complications occurred was too burdensome.

Although the courts have upheld parental consent laws in other states, they have also required the states to allow a judge to approve an abortion for a minor without parental notification or consent. Pro-life advocates have criticized the judicial bypass provisions, pointing to evidence that abortion businesses often engage in "judge shopping" by filing bypass requests only before "friendly" judges. Other critics have pointed out that the laws in some states are written in such a way that it is virtually impossible for a judge to deny a minor's request for an abortion.

One reason for parental consent laws is to protect minor girls from older men who would prey on them and then use abortion to cover up statutory rape or sexual abuse. The National Center for Health Statistics found that among girls who had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 14, approximately 18 percent said the intercourse was involuntary and 36.5 percent of their male partners were four or more years older.

Do abortion businesses report possible cases of sexual abuse to the police? In 2002, a staff member working for Life Dynamics, a Texas-based pro-life group, called 800 abortion businesses throughout the U.S., posing as a 13-year-old girl pregnant by a 21-year-old boyfriend. According to a report released by the group, staff members at many of the clinics told the girl to lie about the couple's ages and/or gave her instructions on how to obtain an abortion without parental consent, in some cases telling the girl that the clinic would have to report the case if they knew the truth.

Two states, Kansas and Indiana, are investigating possible cases of sexual abuse among teen girls seeking abortions. However, abortion businesses in both states are seeking to block state

officials from obtaining access to the teen's medical records, citing concerns about patient privacy. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled March 15 that it would not allow the records in the investigation to be sealed, meaning that abortion clinics could potentially inform the targets that they are being investigated. Attorney General Phil Kline says that the abortion businesses are more concerned about potential liability than they are about protecting teenage girls.

"I have the duty to investigate and prosecute child rape and other crimes in order to protect Kansas children," Kline said. "Rape is a serious crime and when a 10, 11 or 12 year old is pregnant—they have been raped under Kansas law."

Kline also said that it is common practice for prosecutors to seek access to medical records when there is a possible case of sexual abuse involving children. "What is unusual is for doctors not to cooperate with child rape investigations," he said.

## John Paul II's Words to Women Who Have Had Abortions

In his encyclical letter *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life), published March 25, 1995, Pope John Paul II wrote:

"I would now like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord.

"With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life." (paragraph 99)



# KEY FACTS ABOUT ABORTION

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## Most Abortions Are Unwanted

- 52% of women who suffer post-abortion trauma report being “forced by others” into unwanted abortions.<sup>1</sup>
- The National Abortion Federation reports that one in five women served by their clinics are philosophically and morally opposed to abortion.<sup>2</sup> Other research indicates that up to 70% of women seeking abortion are morally opposed to it.<sup>3</sup>
- The Alan Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood’s research affiliate, reports that the primary reasons women abort are a lack of financial resources and emotional support.<sup>4</sup>
- Journal articles by National Abortion Federation officials verify that many women in a crisis pregnancy situation may be making hasty, ill-considered decisions for abortion.<sup>5</sup>
- In a survey of 252 women who experienced post-abortion complications:<sup>6</sup>
  - 66% said their counselor’s advice was very “biased” toward choosing abortion.
  - 40 to 60% said they were uncertain of their decision prior to counseling, of whom 44% were hoping to find an alternative to abortion during their counseling session.
  - Only 5% were encouraged to ask questions, and 52 to 71% felt their questions were sidestepped, trivialized or inadequately answered.
  - Over 90% said they weren’t given enough information to make an informed choice.
  - Over 80% said it was very unlikely they would have aborted if they had not been so strongly encouraged to abort by others, including their abortion counselors.

## Most Wouldn’t Have Aborted if Given Support

- 83% of those suffering post-abortion trauma said they would have carried to term if they had received support from boyfriends, families or other important people in their lives.<sup>7</sup>
- Studies of women who sought but did not have abortions show that few, if any, later regret their decision or suffer psychological problems from having an unintended child.<sup>8</sup>

## Abortion May Be Legal, But it’s Not Safe

- The standard of care is often inadequate to protect women’s health. Some abortionists move from state to state to avoid investigations and patient complaints.<sup>9</sup>
- Peer-reviewed research in major medical journals shows serious potential side effects, such as infertility, depression, and increased risk of death from all causes, including suicide.<sup>10</sup>
- Most abortionists don’t screen for risk factors or determine whether abortion will benefit their patients. Proper screening would *eliminate 70% or more of all abortions*.<sup>11</sup>

*continued*

- Some abortion providers admit lack of expertise in counseling or failure to cover all the aspects of the abortion decision that might be relevant to women considering abortion.<sup>12</sup>
- Many abortion “counselors” are unlicensed and untrained. Some are hired to “sell” abortions and ease women’s concerns so they will be more likely to abort, thus increasing clinic profits.<sup>13</sup>
- More than 80% of all abortions are done in non-hospital facilities, at clinics devoted solely to providing abortions and family-planning services. Most abortions are done by a stranger who has no relationship with the patient, either before or after the procedure. Often women do not return for post-surgical care.<sup>14</sup>

### **Abortion Doesn’t Solve the Problem**

- Women face a considerable risk of falling into a repeat abortion pattern. Approximately 45% of all abortions are now repeat abortions.<sup>15</sup>
- Women who have more than one abortion face an even greater risk of experiencing multiple physical and psychological complications.<sup>16</sup>

### **Most Women Don’t Want Abortion, Even in the Hard Cases**

- In a survey of 192 women who became pregnant through rape or incest:<sup>17</sup>
  - Many only aborted because they felt pressured to do so, and reported that abortion only increased their grief and trauma.
  - None of those who gave birth said they wished they had not given birth or that they had chosen abortion instead.

### **The Majority of Americans Believe Abortion Is Wrong**

- 77% of the public — including one-third of those who describe themselves as strongly pro-choice — believe abortion is the taking of a human life.<sup>18</sup>
- Another major poll found that 65% of those who favor legalized abortion and 74% of those who have had an abortion believe abortion is morally wrong.<sup>19</sup>
- Attitudes are changing. Americans, especially young people, are becoming increasingly pro-life.
- There has been a slow steady drop in abortion rates over the last 15 years, in part because more women are warning others that abortion is not a “quick and easy” solution.<sup>20</sup>
- Even among women who identify themselves as strongly pro-choice, less than a fourth believe abortion improves women’s lives.<sup>21</sup>
- 80% of Americans believe negative emotional reactions are common or very common after abortion, and most believe that these reactions are moderately severe to very severe.<sup>22</sup>
- A poll by the pro-abortion Center for the Advancement of Women shows that more than half of American women oppose abortion on demand. The poll found that keeping abortion legal was the next to last most important priority for women.<sup>23</sup>

*A copy of this fact sheet with complete citations is available at [www.afterabortion.org](http://www.afterabortion.org). Please feel free to copy and distribute.*

# News Briefs

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## Parents Sue Alaska Hospital for Arranging Abortion For Their 15-Year-Old Daughter

The parents of a 15-year-old Alaskan girl are suing a Catholic hospital for transporting their daughter to another state for an abortion without her parents' knowledge.

The lawsuit against Providence Alaska Medical Center says that a staff social worker made arrangements for the girl and her 17-year-old boyfriend to be transported to Seattle for the abortion and paid for it with state funds. The parents say they found out about the abortion when their daughter didn't come home that night. The girl, who is now 17, says she regrets the abortion. Although Alaska passed a parental consent law in 1997, the law is being challenged before the Alaska Supreme Court. A spokesperson for the hospital has defended the social worker's actions.

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## Illinois Mother Arrested for Trying to Help Her Daughter Avoid Abortion

A mother was arrested at an abortion business in Granite City, IL, for trying to help her daughter avoid an abortion last month.

According to reports from the *Illinois Leader* and pro-life activist Jill Stanek, the 14-year-old girl was pressured into having the abortion by her 16-year-old boyfriend and his family. The girl and her mother told Stanek that the mother of the boyfriend posed as

the girl's grandmother in order to have her excused from school. They also said that staffers at the Hope Clinic abortion business prevented the mother from seeing her daughter when she arrived at the clinic and asked to speak with her, then had the mother arrested when she began calling her daughter's name inside the clinic. The girl also told Stanek that when she requested to see her mother, staff members told her that her mother had left and that the staff also moved her abortion to an earlier time slot and slipped the girl's escort out of the clinic by a back entrance.

Illinois does not have a parental consent law in force, and pro-life activists at the clinic say that teens from surrounding states with parental consent laws regularly obtain abortions at the clinic. Federal lawmakers are attempting to pass a bill that would make it a crime for anyone to escort a minor to another state for an abortion in order to avoid a parental consent law.

## Memorial Contributions

In memory of  
Rosemary Rosencranz

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# A Mother's Day Letter

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*Dear Friend,*

Tomorrow is Mother's Day. I am 48 years old and every Mother's Day since I aborted my two children has been painful. Some years, and most of the days in between, I muted the pain by listening to the cultural messages around me that there had not been life present anyway.

I tried to talk with my female therapist about what I was feeling after the first abortion. She told me that women who give up their children for adoption suffer trauma but women who have abortions generally do not. So in addition to feeling regret and sorrow unlike anything I had ever known, I felt there was something wrong with me for being as affected by the abortion as I was. I stopped talking about it.

What I did was what some of us do after having an abortion—I got pregnant again the very next year. Even then, I understood my unconscious wish to undo what I had done. I thought about carrying my child to term, but cowardice and shame overtook me once again. I chose to stop the process of life for the second time.

Often during the last years, I would think, "How old would my children be now if they had lived?" But last November, at a Project Rachel Retreat, I let myself realize the full truth . . . that they are alive, that they exist today.

I met them in my heart and did what I never thought I would be able to do—I named them. Rachel and David. I finally began my relationship with them six months ago. I acknowledged their eternal existence, and I love them.

I have heard it said that our children are the ones who keep after us, pushing us toward healing and reconciliation. I think this is true. I was led to the retreat, which was the single most powerful, profound, and life-changing event of my life.

I knew I had been reconciled with God before the retreat. Nine years ago I returned to Him and received His forgiveness through one of His priests. But I did not feel reconciled to myself, or my children. God's love flooded me during the retreat and led me to the reconciliation and internal peace that had always been out of reach.

Tomorrow is Mother's Day. In my church on this day, the priest asks all the mothers in the church to stand at the end of the Mass for a blessing. It has always been agony for me as women all around me stand, and I sit.

You see, I never had a pregnancy again; I have never given birth. And until last November, I never let myself know that I have two children, that I too am a mother. So when the priest asks tomorrow, I will kneel for my blessing. The women who give birth deserve to stand—I am at peace receiving my full blessing from a more humble position.

Friend, please try. Trust your heart, trust God and your child to lead you where you have always needed to go. For my part, I will pray for you and will ask Rachel and David to look out for your little one until we join them there, surrounded by God, who is love.

God bless you,  
*A Mother*

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**I now realize that I  
too have children,  
I too am a mother.**

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*Elliot*  
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