



# The Future of The Internet

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## Introduction

As the innovation economy continues to flourish, communities of color are making inroads in achieving a more diverse and inclusive tech future. Critical contributions in the areas of business, advocacy, healthcare and criminal justice are taking hold and while there is much that inspires, too much still gives us pause.

The [Arab Spring](#), [Black Lives Matter](#), [Dreamers](#) and the [Dakota Access Pipeline](#) have quickly transformed grassroots causes into international movements and [DeShuna Spencer's Kweli TV](#), [Pero Like](#), and [Remezcla](#) are creating new and exciting distribution networks for those previously ignored.

Mirza [Baig](#) (Aldrich Capital Partners), Kesha [Cash](#) (Impact America Fund), and Carolina Huaranca [Mendoza](#) (Kapor Center) are paving the way for diverse businesses to stand up and be counted in the digital economy and forcing us all to yield to the power of the Internet. The improbable is now the possible for visionaries of color but we recognize that intentional strategies are needed if we are to ensure that these digital pathways remain open and become more accessible to all regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion or socioeconomic background.

As technology increasingly plays an integral role in every sector of our lives, it is imperative that we address its challenges and opportunities. [Artificial intelligence and big data analytics](#) are increasingly the lens through which decision makers determine the nature of access, opportunity and mobility. The same algorithms that ideally should reduce the subjectivity and racial biases in our institutions are in many cases perpetuating and even entrenching that bias and subjectivity. The same solutions that restore dignity to the [experience of hailing transportation](#) can actually reduce the dignity of the driver who does not have access to traditional labor [benefits and protections](#).

Important work has been done by leaders in communities of color to outline the [nature of the policies](#) that should govern a digital society. Our goal is to build on their initiatives, uplift their voices and experiences and be an advocate for equitable and inclusive solutions.

This paper highlights some of those leaders who are making a difference in: Access; Economic Opportunity and Entrepreneurship; Artificial Intelligence; Data and Privacy; Expression and Intellectual Property (IP); and Civic Engagement and Democracy. It outlines what is needed to protect and grow their projects and highlights areas where policymakers and other stakeholders can help.

***Our goal is to build on their initiatives, uplift their voices and experiences and be an advocate for equitable and inclusive solutions.***

## Universal Broadband Access

In 2019, there are too many people of color who lack access to high speed broadband [at-home](#). Statistics show that those disconnected from the internet are largely in black and brown communities and live in low-income or rural areas. Even as the privileged among us are lamenting the dangers of [online oversaturation](#), millions of Americans wish that a day would come when they no longer have to struggle without access to a tool that is fueling innovation, communication and mobility in the 21st century.

However, there are leaders working to make the promise of ubiquitous Internet access a reality for every community, and they include:

- Brian [Howard](#) at the [American Indian Policy Institute at Arizona State University](#), who is using his research and advocacy projects to bring broadband access to Tribal communities.
- [Edwin Reed Sanchez](#), founder of SayCel, which specializes in building wifi networks in remote communities with minimal resources, often reusing dark fiber. Currently a professor at New York University, Reed-Sanchez has designed fiber optic networks in Kenya and Mexico and developed one of the first emergency call response networks in Nicaragua.
- The [National Hispanic Media Coalition](#) (NHMC), which is launching *Conectamos*, a traveling town hall event focused on tangible solutions to address the Latino digital divide. The 2019 tour will provide residents in various regions with an opportunity to get information on why broadband adoption is important, discount internet programs, digital literacy and privacy protections, and tech policy guidance for community activists. Each event, unique by location, will feature prominent members of the community, including elected officials, policymakers, and businesses in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Los Angeles, California; and Phoenix, Arizona.

- The [Detroit Community Technology Project](#) trains digital stewards to provide internet access and digital literacy training to residents in low-income and underserved neighborhoods. Many of the program's participants have obtained broadband access for the first time. This community outreach initiative was not only designed to empower underserved residents with the requisite technology and tools for storytelling, it was intended to help foster understanding, trust and empathy among residents.
- The [Center for Media Justice's](#) Malkia Cyril who is helping empower communities of color in the fight to gain broadband access and to protect against abusive surveillance policies.
- Organizations like [Common Cause](#) and [Public Knowledge](#), in addition to NHMC are at the forefront of fighting to restore net neutrality and an open Internet, helping both lawmakers and policy makers understand why additional barriers to entry disproportionately impact communities that already struggle with access.
- Civic engagement campaigns like, #WhyWeCount powered by NextDayBetter are committed to empowering diaspora communities from Mexico, The Philippines and Puerto Rico to participate in Census 2020 and assist households in hard-to-count communities that also tend to lack reliable broadband access, or have households of mixed documented status and fear for their safety and security.

We are inspired by these leaders who are committed to expanding digital access. Policymakers, corporations and stakeholders can help by:

#### **Enacting Policies and Innovative Solutions to Fully Close the Digital Divide.**

Policies should promote equitable deployment to low-income and other marginalized communities and prohibit deployment practices that perpetuate systemic discrimination. Simply put, communities that face [geographic barriers](#) or live in low [population densities](#) need additional resources, not fewer to obtain broadband access. For communities that have infrastructure capable of providing access to high-speed broadband, [affordable rates](#), and competitive markets are also essential to closing the digital divide. Policies designed to address affordability, like the Federal Communications Commission's [Lifeline program](#), should be expanded, not slated for budget cuts, in order to effectively provide support for affordable, universal broadband access.

**Restoring an Open Internet.** An open Internet is fundamental to ensuring that the voices of underrepresented groups are heard. Meaningful access to the Internet requires a reliable, non-discriminatory connection from a broadband service provider. We need clear, bright-line, enforceable rules to prevent discrimination that would limit a user's ability to use the Internet as a platform for civic engagement, free expression, innovation and economic empowerment.

#### **Promoting Spectrum Policies That Promote Sharing and Innovation.**

Policies must acknowledge that spectrum is a scarce resource that must be used efficiently. Those policies must promote fair and balanced allocations of licensed and unlicensed spectrum and preserve shared space for the experimentation necessary to develop innovative connectivity solutions.

### **Economic Opportunity and Entrepreneurship**

Communities of color and women, while too often underrepresented among the leadership of the [Fortune](#) 500 companies, are strategically leveraging the innovation economy to create new businesses, products, and solutions—or increase the efficiency and profitability of existing businesses. Social media and digital marketing are expanding the customer base traditionally accessible

to our communities. The leaders we recognize in this section have carved out their own spaces in traditional industries, building multiple streams of revenue in the digital communities they cultivate.

- [Mike Muse](#), a politics and pop culture influencer, uses his brand to produce music, educate his followers and invest in underserved youth. He was named a My Brother's Keeper millennial [entrepreneurship ambassador](#) by President Barack Obama, and appointed to the Small Business Administration's Council on Underrepresented Communities.
- Even before he was named a [Senior Curator by the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit](#), Larry Ossei Mensah was curating art as an "[independent curator and cultural critic](#)." A co-founder of ARTNOIR, Mensah curates exhibitions that showcase fresh, diverse, global creatives.
- Celebrity chef [Aliya LeeKong](#) may not have a restaurant, but you can try her recipes, read her books, or download her [children's app](#)—which celebrates food, travel, and culture—all by following her online, as thousands have already done.
- Communications and technology lawyer, [Joe Miller](#), launched the [WashingTECH](#) podcast and a newsletter to help busy advocates and politicians stay up to date on hot topics in tech policy and to promote a [more inclusive public policy dialogue](#) around these important issues.
- Ranked at number 11 on BuzzFeed's "The Best Ice Cream Sandwiches in America, According to Yelp", [Bonifacio](#), a young Filipino restaurant in Columbus, Ohio, is riding the wave of popularity that Filipino food is receiving on social media. Krizzia Yanga, *Bonifacio's* founder, [credits](#) the restaurant's success to the public support she received online—the type of support typically only enjoyed by entrepreneurs in larger cities like New York.

These businesses are using the digital economy to grow their profiles and profitability, but they could expand faster and make more of an impact with the right business and policy environment. Even better, supportive policies will pave the way for more talented diverse entrepreneurs to join them. Policies and practices needed by digital entrepreneurs of color include:

**Supporting Openness and Neutrality.** Policymakers, tech companies and the financial services industry can help by keeping the Internet open and accessible which would make it easier for [diverse businesses and digital entrepreneurs to gain access to capital](#) and navigate the digital transition.

**Improving and Safeguarding Minority Access to Capital.** Access to capital is a barrier to many minority-owned businesses seeking to get off the ground and/or expand their footprint. This challenge warrants significant remedial efforts. For instance, tech companies could require more from their financial services partners by ensuring that these companies take affirmative steps to remedy access-to-capital challenges.

- Tech companies should fund robust minority business investment funds like the [Impact America Fund](#) and [Intel Capital Diversity Initiative](#); support accelerators and incubators like [Tech Square Labs](#) and require those doing business with them to do the same.
- Vibrant minority-owned investment and commercial banks are critical to creating an economic system that reflects the diversity of this country. Governments should reinvigorate existing loan guarantee and investment fund programs that could help these banks incubate and grow minority-owned tech businesses.

**Expand business growth opportunities.** Limited access to collaboration, strategic partnerships and merger and acquisition opportunities further depress the value of minority-owned businesses. Corporate diversity programs have a role to play in monitoring and improving these corporate functions, as well as increasing contracting opportunities for minority-owned tech companies.

**Educating Minority Small Business Owners about the Potential of New Technologies.** Policymakers should build upon resources like the SBA Digital Learning Center, which helps small businesses digitize their businesses and provides hands-on coaching for those with low digital proficiency. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies [recently noted](#) that a majority of Black and Latino-owned businesses have websites, while a smaller number have mobile-friendly websites have mobile apps. Less than half of those businesses used digital tools to run their businesses, even though these tools [can save time and money](#). Companies and other stakeholders can make similar investments, like the [Grow with Google](#) initiative, to make digital learning more accessible.

### **Expression and Intellectual Property Policy**

The Internet has opened up unprecedented opportunities for diverse communities to speak, create, educate and entertain by building a direct connection with their audience. When mainstream media outlets fail to serve communities of color with relatable content, or resolve lingering issues of [under-representation](#) and [misrepresentation](#), communities of color have sought out digital platforms and online services to tell their stories. In some cases, this has led to larger networks recognizing and providing space for previously overlooked [talent](#) and in other cases, it has given a platform to voices that would otherwise be [silenced](#).

It is important to note that the same freedom that has allowed us to share our too often unheard and unseen content, has also provided space for voices that [promote hate and marginalization](#) which impacts the ability of our communities to flourish. We believe that outlining the boundaries of the digital public sphere is a matter for grave deliberation. We must address the ways in which hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation have multiplied, oftentimes to the detriment of vulnerable communities. At the same time, we must aggressively protect against any censorship -- promoted by the government, or by the private sector -- that would limit or inhibit the ability of our communities and POC creators to speak, create and be fairly compensated for their work.

### **Empowering Creators of Color Through Intellectual Property Protections.**

One of the most powerful tools for creators of color is intellectual property. The United States has a long history of discriminating against people of color through predatory practices and loopholes in intellectual property law. However, the rise of the internet has eliminated many barriers to entry and lessened the influence of gatekeepers. The internet has created a platform for creators of color to monetize their works and thrive as entrepreneurs. Educating creators about their intellectual property rights and ensuring they have a clear, effective path to remedial action when violations occur, is paramount to the future viability of online entrepreneurship for creators of colors.

We remain inspired by the storytellers, advocates and educators who are maximizing and protecting our digital forums for free expression:

- YouTube creator [Glen Henry](#) is the creator of the successful YouTube channel [Beleaf in Fatherhood](#). The stay-at-home father of three and loving husband, documents his experience as an African American father in America, a role that is widely subject to stereotyping and skepticism. Henry not only shares his journey as a father with his audience of 110,000 followers but also challenges the misconception that Black dads aren't around for their kids – a stereotype often heightened by TV and film's portrayals of African American families.
- [Dallas Goldtooth](#) and his comedy troupe "The 1491's," use [sketch comedy](#) and 500,000 YouTube followers to advocate for Indigenous culture and values and fight lingering stereotypes about Native communities. Dallas works as an advocate for the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#) whose mission is to "protect the sacredness of Earth Mother from contamination and exploitation by respecting and adhering to indigenous knowledge and natural law."
- Before landing his own Netflix show and joining The Daily Show as a correspondent, [Hasan Minhaj](#) utilized YouTube's platform to build an audience and following through his channel, [Goatface Comedy](#). Hasan used his platform to highlight issues ranging from immigrant experiences in America to Islamophobia.

- The [Institute for Intellectual Property and Social Justice](#) (IIP SJ) was established to promote social justice in the field of intellectual property law and practice, both domestically and globally. Through core principles of access, inclusion, and empowerment, IIP SJ works to advance the social policy objectives that underlie intellectual property protection.
- Under the umbrella of IIP SJ, [Creative Control](#) is an innovative program and event series connecting creatives of color to experts in IP policy for education and free legal services. Creative Control works to make the IP system more accessible for marginalized communities so that creators can safely produce content and be compensated fairly for their work.
- Since 1988, the [Muslim Public Affairs Council](#) (MPAC) has advocated for policies that ensure that First Amendment guarantees of free speech remain at the forefront of policy creation while respecting the safety of users online. Rather than censoring hateful online actors, they work hard to partner with tech companies and Hollywood to increase accurate and representative depictions of Muslims and Islam and to promote mainstream and positive content. They also serve as a resource to better understand how overbroad targeting of "buzz words" [JM1] can have a dangerous and disparate impact on underrepresented communities. MPAC, and other advocacy and civil rights organizations, play an important role in engaging with tech companies before policies or products launch in order to mitigate any unintended consequences particularly on underrepresented and marginalized communities. Sharing the nuances of challenges and opportunities that various communities experience is an important factor in creating both policies and products that are meant for the benefit for all.
- The [Latinos In Media and Arts coalition](#) (LIMA) was established in 2017 by a community of media professionals to empower, support and promote US Latinos/Latinx in entertainment and the arts. LIMA is focused on increasing access to traditional and new media platforms for Latino creatives and cultivating the next generation of Latino entertainment and creative professionals. LIMA is especially concerned with US Latino representation

in new media and streaming inclusion. Through advocacy, partnerships and programming, LIMA is amplifying issues of importance to Latino/Latinx communities and activating networks to support causes such as Youth Cinema Project, Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival, YouTube Youth Summit and Hispanicize.

### **The Call for Policymakers and Stakeholders to Protect Marginalized Communities in the Digital Era:**

**Enforcing and Updating Copyright Protections. Maintain a system of balanced copyright that allows for both the creation and monetization of new works and protection of freedom of speech and expression.** Exceptions and limitations, such as fair use and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) safe harbors, play a key role in maintaining this balance. Without these parts of copyright law, creatives' ability to create, document their lives and experiences, reach their communities and grow their businesses would be severely restricted. In addition, policymakers should address policies that make it more likely for the content made by creators from marginalized backgrounds to have their work unfairly characterized as "controversial" which results in their content being removed or demonetized.

**Tracking Contributions by POC in the Digital Space.** Develop strategies to effectively quantify and recognize the unique contributions made by communities to the IP of the United States. Policymakers and stakeholders must also promote better education and access to the tools that allow us to properly benefit from our creative work.

**Ensuring Creators Have An Effective Remedy Path In Court.** When copyright infringement or other intellectual property (IP) violations occur, it is crucial for creators to have a path to remedying those harms. Currently, intellectual property violations are heard in federal court. Because litigation can be expensive and time consuming, many creators are deterred from bringing their claims to court at all. Policymakers should enact new, more effective, creator-friendly avenues to remedy intellectual property violations.

**Conducting a Termination Rights Study.** Under copyright law, a termination right allows creators to recapture their rights in publishing deals that were negotiated before the true value of their works was discovered. In order to recapture their rights, a creator must initiate the process by serving a timely Notice of Termination. Termination Rights are still a new concept in the intellectual property field, as the first batch of works impacted vested in 2013. Termination rights, if used, have the power to unlock rights and remedies previously unavailable due to predatory practices of the past, which primarily discriminated against Black musicians and creators. Congress should call on the United States Copyright Office to conduct a study into termination rights and their impact on creators of color.

**Supporting Copyright Office Modernization.** The U.S. Copyright Office must be brought into the 21st Century in order to lower barriers to intellectual property protections and enable remedies for creators, notably creators of color. Policymakers should support the Copyright Office's efforts to make online copyright registration user-friendly and effective, to make copyright records easily accessible online and to effectively and safely manage data of the copyright community.

## **Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool that can be used to advance both positive and negative outcomes in business, politics, economic opportunities and health. AI not only allows access to large swaths of our personal data and information, it also can observe, learn and replicate the actions of everyday life including those tainted by discrimination and institutionalized bias. While recent advancements illuminate the biases impacting people of color, they can also easily perpetuate them. Policies that analyze algorithms and data sets, promote transparency and require accountability for systemic bias in artificial intelligence must be developed carefully to balance the need to fight systemic discrimination, while incorporating the benefits of this growing technology.

We celebrate leaders of color in AI, including:

- [Mirza Baig](#), whose [Aldrich Capital](#) has invested significant funds into [Woundtech](#), a company that uses [TensorFlow](#) (open source AI) to treat diabetic wounds, which are disproportionately suffered in communities of color. Using AI, Woundtech has made unprecedented advances in wound care.

[Black in AI](#) and [LatinX in AI](#) are organizations convened to research, collaborate, and advocate on AI issues impacting communities of color. These organizations include leading engineers, data scientists and activists interested in ensuring that AI is implemented fairly and benefits all. Their ongoing research in this space should be required reading by anyone intending to develop equitable AI.

- Phil Goff, founder of The [Center for Policing Equity](#), uses AI to drive the National Justice Database ([NJD](#)), a tool to identify racial bias in policing. The NJD also includes a Juvenile Justice and Education component intended to address school-to-prison pipeline issues.
- Joy Buolamwini, founder of the [Algorithmic Justice League](#) is a computer scientist a digital activist at MIT. AJL aims to highlight algorithmic bias, provide space for people to voice their concerns about coded bias and develop practices of accountability in relation to design, development and deployment of coded systems.

**Policymakers, tech companies and other stakeholders can ensure the growth of AI is equitable and beneficial by:**

**Promoting efforts to train and hire AI experts of color.** Challenges in diversity hiring and retention must be tackled with great urgency as one step towards reducing bias in AI. In-company career pathways and aggressive and strategic efforts are necessary in order to ensure that talented people of color are hired and promoted to leadership positions within the artificial intelligence space.

**Bolstering the capacity of civil society to leverage data and AI to advance social justice, including identifying and remediating existing societal biases.**

Efforts like the [New America Center for Civic Tech](#) are great examples of how sectors can come together to ensure that commercial or business products are not the only outcomes of this powerful technology.

**Developing ethical principles and processes for the development and use of AI.**

AI systems must be thoughtfully deployed, particularly in areas that carry a high risk of significant harm to communities of color, such as the criminal justice system, government surveillance, employment and credit screening.

**Creating meaningful and accessible transparency and accountability mechanisms.**

Companies, governments and others should ensure that - wherever possible - AI and the data that powers it is as transparent and accountable as possible at every stage of design, deployment, evolution and use.

**Designing AI to actively address bias.** AI should be designed with the capability to remedy the effects of algorithmic bias and bad data. Eliminating disparities should be a primary objective in the tech community's design, implementation and use of artificial intelligence.

**Industry-wide focus and prioritization of AI initiatives that benefit communities of color.**

Broad adaptation of AI technology is dependent upon goodwill generated from leveraging the technology for good. Too often, communities of color are afterthoughts in the deployment of new technologies (digital divide, education tech, digital equity). The tech industry should prioritize and focus its investments and partnerships in AI areas showing significant potential in improving the lives of people of color.

## **Data Security and Privacy**

The success of the innovation economy— particularly in the context of AI — is fueled by the growing use of our personal data. As the collection and use of our data becomes more prevalent, the benefits of AI must be balanced against the

risks such collection entails. The histories of the [Tuskegee Study](#), [Henrietta Lacks](#) and [Japanese internment during World War II](#) illustrate the significant and unique impact of privacy and data security policies on communities of color. Particularly in the areas of [health data](#), [genetic testing](#) and [criminal justice](#), it is imperative that public policies require the stewards of our data reduce risks, mitigate damage, compensate those affected when breaches occur and empower our communities to protect themselves. Moreover, these remedies must be policed for unintended consequences that make compliance burdensome for small entrepreneurs.

### Several digital rights organizations are taking the lead on privacy:

**The Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT)** provides [assistance](#) to tech startups by organizing resources and giving updates on advances in privacy and security law. The Tech Policy Program for Startups program enables new businesses to build requisite protocols into their operations at the early stages of business incubation. CDT also studies and advocates on privacy and data security laws.

**The Center for Media Justice (CMJ)** has a data security [campaign](#) focused on communities of color. The #DefendOurMovements: Digital Security project is "a web-based clearinghouse of the most up-to-date and useful information about protecting your devices and data -- whether on the Internet, through cell phone communications or in your home or office."

The [Georgetown Center on Privacy and Technology](#) studies the impact of government surveillance and commercial data practices on vulnerable communities, particularly via its annual [Color of Surveillance](#) conference.

Resources should be made available to assist small businesses in complying with privacy and data security mandates. Moreover, legislation affecting the use of AI should be based on existing, consensus-driven privacy and data security frameworks such as the [Fair Information Practice Principles](#) (FIPPs).

## Civic Engagement and Democracy

From hyper-partisanship to information overload, to policies that make it harder to vote, there is a continuum of reasons for why our communities are underrepresented at the polls and in politics. At its best, technology can spur civic engagement, by exposing information that traditional platforms cannot or will not. At its worst, technology can promote conspiracy theories and inaccurate information or even make our election systems vulnerable.

We are excited by the work of organizations like:

[Voto Latino](#), a nonprofit dedicated to engaging young Latinxs in the civic process through culture, technology and media. Over the last 14 years, Voto Latino has launched various campaigns, like National Voter Registration Day and new technologies to help facilitate voter registration, including their app, VoterPal, which makes registering to vote as easy as taking a selfie. Together with its supporters and partners, we aim to build a more diverse and inclusive democracy.

The [African American Mayors Association](#) (AAMA) is the only organization exclusively representing over 500 African-American mayors across the United States. AAMA seeks to empower local leaders for the benefit of their citizens. The role of the AAMA includes taking positions on public policies that impact the vitality and sustainability of cities, providing mayors with leadership and management tools, and creating a forum for member mayors to share best practices related to municipal management.

[Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#) - AAJC is a nonprofit nonpartisan organization that has served as the leading Asian American voice on civil rights issues in Washington, DC since 1993. AAJC has worked with tech companies to achieve political ad transparency, as well as ad targeting reforms that promote an active citizenry, regardless of background. This organization has also pushed industry leaders to be more engaged in motivating and activating communities to take part in Census 2020.

**Policymakers and companies can help here by:**

**Promoting Civic Engagement Programs to Build an Active and Educated Citizenry.** Though it is unfortunate that the act of voting has become partisan, it remains the foundation of our democracy. Tech companies and the government should promote policies and invest in making it easier for citizens to educate themselves, vote and stay engaged. It is important to include the expertise of organizations that specialize in voting and the electoral process to ensure that all solutions work in practice and meet the needs of vulnerable communities.

**Protecting US elections from interference from foreign, non-U.S. based bad actors** who seek to undermine our democracy by meddling in our elections through stoking fears and spreading misinformation. Provide disclosure and transparency regarding political advertisements on all digital advertising platforms.

## **Conclusion**

Policymakers, corporations, community leaders and stakeholders must be laser focused when it comes to protecting and growing existing and future leaders, viable companies, thriving organizations and first class models. Maintaining this focus, particularly when it comes to communities of color, is the best bet if everyone is to have a shot at achieving the American Dream. Our nation, and our global community will only truly reap the full benefits of the innovation economy, if it strengthens its commitment to civil and human rights and inclusive economic opportunity for all. It is through this lens that policymakers and stakeholders must enact policy, create products and institute programs with everyone in mind, and it is through leaders like those highlighted in this report, that we will achieve real, sustainable and ubiquitous success. These leaders are excellent resources for anyone seeking to understand what works in practice, what should be at the heart of critical decision-making, and where meaningful investments should be made.

Full Color Future and its partners stand ready to help.

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