

From the Office of Leadership Development: Women's and Ethnic Ministry

June, 2018

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Thank you for being interested in the Office of Leadership Development: Women's and Ethnic Ministry. We are here for the purpose of coordinating and implementing leadership development opportunities for women and ethnic minority leaders. We are exploring ways to help our churches create healthy environments for leaders to thrive.

We're excited about several opportunities at the joint Reformed Church in America and Christian Reformed Church in NA synod. This year we are celebrating women. We've chosen the theme, *A Story Yet Being Told, God's Faithfulness and Our Greatest Joy!* A video presentation, workshop, Women in Leadership Gathering, and this booklet are a few ways we are celebrating what God's doing in our local churches and ministries, communities and denomination.

In this booklet, we present profiles of several women in the CRCNA who have contributed to advancing God's work. We will continue to add more profiles as we become better familiar with where we are serving and what contributions we are making. We hope this booklet will be inspiring, encouraging and affirming, whether you recently joined the denomination or served your church or ministry for a number of years. Share it with others! Please accept it as a work in progress.

Each one of you are part of God's plan for building the church by using your God-given gifts for his glory! I'm glad we're on this journey together!

Feel free to contact me.

Grace and peace to you,



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A Story Yet Being Told: God's Faithfulness and Our Greatest Joy



Amanda Benckhuysen

Amanda Benckhuysen served in campus ministry at Campus Chapel at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan from 1998-2001. In 2001, Amanda returned to school to pursue a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies at the Toronto School of Theology. She was called to serve as Assistant Professor of Old Testament at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary from 2008-2014. Amanda is currently serving as a Professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary.



Mary-Lee Bouma

While in seminary from 1991-93 Mary-Lee Bouma planted a Black/White/Asian/Latin church, which met in Oakdale Park CRC's space. In 1994, she became the unordained pastor of Trinity CRC in Mt Pleasant, MI and was ordained in 1997 when the CRC opened ordination to women. Active in local justice, racial reconciliation and prayer ministry, she also served on the grass-roots Urban Mission Board (1990-1998); the Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members synodical committee (1996-2002); the Candidacy Committee (2010-2016); and currently is a missionary in downtown Vancouver, BC, and on the the Human Sexuality synodical committee.



Carol Bremer-Bennett

Carol's extensive experience in Christian ministry includes more than 20 years of organizational leadership, leadership development, and administration in a variety of teaching, principal, superintendent, and director positions in the Rehoboth, New Mexico, private school system. In 2015 she was the first Native American executive woman to be appointed the U.S. Director of World Renew.



Norma Coleman-James

The first woman to serve in an executive leadership position in the bi-national denominational office of the CRCNA, Norma was appointed in 1993 by the late Dr. Rev. Peter Borgdorff to serve as the denomination's first Director of Human Resources with the overall responsibility to develop and establish a bi-national personnel office. She served faithfully in this position for 15 years.



Sini den Otter

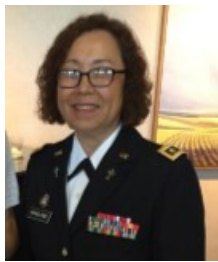
In 1988 Sini den Otter was hired as a chaplain in the new 400 bed active treatment hospital in Edmonton and was granted the designation of Specialist in Institutional Ministry, a long process for which local, classical and ecclesiastical endorsement was needed. Ordination for women was not possible at that time in the CRC. Her home church however, granted her the position of deacon at large which allowed her to proceed with training as required by CAPE (Canadian Association for Pastoral Education). Having served in hospital ministry as chaplain for 20 some years, Sini is thankful to God for leading her on this path of bedside ministry.

**Neva Evenhouse**

Neva began the Coffee Break/Story Hour ministry in 1970 in her house in South Holland, IL. She felt God pulling her along as she wrote Bible study materials and led groups of women in study. Neva followed God's call to ministry, seminary, and eventually became ordained in the Reformed Church of America.

**Lillian Grissen**

Lillian Grissen (1922-2015) served in God's kingdom as a loving, caring wife, mother, and grandmother; as a master teacher in elementary, high school, and college; as an author of many articles and books; as associate editor of the Banner; and as a full-time volunteer at Grace Christian Reformed Church. She loved God above all; she cared deeply about each person in her life; and she loved words, thoughts, and ideas.

**Insoon Hoagland**

Rev. Insoon Hoagland was the first ordained female chaplain, female military chaplain, the first minority chaplain, and the first female Korean ordained minister in the CRC in 1998. Ordained into the CRC and endorsed as a chaplain in 1998, she has served in a variety of military settings, including two tours in Iraq. She is currently serving as Pastoral Care Coordinator/Chaplain Resource Manager for the U.S. Army in Fort Leavenworth, KS.

**Ruth Hofman**

Ruth began ordained ministry in 1996 but had been serving as an "exhorter" with First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto since 1993. Currently, she co-pastors with her husband at Friendship Community Christian Reformed Church and, together with a team of young leaders, is privileged to minister on the campus of York University.

**Magdalene Hollis**

Maggie was the first black woman to become a missionary in the Christian Reformed Church without going to Calvin College. She also served as bus driver for the Grand Rapids Christian Schools, as a volunteer at Madison Square CRC in Grand Rapids, MI, and was confirmed by Madison Square as a missionary in the CRC. She served as elder in Immanuel CRC, Kalamazoo, MI, and as the missionary staff person at House of Hope, a shelter for the homeless. Maggie currently works at Maple Ave Church Ministries in Holland.



Sheila Holmes

Rev. Sheila Holmes was the first African American female to be ordained in the CRCNA and has served as the pastor of Northside Community CRC in Paterson, NJ since October 8, 1998. She served as vice president of Synod in 2009 and second clerk in 2011, as well as president of the bi-national Board of Trustees for the CRCNA in 2013-2014. She is a facilitator for trauma awareness and resilience, dance of racial and ethnic reconciliation, trainer for youth mentors as well as a Disaster Chaplain. Her key ministry Scripture is Ephesians 4:12-14.



Mary Hulst

Dr. Mary Hulst is currently chaplain Calvin College. She became the first woman ordained Minister of the Word in the United States in 1996 as pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC. She later became the first female Professor of Preaching (tenure track) at Calvin Theological Seminary from 2007 - 2009.



Sandy Johnson

Sandy Johnson served the Christian Reformed Church as the Director of Denominational Ministries from 2007-2011. She was a pioneer in leading from the Director position as a woman leader. In that role she had the privilege of serving alongside the CRC ministry directors; to be part of the depth and the breadth of the CRC, and to see God at work around the world within and through our ministries.



Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo

Ida is the first female director to be appointed to the role of international Director of World Renew, a role that she has filled since 2006. She has served in various roles within the CRCNA including program consultant with World Renew for 4 years, Uganda Country Director for World Renew for 5 years, East and Southern Africa Regional Team Leader for World Renew for 6 years and the first ServiceLink Coordinator for CRCNA in Canada for 5 years. In addition to living out her calling and passion for justice and mercy in these roles,

Ida has served various volunteer roles as pastoral elder, Classis Interim Committee member and chair of council for Immanuel CRC in Hamilton. She represents the CRCNA at national ecumenical networks like KAIROS and international networks like ACT Alliance and Integral Alliance.



Thea Leunk

Thea Leunk was ordained in 2001 and has served as the Classis Coach for Classis Renewal and more recently for the last 12 years as the senior pastor at Eastern Avenue CRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan. She was a woman advisor to Synod twice before women could be delegates. In 2008, Thea was the first woman elected an officer of synod and has served Synod in these official capacities: vice president in 2008, Clerk in 2012, and vice president in 2017. She has also served our denomination as a Synodical Deputy, again the first female to do so) and currently chairs the Synod Review Task Force.



Bonny Mulder-Behnia

Bonny, an ordained Minister of the Word in the CRC has been privileged to serve as a pastor at Rosewood CRC in Bellflower, CA, for 16.5 years now, currently as Executive Pastor. While at Rosewood, she has served on the Classis Greater Los Angeles leadership team for five years. In 2015 Bonny served as the First Clerk of Synod, previously having worked as a Synod News Officer for ten years during the '90s. Prior to pastorate at Rosewood, she served as Director of Youth & Children's Ministries at Madison Square CRC in Grand Rapids and as Marketing Coordinator for CRC Publications.



Grace Paek

Grace Paek has been serving the CRCNA as a trainer, Korean Coffee Break (CB) Representative, and Global Ministry Coordinator for CB Ministries since 1998. As a proactive leader in Korean CB and Global CB Ministry, Grace has been raising leaders globally, translating materials, building bridges between leaders & churches, and reaching out to various communities & cultures. Also, she has been promoting CB Ministry worldwide and continuously raising leaders globally and developing contextualized training curricula.



Beth Swagman

Beth developed and directed the Safe Church Ministry for the CRCNA from November 1994 until April 2011. The CRCNA became one of the first denominations to institute child safety policies. In July 1995, she was appointed Director of Pastoral Ministries which included Safe Church Ministry, Chaplaincy Ministries, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and Race Relations, and held that position until March 1998.



Johanna Timmer

Johanna Timmer, (1901-1978) was appointed to the faculty at Calvin College in 1927, and at age 26 became the first dean of women at Calvin College. In 1940 she became the 'acting president' of Reformed Bible Institute, now Kuyper College, and was the first dean there. During her years at RBI she was instrumental in creating young women's societies throughout the denomination, eventually becoming the Young Calvinists of the CRC.



Thea Van Halsema

Thea Van Halsema's (1924-2016) life work included serving as social work professor and Dean of Women at Reformed Bible College (now Kuyper College), working with The United Way of Grand Rapids, authoring books about Christian historical figures such as John Calvin and the history of the Christian Reformed Church and its creeds, participating in early Christian Reformed Church committees about the role of women in the denomination, and serving on the board of the Latin America Mission.



Mary Vanden Berg

Mary joined Calvin Theological Seminary in July 2008. She has taught as an adjunct professor at Kuyper College, Western Theological Seminary, and Calvin Theological Seminary. She is the first woman to receive tenure at Calvin Seminary and to give the

Convocation address after receiving tenure. She is the first woman to hold an endowed chair as a Professor of Systematic Theology. Mary's goal as a professor is to not only help her students understand the truths of theology, which can often seem abstract and difficult, but also to help them recognize the important connections between theology, piety, and ministry in whatever context they find themselves.



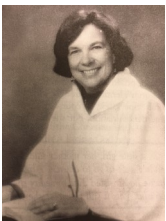
Lesli VanMilligan

Lesli was one of the first women ordained as Evangelist, serving North Hills CRC from 1996-1999. She then served Crosspoint CRC, Cincinnati from 1999-2008, followed by New Life CRC as pastor from 2010-2013. Lesli has also become ordained as Minister of the Word in the CRC, and says she can say that she has held every 'minister' title: Evangelist, Commissioned Pastor and now Reverend. She is currently serving the denomination with Faith Formation Ministries as a Regional Catalyzer for Eastern Canada.



Johanna Veenstra

Johanna Veenstra (1894-1933) was the first missionary of the Christian Reformed Church to go to Nigeria. Johanna Veenstra assumed leadership of the work in Lupwe and was engaged primarily in medical work and in preaching. During her ministry in Lupwe, a number of people became Christians and also became more educated. The roots of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) and the Reform Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN) lay in part in the work of Johanna Veenstra. When she was only 38 years old, Johanna died from an appendectomy.

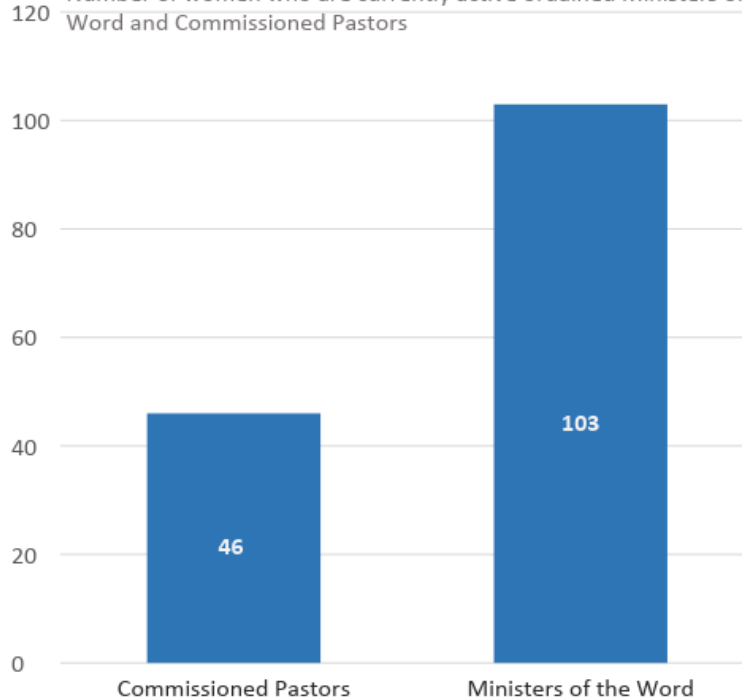


Marchiene Vroon Rienstra

Marchiene was the first and only woman to enter Calvin Seminary in 1972. She graduated with a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1978. Marchiene applied for ordination as a minister in the CRC and was denied. She continued to pursue ministry and was ordained and served in the Presbyterian Church, RCA and the CRC.

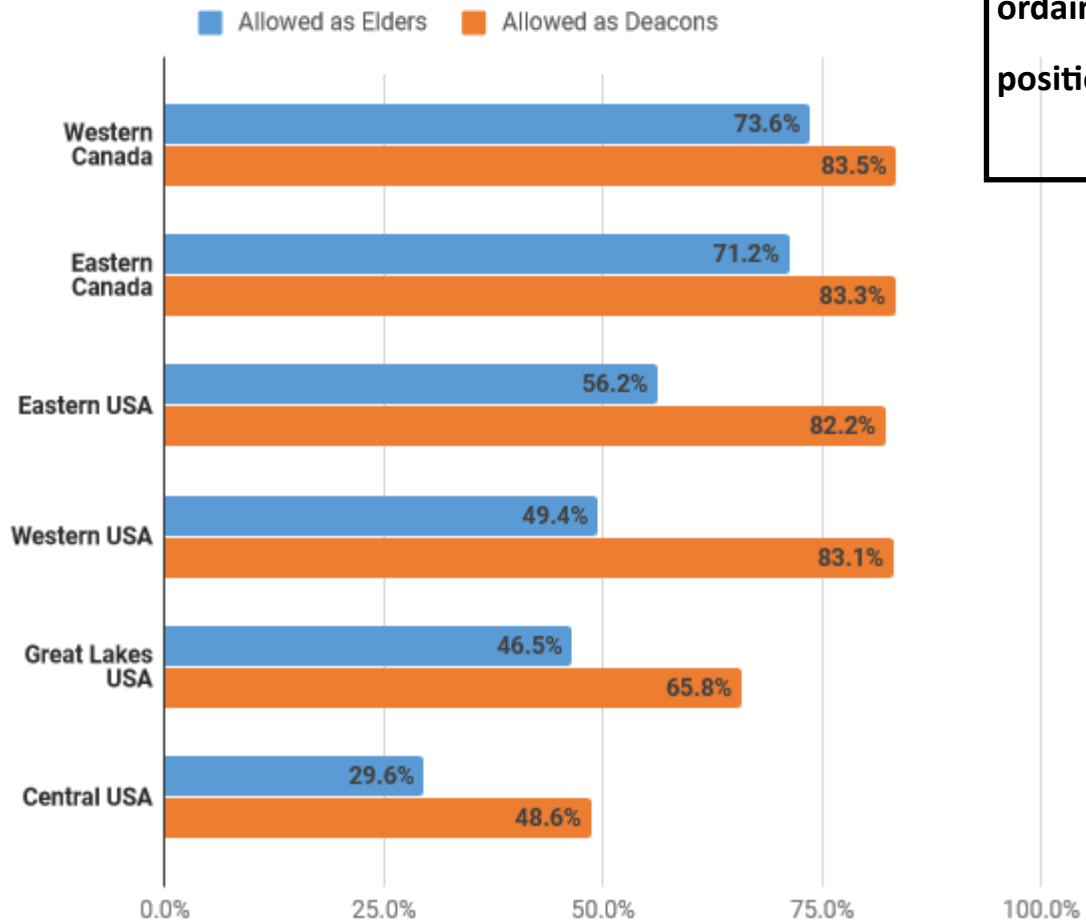
Female Ministers in the CRC

Number of women who are currently active ordained Ministers of the Word and Commissioned Pastors



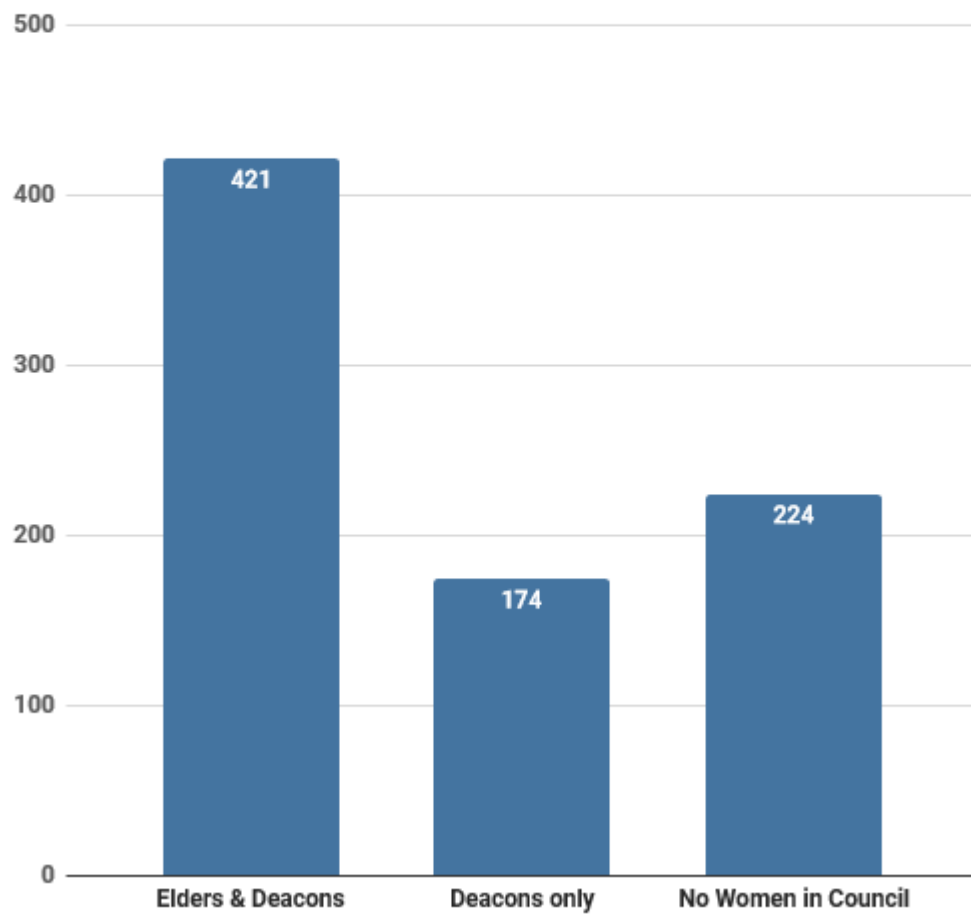
Currently in the CRC these are the stats for women serving in ordained positions

Women as Elders and Deacons

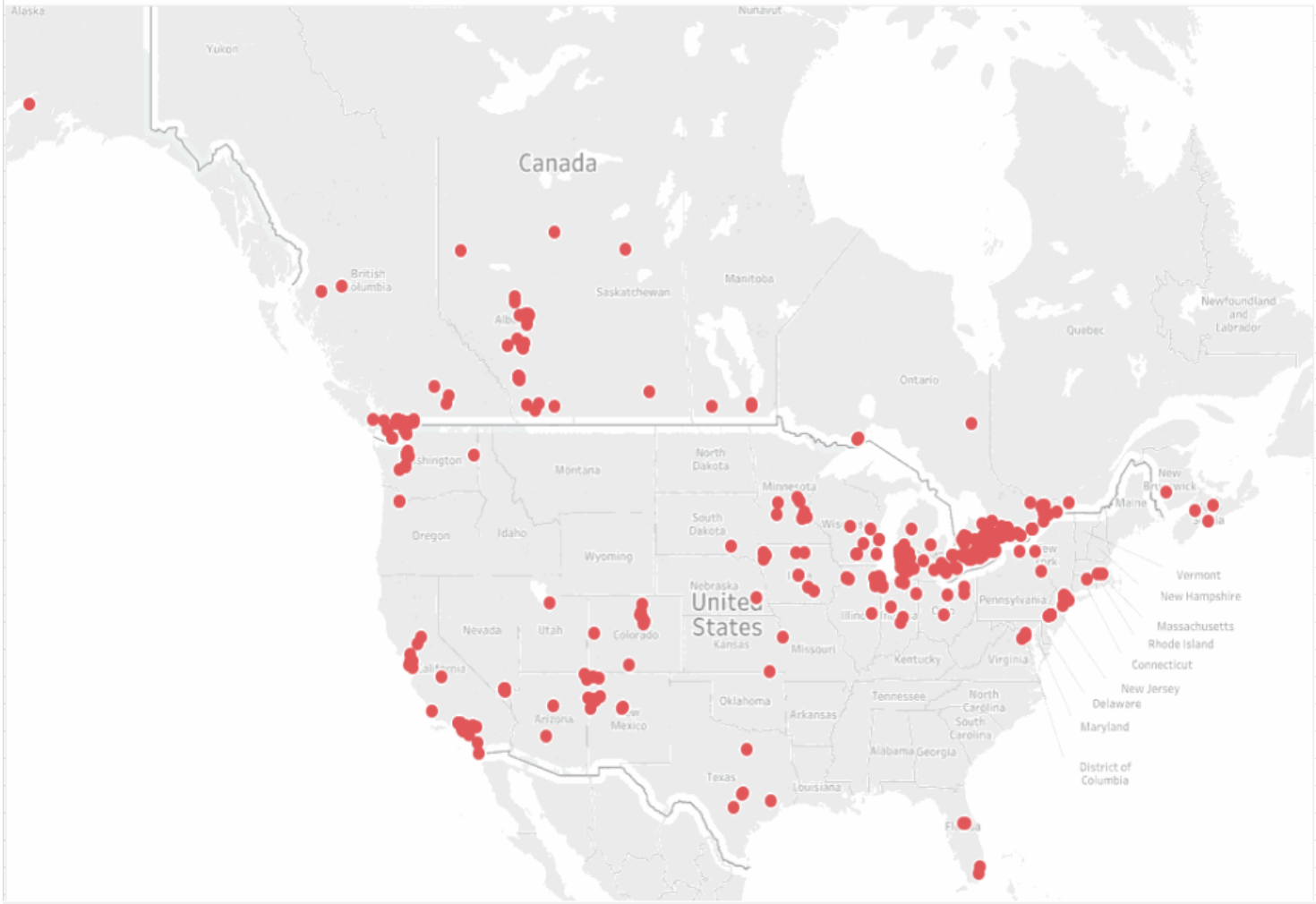


Currently in 2018 in the CRC

Women on Council



Churches where women are allowed as elders & deacons



**A Story Yet Being Told:
God's Faithfulness and
Our Greatest Joy!**



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