Alumni development efforts in Africa: four profiles

Grebel Alumni make a positive impact in our world! From a week or two of volunteer service to a lifetime devotion to helping others, every deed makes a difference. The following are a four stories of Grebel Alumni who have participated in varying degrees to ongoing development projects in Africa. If you know of any other alumni who have interesting stories to tell, please let the editor know about them!

Jennifer Wiebe ('07) recently graduated with a PACS Diploma. She spent four months last year on an internship in Nigeria and worked with an indigenous, interfaith peace organization called Centre for Peace Advancement in Nigeria (CEPAN). They work on peace initiatives/conflict resolution/mediation/interfaith dialogue in order to tackle the ethno-religious conflict within the country. Jenn is pictured (right) with Hajiya Amina Ahmed, a Muslim board member of CEPAN who had been directly affected by the violent conflict of 2001. Through a conflict transformation workshop, she became committed to peace and reconciliation work.

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Students will support a refugee student

In a groundbreaking constitutional amendment this March, Conrad Grebel University College students voted almost unanimously to increase their residence fees by ten dollars a term, in addition to regular fee increases. This levy will help to cover expenses to for a refugee student living at the College while studying at the University of Waterloo (UW).

Justus Zimmerly, Conrad Grebel Student Council President, thinks “it is important that Grebel participates in this project to set an example for the greater university community, and show that we really can make a difference. It will also have an enormous effect on the life of refugee students, hopefully helping not only them but many others as well.”

Partnered with the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and UW, Grebel will be solely responsible for taking care of residence fees through the student levy and additional fundraising efforts. The university will waive tuition fees. UW WUSC will select an appropriate student together with Grebel and will take care of all paperwork.

Participation in this program is an excellent fit with the living/learning values and beliefs foundational to Conrad Grebel, notes Dean of Students, Mary Brubaker-Zehr, including promoting social justice, increased awareness of international issues, engagement among people with diverse backgrounds, and empowerment. In addition, the refugee student’s presence in the Grebel community will offer global learning opportunities for Grebel students who may otherwise not have a chance to experience development issues first hand through internship opportunities.
Lloyd Koch was introduced to Africa when he volunteered for a joint MCC/Mennonite Colleges Service Education Abroad Program in 1967. During this 26 month program he completed a year of credit in African studies through Conrad Grebel towards his BA in Sociology and also volunteered in a mission hospital in the Congo - his introduction to the field of Hospital Administration.

During his 35 career in Hospital Administration, Lloyd and his family spent 1981-82 in Africa as Lloyd was the Administrator of the Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. The rest of his career was in Ontario hospitals.

As a founding member of the Waterloo chapter of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) and the first chair of MCC Ontario’s Refugee Concerns Committee, Lloyd has contributed significantly to Mennonite efforts in Africa. “In my very satisfying career, I’ve often felt that I received more than I gave.”

After retirement, Lloyd and his wife Erla took a five week trip to Tanzania last fall to look at the healthcare and education needs in several small villages in Northern Tanzania and to see the work of MCC, MEDA and two other Canadian charities. They volunteered in a hospital and education complex operated by the Catholic Church at Kilema, at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The couple will be returning for three months this fall to volunteer there again.

“With God’s call to help the development efforts in Tanzania, and many people have joined us by donating money, books and supplies for school, as well as hospital equipment,” said Lloyd.

Lloyd and Erla’s three children, Angie ('99), Cindy ('02), and Jamie ('06) are all Grebel Alumni.

Theodore Kay was an exchange student from Taiwan at Grebel and UW in the 60’s where he attained his Master’s in Chemistry. He went on to take classes in genetics, education and laboratory medicine. Between 1971 and 1979, Theodore worked and volunteered in Nigeria, as a lecturer in biochemistry, nutrition, human ecology, and health education.

Dubbed "Mr. Soybean," he specialized in incorporating the soybean into the African staple diet in order to combat the common problem of protein deficiency. This project had been tried before, and officials were doubtful that he could do it. However, after just two years, Theodore had convinced Nigerian women to use soybeans in their traditional cooking. He was so successful in this endeavor that in 1974 he was selected by African nations as “a leading scientist of food and agriculture in the developing world.”

Overcoming many obstacles in his journey, Theodore always felt that God was leading him on a certain path. After working on different projects, Theodore was convinced to get back to the soybean project in his spare time. In fact, Theodore says, “since the time of taking post graduate training in Canada, I ended up switching to a completely new field every two years in order to accomplish the Lord’s assignment.”

After convincing Kenyans to adopt the soybean in 1993, Theodore's current project country is Malawi where he works for Compassion Ministries Development Programme. They seek to bring hope, peace and comfort among the poor by promoting health education, nutrition information, and working towards self-sufficiency.

For more info email tkay_381@yahoo.com.tw

Last year, a group of 17 people from Port Rowan, mostly couples nearing retirement, decided that they would take a working vacation together. John Wiebe, his wife Betty and son Colin were part of that group.

They were invited to work on an orphanage construction project. The project, building a 30 bed concrete block house in March 2007, was a tremendous success largely due to their ambitious leader, John. Whether it was stubborn determination or faithful response to a higher calling, John believed that with help from local Mozambiquans, the team of 17 could construct a 20x40 foot house complete with veranda, bunk beds, a bathroom, a houseparent’s room, poured cement floors and steel roof in 13 days and still have time to see the elephants before coming home. Amazingly, the last block was laid and the last piece of roofing attached on the last hour of the team’s last day. The house is nearly half full already.

“In their parting service for us,” Colin said, “the children prayed over us, crowded into their new home, sang praises to God, and celebrated this simple gift of hope we brought to a nation that has suffered so much from civil war and disease. We had tears in our eyes, overwhelmed by the strength and joy of the African people.”

John and Betty live in Port Rowan, ON where they raised three children. John has worked nearby in Tillsonburg as a Civil Consulting Engineer at Cyril J. Demeyer Limited for over 30 years. Colin and Jennie Wiebe live in Kitchener, ON with their two children. Colin recently began a consulting engineering job in Guelph and Jennie has taken up urban farming.
Muslim Mennonite dialogue spurs conflict

The quiet, peace-loving Grebel community had a bit of a shock on the evening of May 28th when hundreds of police - from KW, Toronto, and even CSIS - descended on the school.

While most were aware that there would be some police presence at the Shi‘ah Muslim - Mennonite Christian Dialogue III Conference, the magnitude of security was unprecedented.

This academic conference, the third of its kind, brought Shi‘ah Muslim theologians from Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom, Iran together with North American Mennonite theologians. The dialogue, co-sponsored by MCC, seeks to further understanding and build relationships between the two religious communities at both the local and global level.

Amid heavy protest, media hype, misinformation, and travel delays, two public forums were cancelled in advance. The other was cancelled soon after it began when protestors did not let the panel speak.

The protestors were mainly from the Iranian community in Ontario (many of whom have fled Iran) who did not want these scholars in the country. They oppose the Iranian government and want to draw attention to its human rights record. Unfortunately, their protest did not allow the public forum on inter-faith dialogue to proceed.

During the rest of the conference, registered participants and invited observers explored different aspects of spirituality in their respective faiths.

For more information, try an internet search for the title of the conference - you’ll find some interesting points of view from the different parties involved.

Centre for Family Business is ten

The Centre for Family Business is proud to announce that it is celebrating 10 years of supporting, educating and energizing family businesses.

In 1997, a dedicated group of family business owners got together to discuss how they could support one another’s businesses in such areas as human resources, administration and professional development. From these initial meetings and with the support of Conrad Grebel University College, the Centre for Family Business was founded with 15 original members in Waterloo Region.

Having grown and expanded over this 10 year period, the Centre is now flourishing with 67 members. The Centre supports, educates and energizes organizations through:

- Breakfast events where members shares stories and a guest speaker shares insights,
- Confidential roundtable groups consisting of 8-10 members who meet monthly to present real life business scenarios as well as to work through self-discovery exercises,
- Skills workshops for members to delve deeply into topics, allowing for further growth.

For more information on the Centre for Family Business, visit www.cffb.ca.

Refugee support ...continued from page 1

“I believe that a refugee student living at Grebel will help to create a better understanding of each other through daily interaction,” said Zimmerly. “I am excited about this opportunity because I think it demonstrates that we really do care about making a difference in the world.”

Zimmerly’s comments reflect Grebel’s enthusiasm for this project. In fact, Grebel’s Peace Society chose to focus on learning about and understanding issues facing refugees this past term. The group learned how refugee issues affect the community and what experiences refugees have while integrating into the community through hosting speakers and discussions and volunteering at organizations that work with refugees.

“We wanted to work with an issue that was closer to home,” said Darlana Dyck, Peace Society member. “We found it difficult to focus on issues that were across the world so we looked to see what we could do in our own community.”

Volunteering mainly at the Kitchener Waterloo Reception Centre, part of the government Resettlement Assistance Program, students helped with proof-reading letters and resumes, filling out forms for health cards, taking clients to the bank or to receive their SIN cards. Other tasks included helping with some of the first orientation that newcomers need like showing how the bus system works and generally welcoming the newcomers.

“The Reception Centre is the first place that these refugees come when they reach Canada,” explained Dyck. “They remember this place as the beginning their life in Canada. To be a part of that initial welcome is a really neat opportunity.”

New Book

Werner Packull’s newest book, “Peter Riedemann: Shaper of the Hutterite Tradition” was launched on April 27th.

According to James Stayer, Professor Emeritus, Queen’s University, in his book, Packull “traces the life and writing of Peter Riedemann, the second-most important Hutterite leader after Jakob Hutter himself. This book describes Riedemann’s role in reanimating the Hutterite movement.” Werner thanked his wife Karin for her enormous support with the project.

Hard Passage

In May, Conrad Grebel hosted a book launch of “Hard Passage: A Mennonite Family’s Long Journey from Russia to Canada” by Arthur Kroeger. Kroeger’s family history is an excellent new reflection on the migration of Mennonites from Russia to western Canada in the 1920’s. Kroeger, who lives in Ottawa, had a 34-year career in the federal public service, including 17 as deputy minister of several departments. He also served as chancellor of Carleton University, where the Kroeger College of Public Affairs bears his name.
“Giving back to the community seems to come naturally to Lynn, owner of Kitchen-Huber Plays,” said Conrad Grebel Music Chair Dr. Ken Hull when announcing Lynn McRuer as this year’s winner of the Conrad Grebel University College Distinguished Alumni Service Award at Grebel’s 2007 Convocation. “In many ways, Music Plus has become the hub of the region’s musical community. It’s not just that Lynn is in touch with pretty much everything that’s going on; it is the commitment to the well-being of the musical life of the community and the readiness to support the development of music-making that stands out.”

The purpose of this award is to honour important service contributions of Grebel alumni while inspiring other alumni and current students. Lynn has indeed made a significant and unique contribution to the alumni while inspiring other alumni and important service contributions of Grebel University College. “Lynn exhibits the ability to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people every day. She has been a wonderful example of leadership and service to the community, worthy of recognition.”

While studying at the University of Waterloo (UW), Lynn was an active student in the music program at Conrad Grebel. She studied piano with Ken Hull and sang in the University and Chamber Choirs and played in a recorder ensemble. Music Professor Len Enns remembers her as a gifted musician and an excellent student. “The professors were an inspiration to me,” said Lynn. “Leonard Enns, Wilbur Maust, and Ken Hull are the educators who were most influential. I truly loved the choral experience with these gentlemen. Leading church choirs and starting a community choir seemed to follow naturally.”

Practicing on the grand piano in the chapel (while praying that one day she could afford a similar instrument) is one of Lynn’s most vivid memories of Grebel. She also liked the small class sizes, accessibility to the professors, and exposure to new compositions played by other students and written by students and faculty.

Lynn, who graduated in 1985 with a Music and Psychology double major, began working at Music Plus in 1988. Six years later, her boss offered to sell her the business for $1.00 - inventory not included. After careful consideration, Lynn assumed ownership. When Music Plus, staffed by talented, working musicians, moved to a spacious old factory in downtown Kitchener, they welcomed the Beckett School of Piano — now owned by Lynn’s husband Bill Labron. As well, they rented facilities to Saxonia Music (instrument repairs), thus fulfilling Lynn’s dream of a real “Music Factory” — lessons in all instruments, retail, print music, instrument sales, and repairs.

Lynn and her husband also helped co-found Kelman-Hall Publishing, a division of Music Plus Corporation which now distributes print music worldwide.

“Winning this award was quite a surprise,” said Lynn. “I feel very honoured to be chosen, since I see my contributions as part of my offering back to the communities that have supported me. I see it as a normal part of life! For example, choir singing is an integral part of my being. So to enable others to participate in singing is a joyful experience!”

According to the Grebel Alumni Committee, “Lynn exhibits the ability to make musical connections in the lives of people every day. She has been a wonderful example of leadership and service to the community. In this spirit of creativity, relevance, and excellence, we award Lynn McRuer the Distinguished Alumni Service Award from Conrad Grebel University College.”
A journey is measured in friends

“Together we have had quite the journey,” said Hiba Khaled, undergraduate valedictorian, at Conrad Grebel’s 27th annual Convocation in April. “I’ve heard it said that a journey is best measured in friends rather than miles. I am pleased that the friendships that we have developed here at Grebel will forever reflect the incredible trip we have shared.”

The Convocation ceremony recognized achievements of University of Waterloo (UW) undergraduates who have participated in Grebel life, and in the Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) or Music programs. Degrees were granted to 4 students in the Master of Theological Studies program. President Henry Paetkau welcomed everyone, noting that “we are here to celebrate accomplishments and to acknowledge academic achievements; to mark transitions and to identify new hopes and dreams for the future.”

Nearly 100 undergraduates were honoured this year, and each student shared a bit about their future plans. Amazingly, getting married was not even near the top of the list. Going to nearly 100 students were shared about their future plans. Amazingly, getting married was not even near the top of the list. Going to and building peace in their spare time.

As valedictorian, Hiba acknowledged the incredible friends and unforgettable memories each student had made. “Today marks an important milestone in our lives. We are older, wiser, and have grown remarkably since our first day here at Grebel as residents and PACS and Music students. Take what you learned from this place as the basis for what you have yet to learn. May your quest for knowledge and understanding of the world and your place and role in it not be quenched but reach out and discover more.” She left students with this quote: “Success is not a place at which one arrives but rather the spirit with which one undertakes and continues the journey.”

Alumni Executive chair Marcus Shantz told this year’s graduates that it was “deeply reassuring” to hear everyone’s plans for the future. He was pleased to see that new alumni were taking their responsibility seriously and will be accountable to each other.

Conrad Grebel has now conferred degrees on 57 Master of Theological Students. This year’s graduates were (l-r) Stacey Thurman - Biblical-Theological Option, William Schwarz - Ministry Option, Gregory Papazian ('02) - Biblical-Theological Option, and Troy Watson, Biblical-Theological Option (not pictured). Juanita Laverty ('98) and David Sararus were also acknowledged for their participation in the MTS program. Although they graduated from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in May, they took many of their classes at Grebel, taking advantage of the reciprocal relationship between the two schools.

Bill Schwarz spoke on behalf of MTS graduates. He likened his experience at Grebel to the city of Joppa in the Bible (as mentioned in the story of Jonah.) “Joppa was a place of decision where individuals had to make important choices; a place where one’s theology was confronted, tested, perhaps shaken; and a place where people were stretched beyond their comfort zones.” In addition to the academic study of theology, Bill said that he and his fellow students were always supported and nurtured. “This allowed us to take risks, to explore, to grow, to become. We were individuals who believed in and loved the God who changes hearts and transforms lives. We prayed for each other, listened to each other, learned from one another and supported one another in our journeys of faith. And we became much richer for it.”

Grebel Review

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People

Lisa (Weidner) Adams ('88) is currently staying home with her two daughters, Sydney (4), and Emma (1). They live in Lancaster, PA and her husband Scott works in the printing industry. Before becoming a mom, Lisa traveled and lived around the world and worked as a Youth Director for a large United Methodist Church for 13 years. She would love to hear from old friends - lisaweidner@juno.com

Emily Burgetz ('69) is one of the founders of the Pax Christi Chorale. She has been on the organization committee from the very beginning and was president for many years. Based in Toronto, the choir is a group of about 80 singers both Mennonites and singers from various faith traditions and cultures. The choir just celebrated 20 years of music making.

Tamara Shantz ('03) just graduated from Yale Divinity School with a Master of Divinity degree. After three years in New Haven, she will be moving to Goshen, Indiana to work as the Assistant Campus Minister at Goshen College. “These past three years at Yale have been challenging and wonderful and while I was hoping to return to Canada after graduation, I am excited about my position at Goshen and look forward to getting acquainted with the Mennonite community in that region. If you are coming through Goshen, please look me up! I love visitors!”

Ian ('98,'00), and Emily ('99) Stokes-Rees have finally both passed their PhDs and moved from Oxford, England, to Nice, France, where Ian is doing a postdoc at INRIA working on grid computing. Maggie (2) is enjoying the sun and trying to improve both her English and French. They would love to hear from old friends (ijstokes@alumni.uwaterloo.ca) or host visitors to the Cote d’Azur.

Njo Kong Kie ('83) recently released a new CD - “Day Off”. Reviewers say “Phenomenal Doesn’t Begin to Describe it!” For more info on the CD, visit www.musicpicnic.com.

Maria ('02) & Isaac ('99) Andrusiak Morland, with big brother Ilya (2) were happy to have Nikolai (Nikai) Jakob William join their family on March 30, 2007. Maria is finishing up her Masters Degree in English and keeps busy through self-employment and volunteering as a La Leche League leader. Isaac continues to work full time for the UW Computer Science Computing Facility, and will enjoy his parental leave this summer - working on his own projects, running after Ilya, and driving the family on a Winnipeg/Chicago road trip. For a visit or a chat, email maria@andrusiak.ca or ijmoran@uwaterloo.ca.

Donny Cheung ('01) just defended his PhD thesis in combinatorics and optimization, entitled “On Algorithms, Separability, and Cellular Automata in Quantum Computing.” Contact him to see how it went!

Jake Sauer ('00) died suddenly on Wednesday, May 9, 2007 at the age of 31, diagnosed with acute leukemia only four days before. Jake is survived by his wife, soul-mate and best friend, Alex Jenkins ('00), and two small children. Alex and Jake delighted in their 20-month-old daughter, Stella and were looking forward to the imminent arrival of their second child. Alex gave birth to their second daughter the day prior to Jake dying. Jake will be lovingly remembered by his father, Lee ('71); his brother, Ted, and his sister, Kate; he was predeceased by his mother, Helen Louise ('69).

Jaby Jacob ('98) wrote this tribute:

I met Jake the winter of ’95 when I had just moved into Grebel for the first time. Since he spent all his time in the room across the hall from me, I got to know Jake fairly well. But it wasn’t until the fall of ’95 that we really started to really make an impact.

That was the term that we formed the secret service to protect the student council president. It was also the term of the infamous paper cup prank, the car without its tires prank, and the mannequin in the shower prank. Our fun was endless, but we also made time to be serious.

Jake was probably the most down to earth in our group. A consummate hard worker, he was more determined than the lot of us combined. That determination manifested itself not only in his academic and career goals, but also in life.

Jake’s generosity was legendary, sending bouquets of flowers to people he hardly knew. God blessed him abundantly, yet Jake never was one to show off. He lived life to the fullest, enjoying himself, making sure others were also with him in their fun. This was the reason some freshmen formed an intramural basketball team and named it “Jake Sauer”. Jake was the first to be friendly and inclusive to them in their first weeks at Grebel.

Eric Conrad McWhinnie was born to Suzanne Conrad ('96) and Lindsay McWhinnie on November 21, 2006. Big sister Adele enjoys her new role and the whole family plans to travel this summer to Scotland to visit relatives and also to France as part of Lindsay’s work in the wine industry. Suzanne is on maternity leave from her Secondary French Immersion and Spanish teaching position.

Doug Heintz-Grove, Paul Berg-Dick ('73,'74), Jane Heintz-Grove ('88), along with a number of other alumni, met in Ottawa this winter to skate and eat!
Shadows of Grossmünster

Grebel Alumni Ana (Fretz) ('05) and Will Loewen recently took on the monumental task of writing and directing a musical based on early the Anabaptists. They were excited to work on this project “in the hopes that people of this day and age are inspired by stories of young faithful adults.” They wanted to give Mennonites a greater appreciation for their history and help people outside the Mennonite community learn more about the Anabaptist heritage.

History Professor Marlene Epp considered the musical “a creative reminder, in words, music, and drama, of an historic moment that we take for granted.”

Beginning with a few scenes of historical background, the musical took the audience on a journey through Martin Luther’s 95 Theses, secret church meetings, debates between the radicals and church officials, rebaptisms, imprisonments and escapes, and finally martyrdom.

The Shadows of Grossmünster really brought home the fact that these “radicals” were young students, and highlighted the importance of women in the early church, with Anna Manz as a key figure.

Alumni Sleepover

There was a big party at Grebel in May! As part of UW’s 50th Anniversary celebrations, alumni from the Grebel’s first decade were invited to sleep over. (l-r) Rita Boldt, Mary Martin, Esther Etchells, Carolyn Snider, Marianne Enns, Arnie Dyck, Kathryn Roberts, Laura Sauer, Ted Roberts, Karen Enns, Gord Hayward, Miriam Thompson, John Bender, Jinny Wilson, Doug Minke, Carol Faye, Bryan Metcalf

Your Beloved Dons from the 80’s and

Mary Brubaker-Zehr ('85)

After graduation, Mary tied the knot with her Grebel sweetheart, Scott. (Surprise!) She then worked as a Recreational Therapist, began a MDIV, and did church work in Bogota, Colombia for five years. The Latin American ‘heat’ resulted in many moments of passion and three babies. By 1996 Mary couldn’t stand being away from Grebel any longer, so she began working at Connie-G as the Dean of Students. A few years ago she completed her MSW.

In her spare time, Mary gardens and runs (all the while yearning for her old residence running pals.) She considers one of the best parts of life to be getting together with old Grebelite friends to laugh, and to challenge and support one another.

Jim Bering ('85)

Jim is currently teaching grade five for the Waterloo Public Board. He has been married to Patti, also a teacher, for 17 years and they live in Kitchener, having never permanently left the area. In their spare time the couple enjoys traveling.

Jim also plays in a slow pitch league in the summer and a hockey league in the winter. When he thinks of Grebel the first thing that comes to his mind is the people that lived there and were associated with Grebel, as well as the many nicknames people had. “Jimbo” speaks fondly of his stay at Grebel, but admits that he probably upset some people with his behaviour. He credits Mary for her patience in dealing with him!

Lobsang Tour

Professor Carol Ann Weaver traveled with singer Rebecca Campbell to Pennsylvania in March where they performed 8 concerts, all featuring Carol Ann’s “Lobsang” composed in honour of the five Amish girls who met with tragedy on Oct. 2, 2006.

“There was a sense that a bit of heaven occurred as we gathered to commemorate these five girls. In each situation, we lit a candle for them while giving each of their names and ages. There were tears and laughter. Grief was very palpable, but joy was also very present.”

The concerts supported the affected Amish families, with proceeds from Carol Ann’s Thistle & Jewel CD going to assist the Amish community.

Carol made a special pilgrimage to visit the site of the Amish tragedy. “It was unspeakably moving,” she said. “As I stood there an Amish buggy went by with an Amish man inside. Our eyes met; he smiled and waved at me, and I waved back. He knew well why I was there. It was our unspoken bond of love.”

Carol and Rebecca will return to do a “Memorial Concert” in October, 2007.

Your Beloved Dons from the 80’s and
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**“From a peace and justice tradition”**

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**Rhubarb**

A Magazine of New Mennonite Art and Writing

Ontario Mennonite writers and artists are invited to submit original poems (max: 6), creative prose (max: 2000 words), or visual art (slides, transparencies or high resolution digital files on CD; send no originals).

Send to: Hildi Froese Tiessen, Conrad Grebel University College, 140 Westmount Rd. N, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6

Direct inquiries to: Margaret Loewen Reimer - margaret.reimer@sympatico.ca

NO email submissions, please.

Include a 100-word biographical statement/resume and enclose a SASE to have your material returned.

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