

The Newsletter of Asian/Pacific Islander Unitarian Universalists and their Allies

Volume 4 Number 1

Page 1

March 2008



**What's Next for A/PIC? Envisioning the Future Together** — by Vivien Hao, A/PIC Chair

A/PIC Chair

I was on a spiritual and emotional “high” for a week after sharing an amazing weekend with 40 API UUs at the February A/PIC Annual Conference in Pasadena. Although about half of the participants were brand new to A/PIC (and me), and the others I see at most once or twice a year, there was an immediate bond among us — a true sense of shared history and an acute awareness that this gathering — perhaps the largest ever of APIUUs in one room — was both precious and very special.

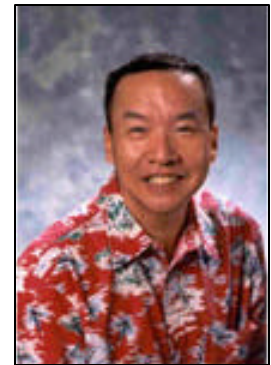
The next Sunday, when I went to my regular service at Pacific Unitarian Church, I missed the real sense of family that I experienced with my APIUU brothers and sisters the week before. I caught myself musing, “Wouldn’t it be great if I could go to church each Sunday and feel that profound sense of belonging?”

That’s my dream — my vision for us all — that each of us would have access to a faith community that is both diverse and inclusive, both exciting and safe, both comfortable and always challenging us to grow in new ways. For now, we have the A/PIC virtual community—and our annual gatherings at GA, the annual DRUUMM conference, and of (see *Future*, 4)

**My First A/PIC Conference** — by Paul Leung, A/PIC Vice-Chair

A/PIC Vice-Chair

My wife Wendy and I recently attended our first A/PIC meeting in Pasadena. With the incentive of visiting family for a few days after the conference, we signed on but I still wasn’t sure what to expect given what little knowledge I had of A/PIC at the time.



Wendy and I are the only persons of Asian descent who regularly attend the Denton UU Fellowship in Texas. There have only been two occasions of “Asian sightings” in a UU setting for us — one was at the Honolulu congregation and the other was in the Phoenix area where we found another Leung who with his family was quite active in congregational activities.

So it was good to see so many other UUs of Asian descent not only from California but also from Atlanta, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Milwaukee, and New Mexico, all of whom are also minorities in their own UU congregations. It was also good to come across APIUUs who are passionate about their faith. Most Americans of Asian descent I know who are religiously oriented seem to have adopted more fundamental evangelical faiths with their narrow range of answers. Fellowship with others who have often felt the (See *First*, 5)

**In this Issue**

What’s Next For A/PIC? Envisioning the Future Together ..... 1

My First A/PIC Conference ..... 1

Spirituality Through a Multicultural Lens ..... 2

Environmental Justice in Asia and the Pacific Islands.....3

A Letter to My Friend .....4

Manila UUs Expand Microfinance Program....5

Visioning With Appreciative Inquiry.....6

Milestone .....8

## *Spirituality Through a Multicultural*

*Lens* — by Caite Chi Olson, A/PIC Secretary

In Canberra, at the 1991 World Council of Churches, a young Korean woman named Chung Hyun Kyung offers the conference a brilliant visual gift – a traditional Korean fire dance. Now, from what I know of Korean dance costumes, called *hanbok*, there would be brocaded silk of hot pinks, next to royal blues; vivid lemon yellows striped next to emerald green, embossed with either gold or silver. Contrasting this riot of color is a white sleeve of the most delicate silk, called *han-ssam*, worn like a bracelet. This *han-ssam* could be worn demurely to cover the dancer's face or undulate through the air; any small gesture would be accentuated. Drumbeat of traditional *chang-goo* (shaped like a sideways hourglass) segues into the plaintive sound of the Australian *didgeridoo*, ushering in the conference leaders through a smoky purification ritual.

With such a beautiful beginning, you would think that this conference would have been blessed. I would have thought that too, but we would both be wrong.

Most of the attendees agreed Chung's presentation was in bad taste. A majority of those people condemned it as Sinful. The sin most widely named was Syncretism, defined as "fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices."

This deeply religious, newly ordained young woman offers her vision of what her Christian faith means as sinful. As a Korean womanist or feminist of color, Chung's longing is to be seen, as she had so often seen others worship in a context familiar to them.

If Lois Derman-Sparks, an early Anti-Bias Curriculum developer, had been in Canberra, she could have offered a metaphor. Her offering metaphor would have been Mirrors and Windows.

People of the majority see versions of themselves everywhere, so they need a window to see through to other experiences. People who are different from that majority need mirrors – to see reflections of themselves, other versions of themselves. Chung Hyun Kyung offered the World Council of Churches a window experience; a view into her own Korean womanist Christian context.

As a woman of mixed race, half-Korean, half-Norwegian, mirrors were my early obsession. I



wanted to see people who looked like me. Movies and musicals like *Flower Drum Song* and *South Pacific* provided my youthful experiences. I could see, in the first, three ways of being an Asian female – lovely hard-working seamstress, show girl who enjoyed being a girl, or docile,

dutiful daughter who gets the guy and "wins."

The score of *South Pacific* holds an even more haunting mirror in the song "You've Got To Be Carefully Taught":

*You've got to be taught to be afraid  
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,  
And people whose skin is a different shade,  
You've got to be carefully taught.*

This song belongs to a young lieutenant who fell in love with a beautiful Pacific Islander. His choice of a suicide mission over marriage to that beautiful girl opened my eyes to this simple truth: These were not mirrors for me, but windows into American culture's view of Asian Pacific Islanders.

In the readings from our API youth, there are two mirrors for me, windows for most of you into the Asian womanist experience. Here are deeper truths than Hollywood ever offered. In *Suicide Note*, Janice Mirikitani nearly drums out the inescapable "not-good-enough, not-smart-enough." It is a poem of internalized oppression, something we dream of changing for our youth. I know that there is in me a hope that they will never feel ashamed of their heritage, that they will hear the words of Amy Tan's mother better than I did – "The only shame is to have shame."

A/PIC after all represents in our amazing diversity, lands where major religions flourished; wisdom from traditions we all as Unitarian Universalists claim as a source of our faith. As a student of world religions, the *darshan* of Hinduism honors the holy in its many forms, the interconnected web of life differs, for me, very little from what I know of *Tao*, the Buddhist monks of Myanmar bore witness this year to what can be the ultimate costs of social justice.

In this world-wide, mirror-connection to Asian/Pacific Islanders, I feel a (see *Spirituality*, 7)

## *Environmental Justice in Asia and the Pacific Islands* — by Kat Liu (All Souls Church Unitarian, Washington, DC)

I am concerned about Asian/Pacific Islander issues, and also gravely concerned about global warming/climate change. However, when we were called at the conference in Pasadena to dream about where we see A/PIC in the coming years, I at first could not see us addressing global warming. It was in my mind an urgent yet separate issue.

This is especially embarrassing given that I am currently the point person on Environmental Justice for the UUA. For those of you unfamiliar with the term, environmental justice (or EJ for short) recognizes that environmental issues must be seen through the lenses of racial, economic, and gender justice. EJ recognizes that often times, those who are the least powerful and least responsible for environmental problems are the first to suffer its consequences. What I've recently come to understand is that while the consequences of global warming are dire for everyone, they are especially dire for our sisters and brothers living in Asia and the Pacific Islands.

In the United States, some folks are still arguing whether global warming/climate change even exists. Meanwhile, residents of Asia and the Pacific Islands are confronted with the life-threatening reality of it.

More than twenty thousand islands dot the Pacific Ocean, home to almost nine million people. Many of these islands are low-lying reefs and atolls, no more than half a mile above sea level. The rising salt water is encroaching on homes. And the salt water has killed mangrove trees, which normally act as a natural protective barrier against tsunamis. After the tsunami of 2004 those areas where the mangrove trees had already died fared much worse than those where they were still intact. The salt water has also killed agriculture and poisoned sources of fresh water, making the islands that still stand above sea level increasingly uninhabitable. Ironically, the residents of these islands contribute the least to greenhouse gas emissions and thus global climate change, yet they are the first to suffer. Tens of thousands have already applied for emigration to New Zealand.

And then there is Asia. While the much larger and higher land masses of Asia will not be submerged, they will and are feeling the consequences of global



*Rescue workers in Indonesia after torrential rain, January 2007*

climate change. Coastal regions are subjected to the same tsunamis that contaminate fresh water and spread disease. Melting of the Himalayan glaciers will result first in flooding and then in the decrease of river flows. Changes in weather patterns will also result in floods and droughts. It is estimated that over one billion people worldwide will be displaced due to scarcity of fresh water by 2050, most of them from Asia. And lest anyone think that China and India bear the onus with their increasing industrialization, the average U.S. citizen still generates five times more carbon pollution than the average Chinese and fifteen times more than the average Indian.

We are looking in the near future at massive numbers of climate change refugees who will tax national infrastructures, increase conflict over limited natural resources, and result in untold human suffering and lost of cultures. As APIUUs, it is our responsibility to bear witness, and to model a more just way to live with a much smaller environmental impact – for our earth, our brothers and sisters, our children, and our selves. Visit [www.uua.org/socialjustice/issues/globalwarming/](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issues/globalwarming/) to find out what you can do.



*Flood evacuees in Jakarta*

***A Letter to My Friend*** — by Colleen Fong  
(First Unitarian Church of Oakland, Oakland, CA)

**D**ear Donna [Fujioka],

I want to thank you for forwarding the A/PIC conference registration form to me last fall. I have been attending the First Unitarian Church of Oakland on-and-off for the past seven or so years and had seen an A/PIC brochure, but I would not have registered for the conference without your email message. Fortunately, it came at a time when I had carved space out of my crowded schedule by teaching a reduced load (for reduced pay). Although my university does not observe President's Day, which we lost when we gained King's birthday, I felt free to take a three-day weekend and travel to Pasadena with you and your family for my first A/PIC conference.



The first night when we gathered in an upstairs room in Throop Church, I felt a connection and a passion that I had not experienced since attending the first meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies in Seattle in 1979. Over the next two days, I came to learn that the A/PIC community, comprised of APIs and allies with a vast array of life experiences, had come together from various parts of the country in common cause. I was able to speak with nearly *every* person at the conference, one-on-one. Despite the fact that I live in a city that is 21% Asian Pacific and teach on a campus where 34% of the students are Asian Pacific, I rarely experience this intense sense of community and openness.

The Association for Asian American Studies has matured into *the* professional organization for Asian Americanists, replete with a journal, regional representatives, etc. It has served as a tremendous resource for those in the field, but I will always hold in my heart the intimacy that I experi-

enced in 1979. As A/PIC grows its membership and moves to regional meetings, the special-ness of my Pasadena experience will become even more significant. I am honored to have attended the sixth annual conference. Thank you for extending the invitation.

Sincerely,  
Colleen [Fong]

(Future — from page 1)

course at the annual A/PIC conference. For these and each one of you, I am grateful.

Since our formation just five years ago, A/PIC has become the largest, most active and organized caucus of DRUUMM. We have earned a well-deserved reputation for provocative and exciting programming at GA, and for providing support and encouragement to our members in times of both joy and sorrow. Yet, I believe we can be so much more. What greater service could we be to our own membership and the larger UU community, especially all those API children who are transracially adopted or in mixed-race families? How can we build this dream of a multiracial, multicultural world—and evangelize to thousands of unchurched API “UUs in waiting”?

At the Pasadena conference, we got a good start on our visioning and strategic planning process. With the facilitation of Dr. Rama Hart, a UU from Minneapolis, we have begun to look at “what we want to do when we grow up.” It was evident during our sessions that each of us has a slightly different vision for A/PIC’s future. But everyone seemed to agree on two things: We can and will stretch ourselves and we can and need to broaden our reach, in the UU world and outside of it. As we move forward in this year-long process of self-assessment using the Appreciate Inquiry process, the A/PIC Steering Committee will be asking you for your input on how we can further share our stories and enlarge our circle of love.

I hope you will join us in creating a bold, new vision for A/PIC. Let’s be prepared to speak out, stand up and show up, when called!

In faith and struggle, *Vivien*

**Partner Church Council visits Filipino UUs**

— by Bob Guerrero (UU Community of Manila,



Quezon City UUs fellowship with American UUs at Max Brenner

From March 4 to March 15 an intrepid band of American UUs toured the UU congregations in the Philippines.

The party, headed by the UUPCC's Lee Boeke Burke, was composed of 11 American UUs from Los Angeles, San Diego, Colorado, Wisconsin, Maine and New York.

The group toured several UU congregations in the island of Negros and also visited the congregation in the Metro Manila urban poor area of Western Bicutan. Everywhere they went, the group has felt warmly embraced.

Unitarian Universalists of Quezon City, a one-year-old group of mostly professionals, also enjoyed dinner and coffee with the visitors.

The visit was deemed a success, as greater ties were forged between American churches and the UUs from Negros and Metro Manila.

(First, from page 1)

“micro-assaults” of the majority was a welcome and comfortable experience.

At the conference I learned of how A/PIC has helped individuals connect with their Asian roots and how A/PIC provides a place to explore race beyond being Black or White. But still the programming of this meeting was a bit surprising for a first timer as the primary focus was a strategic planning exercise using the Appreciative Inquiry technique. Not knowing much about an organization certainly is a disad-

vantage in thinking of planning for the future, but the exercise was designed to be inclusive of congregational experiences wherever appropriate.

Having attended my first A/PIC conference, my perspective and knowledge of A/PIC have grown and I now know A/PIC to be a unique organization within the larger Unitarian Universalist community. Maybe typical of UUs in general, A/PIC’s membership has divergent opinions and perspectives that are not easily accommodated or reconciled or agreed upon.

I learned that A/PIC has many faces:

- ◆ A/PIC is a refuge and thus a safe and comfortable place for APIUUs to explore self and identity.
- ◆ A/PIC is a place to celebrate and support APIUUs in their roles in American and UU life.
- ◆ A/PIC serves as an educational voice and an advocate in combating racism beyond Black and White for the larger UU community in dealing with social justice issues of being bi-cultural and bi-racial as well as for API adoptees living with White families. A/PIC tries to ensure that UUs live up to their own stated principles.
- ◆ A/PIC is evangelical in that it is a catalyst for increasing the numbers of APIUUs and a watchdog for fostering authentic inclusion and not just token participation.
- ◆ A/PIC strives to nurture young people of Asian descent to form a new generation of leaders.

Having learned about A/PIC, I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this growing, influential moving within Unitarian Universalism.



Wendy and Paul at their first A/PIC conference

## Visioning Using Appreciative Inquiry

by KokHeong McNaughton (Unitarian Church of Los Alamos, NM)

One of the highlights for me at our sixth A/PIC Conference, besides reconnecting with friends, was the opportunity to participate in the visioning process using the technique of *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI), led by Dr. Rama Hart, a UU and a trained AI facilitator.



I've since brought back to my congregation this wonderful tool. I am now an avowed AI-Evangelist, in addition to being my usual UU-Evangelist self. I bought a couple of books and have been pushing them like illegal drugs onto those who are still my friends.

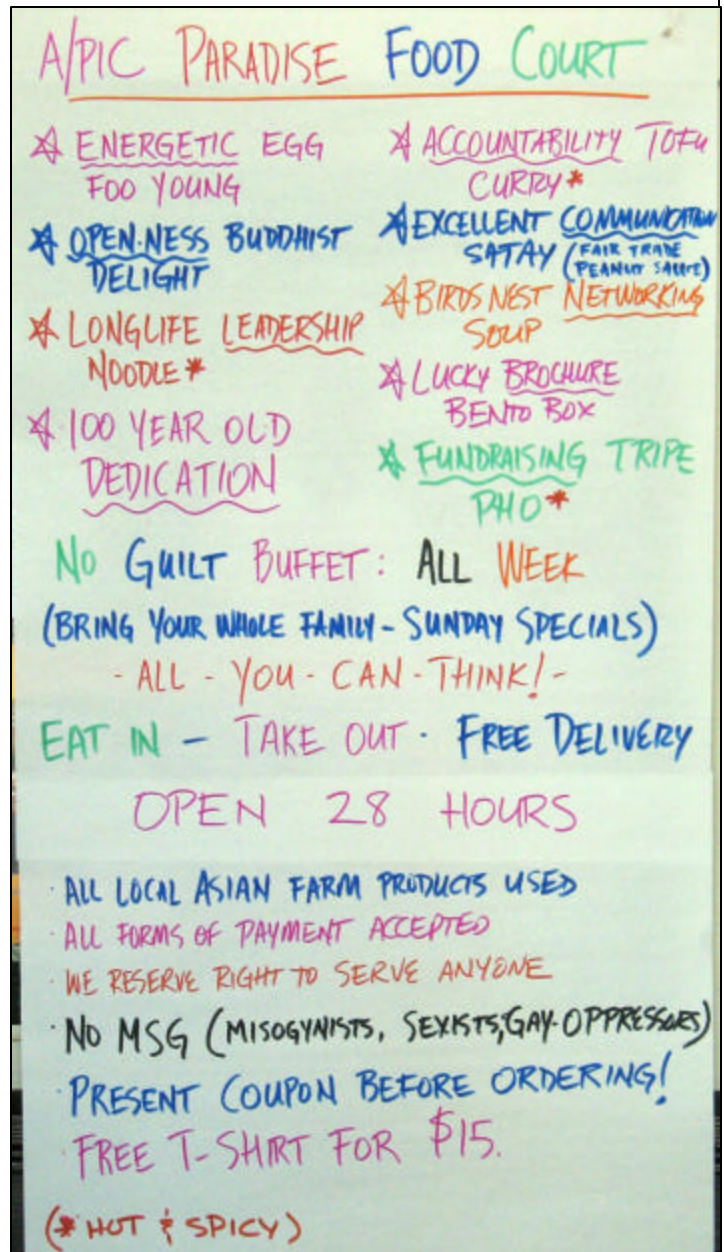
Wikipedia defines AI as “[an] organizational development process or philosophy that engages individuals within an organizational system in its renewal, change and focused performance.” I find this very useful in my capacity as a member of the Committee On Ministry engaging in the first year performance evaluation of our newly-called minister. It's also a very useful tool when conducting membership profile interviews and exit interviews, or simply talking to people during coffee hour so as to keep my fingers on the pulse of my church.

AI focuses on what is good and working instead of what's wrong and not working in a particular environment. Instead of going into a dysfunctional organization and trying to fix what's not working, by concentrating on what's working, the situation fixes itself! It's a miracle!

One of the first steps in the AI process is the *Appreciative Interview*, conducted one-on-one and encompassing as many of the stake-holders as possible. Rama did this during our A/PIC conference by providing us with a set of interview questions and organizing us into pairs. I was fortunate to be paired with Colleen Fong whom I met for the first time. Colleen is a newcomer to A/PIC, yet the questions were designed such that we could both share stories about the strengths of either A/PIC or our own congregation.

From these stories, shared with the whole group, we began to see our *Core Strengths* — those values in our organization that have sustained us for the past 6 years.

In larger groups, we mapped out these Core Strengths in creative ways, and presented them using words, pictures and a special “Food Court Menu.”

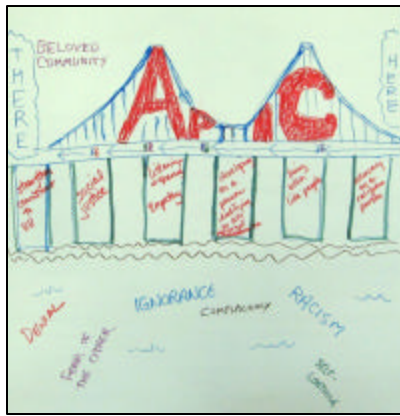


Some of A/PIC's Core Strengths include:

- ◆ Energetic and dedicated leadership
  - ◆ Communications — website, email lists, brochures, newsletters, net-working, publicity
  - ◆ Transparency and accountability
  - ◆ Fund-raising talents
  - ◆ Strong General Assembly Programming
  - ◆ Willingness to admit errors
  - ◆ Diversity in community
  - ◆ Openness to new ideas and experiences
  - ◆ Safe, non-judgmental environment for spiritual growth and exploration
- (see AI, 7)

(AI — from page 6)

Another presentation of our Core Strengths is that of a bridge to bring A/PIC from “here” to “there” (“there” being defined as “beloved Community”) while the undesirable qualities are discarded into the water.



In this picture, the pillars that hold up this bridge are:

- ◆ Strengthen commitment to UU
- ◆ Social Justice
- ◆ Listening and sharing — empathy
- ◆ Developing as a person identifying as API — personal transformation
- ◆ Being with like people
- ◆ Advocacy as a religious person

From strengths come vision. Through guided meditation, we were led into a future ten years from now. We’ve been asleep for ten years. We wake up. A/PIC has made front-page news. What happened? What did we do? What do we see us doing ten years from now? We are encouraged to dream big. From brainstorming what we individually saw in our meditation, a list of possibilities emerged that were organized into categories. Groups were formed to examine each of these facets of A/PIC’s future:

- ◆ The A/PIC of tomorrow — A/PIC is the catalyst for personal, spiritual, and identity transformation for APIUUs.
- ◆ Building bridges — reaching out to “unchurched” families with multiracial/transracially-adopted children.
- ◆ Sustainability — A/PIC leads UUA on global environmental justice in solidarity with APIs around the world!
- ◆ Youth lead the way — the vibrancy of our District’s youth of color attracts first Multi-ethnic Summit!
- ◆ Youth cement lifelong bonds — every District sends at least 12 youths to our conference!
- ◆ Transracial/multiracial — A/PIC is the authority on multiracial/transracial issues in the UUA!

This conference, for me, has been one of the most enjoyable. The warm weather and the easily-

available and diverse ethnic food added much to my enjoyment. My husband Mike and I spent half a day after the conference exploring China Town in Los Angeles where I indulged in banana fritters and fresh squeezed sugar cane juice.

The vendor assured me that the sugar cane was locally grown.

(Spirituality — from page 2)

personal loss this year in the death of Pakistan’s Benazir Bhutto. Her understanding of Islam as a pluralistic, liberating religion ran counter to our American stereotypes of Muslim women. This I appreciate, as I do the centuries-old relationship between Unitarian and Muslim leaders.

While we are from these places, we are also like almost 90% of Unitarian-Universalists. We come out of, for me, Lutheranism, and, I have heard, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Baptists.

In my spiritual journey, elements from all these religions and spiritual disciplines resonate, rich sources for the always further contemplation and action in this Midwestern, middle-aged multi-racial life I lead.

Thank you for the song *Arirang*, perhaps the most cherished Korean folksong of all. The translation is, I have been told, something like this — *Oh my Beloved, how could you have left me alone and weary?* This is a song of *han* — the nearly untranslatable sadness, or bitterness or realization of our shared mortal condition. Yet this is somehow also sustaining and life-giving.

You can recognize *han*, even when you cannot verbalize *han*. African-descent poet Lucille Clifton writes a *han* poem:

*won't you celebrate with me  
what i have shaped into  
a kind of life? i had no model.  
born in babylon  
both nonwhite and woman  
what did i see to be except myself?  
i made it up  
here on this bridge between  
starshine and clay,  
my one hand holding tight  
my other hand; come celebrate  
with me that everyday  
something has tried to kill me  
and has failed.*

Thank you and Amen, Ashay and Blessed be.

## Milestone



On December 15, 2007, Joseph Santos-Lyons was ordained at West Hills UU Fellowship in Portland OR. Robette Dias and Rev. Chester McCall delivered the Ordination Sermon while Rev. Monica Cummings gave the Charge to the Minister.



February 17, 2008 marks the first service of the Singapore Unitarian Universalists. Joseph Moody, (second from left) conducted the service and lit the Chalice.

## Become an A/PIC Member!

A/PIC membership is open to all individuals who self-identify as partly or wholly Asian or Pacific Island in heritage or origin.

To become a member, simply state your intention by sending an email to [steering@apiuu.org](mailto:steering@apiuu.org) with the following information:

- ◆ Your full name
- ◆ The name of your congregation or UU organization with which you claim affiliation
- ◆ Your ethnic identity
- ◆ Contact information: mailing address and phone number
- ◆ A statement of intent (eg. I, \_\_\_\_\_, intend to be counted as a voting member of A/PIC.)

Membership privileges include:

- ◆ Voting
- ◆ Holding elected offices
- ◆ Accessibility to the members' only section of our website
- ◆ Scholarships to conferences and meetings
- ◆ Subscription to the members' only email list
- ◆ Receiving minutes of all Steering Committee phone conferences
- ◆ Receiving bi-annual updates on our Membership Directory
- ◆ Receiving copies of Hot Rice three times a year

***And..... There are no membership dues!***

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