



THE  
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER  
OF THE  
FIRST FRIDAY  
BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.

# First Friday News & Views

SEPTEMBER  
2011  
VOLUME  
16  
ISSUE  
9

## STICKING TO THE FACTS

by Jonathan Wilson

Jack Webb, the fictional detective, was famous for saying to a witness prone to volunteering opinions, “The facts ma’am, just the facts.” That admonition came to mind after the California Legislature passed, and Governor Brown signed, a statute requiring that the California public schools tweak the curriculum to include information about gay people. This will be an improvement, and there’s plenty of room for improvement.

Doubtless there are those who will view this development as advancing the “gay agenda.” I agree that it will – those afraid of the “gay agenda” and I simply don’t agree on what the “gay agenda” is. Our detractors would have folks believe that the “gay agenda” is one of advocating a culture of decadence and debauchery, prime examples of both of which, paradoxically, can be seen in videos taken at Mardi Gras or spring break resorts (predominantly heterosexual venues).

By contrast, my “agenda” as an out gay man is to teach the difference between sexual orientation and behavior. Gay people are capable of their share of decadence and debauchery, but so are straight people and, given the numbers, most such behavior is committed by straight people. Simply put, gay people exist. All of God’s children aren’t straight, and same-gender intimacy between the gay ones is not, as First Century thinkers would have folks believe, just straight people misbehaving. My “agenda” is to educate others that only what is truly *behavior* carries implications for morality. There are right and wrong *behaviors* (even though even that demarcation is not static over time); no behavior that I know of is unique to gay people; and sexual orientation is irrelevant and can be found on both sides of that line.

Behavior is something consciously chosen, like deciding to be a Catholic; a Baptist; a Republican; a bigot; or an enlightened, tolerant person. Like being a glutton, a liar, a cheater, or a thief. Chosen behavior can be virtuous and some can be not-so-flattering. The latter can be unwise, impolite, immoral, or even criminal. What is not-so-flattering, and the degree of approbation that should be assigned to it, are subjects of fair debate in every generation. As James Russell Lowell famously said, “New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good [behavior] uncouth, they must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth.”

So, for example, Jesus could challenge supposed truth enunciated in the Old Testament, and we have a New Testament as a partial result. There are those who could, citing the Bible, advocate reducing the age of consent and polygamous marriage. I, for one, am comfortable with a New Testament that doesn’t condemn homosexuality. Despite what the Bible teaches, I’m also comfortable with the current age of consent, and I’m comfortable restricting state-sanctioned marriage to two consenting, unrelated adults.

The history curriculum in public schools can identify countless gay people already otherwise well-known to most students, and recognize their meaningful, positive contributions. Those contributions are made the more impressive given the societal context in which they were made, a context that, until recently, included criminalization of same-gender intimacy and the erroneous attitude that homosexuality is a mental illness.

The art curriculum can beneficially identify countless artists in every medium who were/are gay. The literature curriculum will be better understood by a better understanding of the authors. Can anyone seriously doubt that the writings of George Eliot are better appreciated by knowing that the name was actually that of the female author, Mary Anne Evans? And in the curriculum

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### CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, September 2, 2011, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by August 31 to [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or 288-2500 by phone.

about politics, where it is so important to a democracy for students to understand about hypocrisy, identifying positive and negative closet-case contributions is an imperative.

There's no need for opinions to be expressed in the public school curriculum. There's no need to include any opinion other than neutrality. The facts will speak for themselves. Many of us have been driven into or kept in the closet by falsehoods about gay citizens. Many have engaged in self-destructive behaviors borne of pervasive teaching of lies about us. Our oppression has been fostered, too often even by our own hands, by false stereotypes. As the Bible (KJV) says, "...the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32).

"The facts ma'am, just the facts." Get the truth out there and the rest will take care of itself.

## Remarks of Suku Radia

Intro by Bruce Carr

Our speaker on August 5, 2011, was Mr. Suku Radia, President and CEO of Bankers Trust and a long-time friend and supporter of our community. Radia treated us to some highly eloquent remarks -- "from the heart," as he said -- in defense of Marriage Equality as a basic expression of American freedom. We are honored to re-print the heart of that speech here, with his permission.

I feel especially honored today to address the First Friday Breakfast Club because, like all of you, I subscribe to the notion that we live in the freest country in the world. Some of my remarks are fashioned after a speech delivered by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg in May 2011 at The Cooper Union.

Freedom can never be frozen in time. In matters of freedom and equality, history has never remembered obstructionists kindly. Our past teaches us that when we as a nation have struggled with women's suffrage, workers' rights, racial justice, and other core issues, it took us time to do honor to our principles—often too much time—but good sense and compassion ultimately prevailed.

In a recent column, the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote, "Did I mention that I've signed a pledge—just like those Republican congressmen who have signed written promises to different political enforcers not to raise taxes or permit same-sex marriage? My pledge is to never vote for anyone stupid enough to sign the pledge—thereby abdicating their governing responsibilities in a period of incredibly rapid change and financial stress."

Friedman continued, "It is this kind of idiocy by elected officials that sends you into a hair-pulling rage and leaves you wishing we had more options today than our two-party system is putting forward—for instance, a party that would have of-

fered a grand bargain on the deficit two years ago, not on the eve of a Treasury default."

I came to this country almost 40 years ago to attend college. Though my ancestry is Indian, I am originally from Uganda, East Africa. I was born to wealth as a member of my family's fourth generation in that country, and thus consider myself to be an African. While I was in the States, my family was evicted from Uganda by Idi Amin. Unlike several of their friends who were not so fortunate, my parents managed to escape with their lives, but they lost nearly everything else. So here I was in the United States attending college, a man without a country, but a man who knew he was living in a nation that had been guided for years by the same principles that had shaped the life he knew in his homeland—freedom, liberty, and equality.

There is no denying that African-Americans once were held in bondage, Catholics could not hold office in New York, those without property could not vote, women could not vote or hold office, and homo-sexuality was, in some places, a crime punishable by death. There also is no denying that, one by one, the legal prohibitions to freedom and equality have been overcome.

Every generation in this country has successfully removed barriers so people can more fully participate in the American dream. When the Supreme Court of Iowa unanimously ruled that gay marriage was permissible, I was absolutely delighted and extremely proud. When Iowans then found a way to throw out three of the judges for that same landmark decision, I was appalled.

Earlier this year, I spoke before the Iowa General Assembly in passionate defense of tolerance. Afterwards, I was hurrying out of the chambers to attend another engagement when a gentleman with whom I was barely acquainted joined me on my brisk walk to my car. At first, I did not realize that his was a so-called faith-based agenda, and had we understood each other sooner, he could have saved himself some thankless exertion. I cannot understand the kind of faith that argues the right of one group in society to cause another group to live in fear—of harassment, of humiliation, of discrimination, of physical violence—simply because it can.

Terry Branstad called on me when he was running for office last September. He handed me an envelope hoping I would give him a check for \$1,000 in support of his campaign. In the course of our conversation, the now-Governor unequivocally stated he believed marriage should exist only as a union between a man and a woman. I quickly responded that I would never deny his right to hold that belief; however, the discussion we were having was not about his religious beliefs or my own. We were having a political discussion, a discussion about power and who should hold it over what and for what reasons. He did not agree with my distinction, and he chose to continue the conversation no further. He was well aware that my checkbook was still in my pocket, and I take some pride in believing he also was well aware that I was not going to hang back and be silent on the issue.

Many of you know Michael Gartner and have heard him

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# Midnight in Paris

## And

### Bridesmaids

Review By Gary Kaufman

As your reviewer I have gone to many, many action movies this summer. Some fairly good (**Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows Part 2** and **Rise of the Planet of the Apes**) and some excruciatingly horrible (**Thor in 3D**). But the two movies of the summer that really stand out for me are two well-written romantic comedies. One is written and directed by a comedic film veteran, and the other is the first screenplay written by a current star of **Saturday Night Live**.

The comedic veteran is Woody Allen, who has his most well-received film in years in **Midnight in Paris**. Some of Woody's better films in the latter part of his career have been movies that capture an era in a comedic format, such as **Radio Days**. **Midnight in Paris** opens with wonderful romantic shots of Paris followed by Owen Wilson's character, Gil, opining about what it would have been like to be in Paris in the 20's with the wonderful writers and the artists of the era, and he thinks of moving there. His accompanying fiancé, Inez (Rachel McAdams), responds by saying she would NEVER want to live anywhere but the U.S.A. Gil is a successful writer of screenplays for movies. He would rather be a novelist, and bemoans the career choice that he made to be a well-paid Hollywood hack rather than being a starving novelist living in Paris. Gil and Inez are vacationing in Paris with Inez's parents who are in Paris on a business trip. Gil is struggling with a novel and has not let anyone read it, including his fiancé. He discloses that it is about a guy who runs a nostalgia shop. Paul, an irritating friend of Inez, explains that nostalgia is for people who believe that there was a Golden Age that is different than the one in which they're living; people who have difficulty dealing with the present. Inez keeps wanting to go dancing and partying with her friends, while Gil would prefer that the couple walk the streets of Paris in the rain.

One night Gil decides to walk home to his hotel and let the others go out dancing, but he becomes lost trying to find his way back. Gil is trying to figure out what to do with his predicament when a bright yellow antique automobile from the 20s pulls up, and the occupants urge Gil to join them to go to a party. They are all dressed in 20s period clothes and Gil, intrigued, decides to accept the ride. Before he knows it he is at a party in Paris where there present are F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda. The two agree with Gil that the party is too dull and soon they are whisked away to a bar in Paris where they run into a young Ernest Hemmingway. Gil asks Hemmingway to read his book, but instead Ernest decides that the person who should read it is Gertrude Stein (Kathy Bates).

On many successive nights, Gil waits until midnight at the same isolated location to accept a ride from the people in the 20s vehicle. One night he is taken by Ernest Hemmingway to

Gertrude Stein's apartment where they are greeted by Alice B. Toklas. Initially Gertrude is criticizing a work of Picasso to Picasso and his mistress, Adriana. Gil falls for Adriana. But when the couple decides to go out together and wait for the usual vehicle, instead of a vehicle from the 20s showing up, a horse drawn carriage from the 1890s shows up and takes them to Adriana's Golden Era, Paris in the time of the Moulin Rouge, where they meet Toulouse Lautrec and other artists of that era.

The characterizations of all these famous writers and artists are great, with Corey Stoll's interpretation of Ernest Hemmingway really standing out. It is also great to see Owen Wilson in a good comedy again – he had been brilliant in the 2005 movie, **Wedding Crashers**, but has been involved in less-than-stellar films since then. One hopes that this film will get him back on the right track.

The question the film poses is whether there were ever any golden eras that were really better than the present. The film includes many pointed jabs to the extreme right wing and other issues and is a joy to sit through. Those who appreciate the humor and skill of Woody Allen, should certainly see this picture.

I also saw **Bridesmaids**. It is the initial screenplay by Kristen Wiig, known for her fast-talking Penelope character and impersonation of Nancy Pelosi on **Saturday Night Live**. This screenplay is an absolute hoot! The film opens with Kristen Wiig's character, Annie, having another sexual romp with someone who considers her "his #3" – representing another string of sexual relationships with men who are not interested in having a rela-

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## BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the September 2 meeting no later than August 31. E-mail [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Dr. Dwight Watson, Dean of the University of Northern Iowa, who is African-American and gay.

Thanks to Scott Johnson for his introduction of our August speaker, Suku Radia.

If you haven't sent an RSVP indicating you're going on the FFBC excursion to Elkader September 17-18, 2011, do so to the same email address or phone number as above.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Fred Mount for coordinating the book exchange .

Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC Scholarship Fund. Also, consider designating FFBC as a targeted recipient of your United Way pledge; FFBC is an approved designee. You'll get credit at work for your participation and help FFBC at the same time .

## Suku Radia (cont.)

speak. Michael used to be the managing editor of the *Des Moines Register* and is the current owner of the Iowa Cubs. If you know him at all, you know why his sharp tongue is universally feared. A while ago, I had the honor of being interviewed by him in front of some 150 influential people from Central Iowa.

He previously had sent me an email expressing his support of the position I had taken on the gay marriage issue. Knowing we were in agreement made my preparation much easier. I occasionally might be judged as foolhardy, but I'm prudent enough to want to avoid learning in a public forum whether I'm intellectually capable of holding my own in an argument with Michael Gartner.

Michael asked me a question along the lines of, "You took a position on the gay marriage issue. You are in the business community. Are you concerned about the fact that Bankers Trust may lose some business as a result of your stance?"

My response was that I had received 102 communications, 20 of them from CEOs. Of those 102 communications, 101 were supportive. It was a result that made me proud of Iowa's business community and affirmed my confidence in the essential fairness of Bankers Trust customers.

I was not so proud that a number of CEOs who sent supportive messages failed to stand behind their written words by appearing before the Iowa General Assembly.

I say this to you now: If legislation is introduced to challenge the state's current position on gay marriage, I vow to call upon my CEO friends to stand against it. We will be loud and we will prevail.

When I met with Michael Gronstal last week, I greeted him with an embrace and thanked him for being such a courageous leader. No Iowan has stood firmer for human rights—including the right to marry—in this state. As you know, there will be an effort to unseat him in the next election. I am optimistic that he will not only win another term, he will continue taking the lead in making gay marriage a non-issue in Iowa politics.

A new generation is about to add impetus to attitudinal change. Study after study shows that the majority of young people recognize the right to marry as a CIVIL right; it is not exclusionary. I hope our legislators have the foresight and courage to listen to their own children.

Unfortunately, not everyone is listening to them. Three weeks ago, two Republican candidates for president signed the "Marriage Vow" pledge issued by Iowa's Bob Vander Plaats. Be assured many leaders are standing firm against such nonsense. Gary Johnson, former Governor of New Mexico and presidential candidate, stated, "Government should not be involved in the bedroom of consenting adults. As a Republican, I am an advocate of liberty and the elimination of unnecessary government intervention in our lives. This pledge is offensive

to those principles and as far as I am concerned, it is un-Republican and un-American."

We have made tremendous progress in our constitutional system, and every generation moves closer to living the words of the Preamble. Remember, I came from a country where there was a coup when Idi Amin seized power. Here, we have no king or queen to overthrow. We only have our ideals to live up to.

Nothing I've said here this morning is earth-shattering, but I speak from the heart. In closing, I ask us to remember that we are a nation of many peoples and beliefs. The only way to respect all citizens is to allow them to make personal decisions for themselves.

## Movie Review (cont.)

tionship. To add to Annie's angst, her best friend from childhood, Lillian (Maya Rudolph), is getting married and wants Annie to be her maid of honor. The film brings together all these characters who are the bridesmaids of Lillian, and each person is just about as loony as the rest. It reminds me of the **Bob Newhart** episodes when he had his group sessions. In addition, Annie's mom is someone who goes to AA meetings and who views herself as having an addictive personality. When Annie points out to her mom that she has never had a drinking problem, her mom says, "That's only because I never had a drink!"

The advent of the impending wedding sets off a string of events – the announcement party, the bachelorette party, the wedding shower – and each turns out to be a total disaster, mostly because Annie feels threatened by Lillian's new friend, Helen (Rose Byrne), who is very rich and very beautiful – think Blair on **The Facts of Life**. It is fun to watch these two try to outdo each other, especially among the antics of the rest of the bridesmaids. The one who stole the show was Melissa McCarthy's character "Megan," the sister to the groom, who out-grosses any male character I have seen in this type of film. A love interest develops for Annie when she is pulled over by Officer Rhodes (played by cute-as-a-button Chris O'Dowd), and the high jinks continues, culminating in a very emotional and satisfying ending and probably the most spectacular wedding there could ever be. Coupled with the moral that "you are your problem and you are also your solution," and you have about as satisfying a trip to a movie as one can get.

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*Grassroots: something that thrives on dirt.*

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*Remember when teachers, public employees, Planned Parenthood, NPR and PBS crashed the stock market, wiped out half of our 401ks, took trillions in taxpayer funded bail outs, spilled oil in the Gulf of Mexico, gave themselves billions in bonuses, and paid no taxes. Yeah, me neither.*

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# Brace Yourself Daisy May

By Jonathan Wilson

The title is none other than the definition of “Missouri foreplay.” It’s nothing more than a warning of something unpleasant that’s about to happen.

Something unpleasant is about to happen. The FFBC Board of Directors has been prompted by increasing rent and catering expenses to revisit the FFBC dues structure. No member of the Board can recall a dues increase, ever. That’s pretty good fiscal management for a fifteen year run – or it means that we’ve been over-charging for FFBC membership since the inception.

Regardless, the expenses have finally caught up with us. We’ve absorbed rent increases already, and we’ve persuaded our caterer to postpone a price increase until January 2012. That has given us the lead-time to evaluate our dues structure in a thorough, thoughtful manner; and time to forewarn the membership.

At its last meeting, the FFBC Board adopted the following dues structure effective January 2012:

## **Student Rate**

**\$8.00 per meeting**

## **First Time Attendee Rate**

**\$12.00 per meeting (within the preceding, rolling 12-month period, and without regard to membership eligibility)**

## **Monthly Rate (whether eligible for membership or not)**

**\$15.00 per meeting**

## **Three or More Consecutive Meetings Rate**

**\$42.00 (\$1 discount/meeting)**

## **Annual Rate (if paid before March 1 each year)**

**\$150.00**

## **Separate Newsletter Subscription Rate**

**\$15.00 per year**

With this new dues structure, the Student Rate remains unchanged, so a member can take advantage of that by becoming a full-time student. The rate for First Time Attendees also remains unchanged and has the added clarifications that (1) “first time” is within a rolling period of twelve calendar months, and (2) no differentiation is made between those eligible for membership and those not eligible. The rate for those attending and paying on a meeting-by-meeting basis will actually have a reduction of \$3 from the current charge. The Board also revised what previously was a charge for each calendar quarter; going forward that option will be for three consecutive meetings without regard to calendar quarter, and the charge will increase by \$2 per meeting (still a discount from the meeting-by-meeting rate). The separate newsletter subscription rate will remain unchanged.

The “regular” annual membership rate will, however, go up to \$150 if paid prior to March 1 of the calendar year. De-

pending on whether or not we have two meetings in July, that works out to either \$12.50 or \$11.53 per meeting. Still a good deal and worth paying by the year.

What do you get for your money? Your dues, however paid, will cover your share of our location costs and catering the breakfast. For those paying by the year or for three months, the dues will also include our monthly newsletter for a corresponding period without additional charge. Those who don’t participate in FFBC, and those paying on a meeting-by-meeting basis, can separately subscribe to the newsletter for \$15 per year.

Beyond that you get a terrific network of friends and potential friends; a wonderfully gay-friendly, male environment once each month; excellent and varied local, state, and national speakers; and the opportunity to participate in a scholarship program that helps with education and activism to reduce homophobia in schools and communities across the state of Iowa.

Now, for what you’ll get, that wasn’t as unpleasant as you might have expected. If only that could always be the case.

## **Depends on Whose Ox Is Being Gored?**

By Bruce McCabe

Governor Branstad’s earlier proposed \$6.16 billion budget included no money for a previously negotiated pay increase for state workers; eliminated the Iowa Power Fund, which finances alternative energy projects; and froze State spending on schools for two years. He wanted to cut money for preschool aid for middle class families.

Now Branstad’s eagerness for cutting also extends to closing at least 37 Iowa Workforce offices and laying off about 100 workers, despite the fact that Iowa still has about 100,000 unemployed adults looking for work.

With the Governor’s fondness for cutting programs, one would suppose that he would understand the U.S. Postal Service’s need to consider closing certain unprofitable small town post offices. (The U.S. Postal Service is the only federal agency required to operate in the black). But no, it seems that might affect the thousands and thousands of dollars – after depreciation – that Branstad makes by renting post office buildings, which he owns in at least twelve small towns, to the Postal Service. Lohrville, Iowa, is one of those offices which may close. The Governor’s response? On the taxpayer’s dollar, he heads to Lohrville in April to protest the closing. Conflict of interest? One would think.

Maybe we should look at cutting Branstad’s salary and suspending the pension he gets for his previous service as Governor. Or charge him rent for Terrace Hill? That building, after all, belongs to the people. Or maybe Terry might like to step up to the plate and show some real leadership by voluntarily cutting his own salary, such as Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, who will only accept one dollar for his service in 2011.

Or maybe we shouldn’t hold our breath.

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*Question: Why do Mike Tyson’s eyes water when he’s having sex? Answer: Mace.*

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*As one ages, one becomes more interested in making good second impressions.*

# FFBC

*First Friday  
News & Views  
Des Moines, Iowa*

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

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## My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

### My Cat and Peach a la Mode

Steve Person

I have a cat. She is the one constant in my life that I can depend on and relate to—more dependable than any human being I have ever known. I also travel a lot, and when I am away, I have to have people look after my cat to make sure she has as normal a life as possible while I am gone. Right now, I have three people who look in on her while I am away, and I reward each of them for their service in different ways.

One of the people who looks in and takes care of my cat works in my building in the office. She, too, is a cat owner, and she appreciates the typical and atypical behaviors that cats exhibit. I told her from the beginning that I would be willing to pay her for looking in and taking care of my cat, or that we would have an “adventure” when I returned, all paid for by me. To date, she has taken me up on the latter.

Initially, I took her out to dinner at Splash where I introduced her to the joys of eating oysters. Earlier this summer, I took her on an outing to Eldon, Iowa, where we visited the **American Gothic** house made famous by Grant Wood in his painting of the same name. We had a wonderful day, and while in Eldon were given a personal tour of the railroad museum in that small southeastern Iowa town.

A few weeks ago, I owed her a new adventure and told her to wear her walking shoes. I took her to Woodward, Iowa, where we were going to visit the new high trestle bicycle/pedestrian path over the Des Moines River valley in Dallas County. Before we embarked on the 5.3-mile walk to and from the trestle, we had lunch at a wonderful local restaurant in Woodward called Lou’s Diner. The food was perfectly prepared for our lunch, but the dessert—ahhh—was something to die for.

The waitress in the restaurant informed us that the pies of the day included Dutch apple, peach, coconut cream, and banana cream. I ordered the peach pie. Please understand that most boys believe their mothers cooked better than anyone else, and my mom made a peach pie that had no equal—that is, until I met Lou’s homemade peach pie in little Woodward, Iowa. It was the best peach pie I have ever eaten, and if I get the opportunity to go back to Lou’s Diner while peaches are still in season, I will go. Some people have religious experiences in church. I have mine in restaurants, especially those providing desserts that are worth the trouble to go there. At Lou’s Diner, they certainly were!

I have to admit that the walk to the trestle was more than I had anticipated, and that once there, we were disappointed to see that the river valley was mostly a dingy brown since the water levels from the Saylorville Reservoir had been cut back, resulting in the broad flood plain being reduced to the river’s normal channel.

Nevertheless, the peach pie made the day a resounding success!

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*With the state legislative enactment legalizing gay marriage in New York, we have passed the “tipping point.” Folks now have a choice: to be part of the steam-roller or part of the pavement.*

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