

Sociology Essay
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Mass Incarceration the criminalization of America: (page 1)

TOPIC: Facts and People in prison. Who is in our prison system? What are the characteristics of people in the American prison system, and why so many? A 2006 report by the National Institute of Justice is the last known Bureau of Justice Statistics Studies in their Series. But why is this and how are the Social Sciences supposed to conduct research, on the Criminal Justice System if there are no known researchers, advocates, and policy makers that have a place where they can get updated statistics.

INTRODUCTION

It has been shown in a 2010 report by the National Institute of Justice to the United States Congress that prison education is far more effective at reducing recidivism than boot camps, shock incarceration, or vocational training. In the foregoing paper, I am relying on papers published by The American Sociological Association, as well as a great range of content from trusted others as I am limited by my own incarceration, as I came to the New Mexico Corrections Department in Fall of 2002. I hope to put a face on incarcerated prisoners and the value of higher education and what it means to recidivism and the for-profit corporations that make their profits by inhumane treatment of the prisoners in their care and the states that turn their backs and have a blind eye to the health and welfare of American citizens placed in their care by the American Justice System....

Now the American public should be growing impatient with the failure of states and their correctional systems as to what is going on in the country's penal system and should be outraged

Subheading
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At how dehumanizing treatment their family members are subject too. But we will first talk about as I will also utilize my own personal understanding of the prison system as a prisoner. I will try to be as objective as possible in my writing as a scholar, a researcher, and a student. The first part of this paper is on the subject of reform, riots, the new age of for-profit companies now involved with the prison system, and the consequential breakdown of the U.S. prison system due to their overuse since the 1980's. This paper will try to address the issues of race, of overpopulation, reform, and the abuses of power at the level of law-enforcement and judicial decision-making and finally programs that help offenders stay out of prison are prisons not in the business of making inmates into productive members of society and tax paying law abiding citizens.....

THE problems that have now surfaced in U.S. prisons have stemmed from cutting costs for state prisons as well as from the idea that longer sentences might help prevent crime. I myself did not become a felon until 2001, and I have since seen the prison system in New Mexico change significantly twice over my past sixteen years. I have watched this state system turn nonviolent prisoners into murderous monsters as the state passed bills which reduced violent offense to eighty-five percent of their original sentences: if you were sentenced to ten-years, you'll do eight-years and five months. But what happened when a prosecutor was elected Governor in the State of New Mexico? So this is what happened.

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As she charged the only sound correctional practice demands that are the inclusion of a variety of programs to address the many needs of this inmate population. In such a way that the programs provided during the inmates daily structure and routine to education, Vocational training, Substance abuse treatment, Mental health and trauma treatment, and work programs, ⁽¹⁾ that the Geo Group Inc. has done away with most programs that would better the prisoners in their care. ⁽²⁾ In Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3, these news stories by the Santa Fe New Mexican and KRQE NEWS 13 Investigation by Larry Barker from April 17, 2016, and January 28, 2018 and the KRQE Investigation posted July 31, 2018 Shows what is really going on the prison Industrialize for profit Corporation Machine's that hold most of the States prisoners. Now back to the issue of eighty-five percent the good-time a prisoner under eighty-five percent would take a drug treatment program such as (R.D.A.P) Residential drug and Alcohol program would awarded someone with a sentence of Fifty percent he would be awarded a ninety day lump sum (90) the eighty-five percenter would receive four days for every thirty days that would add up to twelve days (12) lump sum so where is the incentive for those prisoners? why should this matter to the public? These programs were incentives for inmates to learn how to be productive members of society. Now the other programs such as spiritual development recreation, hobby crafts, library access both standard and legal access and as well as personal wellness... ⁽³⁾ are needed

To provide the help to meet the full extent of what is needed to deter further criminal involvement...

I believe that is what the corrections system was meant to do: to make a change for the betterment of the prisoners, their families, as well as the public. Sadly that is not the case; the only thing that changed is that prisoners have nothing to look forward to on the inside. Nor do they look forward to release, as probation and parole are geared towards sending inmates back to prison. In 2007, there were over 725,000 inmates released from state and federal jurisdiction, of those released, nearly two-thirds will be rearrested within three years; the largest increase in the nation's prisons is recycled offenders.⁽⁴⁾ The number of people incarcerated in state and federal prisons increased by thirteen-percent from 1,317,300 to 1,483,900 between 2000 and 2012, although the totals have declined modestly since 2009. Now the numbers were 4,781,300 people were on probation and/or parole in 2012, for a total of 6,937,600 people in America under some form of Criminal Justice Supervision.⁽⁵⁾

NATIONAL STATISTIC ON RECIDIVISM:

Bureau of Justice Statistics studies tracked 404,638 prisoners in thirty states after their release from prison in 2005. These are their statistics within three years⁽³⁾ of release, about two-thirds (67.8% percent) of those released were rearrested. Within five⁽⁵⁾ years of release, about three-quarters (76.6% percent) of those released were rearrested. Of these prisoners who were rearrested, more than half (56.7% percent) were rearrested by the end of the first year.⁽⁶⁾ The 2011 U.S. incarceration rate of 716 people per 100,000 population is the highest

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 In the world. Between 2002 and 2011, State prison populations grew at an average rate of 0.8% per year, and the federal population at (3.2%). In addition to the nearly 1.5 million people in state and federal prisons, there were 744,500 people in local jails in 2012, yielding a total incarcerated population of 2.2 million. (8)

Current Conditions:

As expenditures for corrections is growing despite how much the legislators pass new laws and take away from the budgets of the corrections departments across the country, they are aware that a modest targeted investment in firmly structured educational and drug treatment programs to prisons do and will have a positive personal impact on the offenders, that will significantly reduce crime and victimization in all communities, and would save millions of dollars of the American taxpayers. (9)
 In 2009 Over the next three years the projection of prison and corrections-related spending would increase to \$25 billion. As for this private type of prison the contracts with states are built on recidivism, here in New Mexico Geo Group Inc. states that the corrections department must have a (95) ninety-five percent fill rate in all Geo facility across the state. As it is, the U.S. correction system is basically a revolving door for recycling criminal behavior as returning prisoners of fifty-two percent of the prison population are repeat offenders.

Research on correctional programming is growing and there is clear evidence to support correctional programs that work toward achieving meaningful reductions in recidivism. With the effectiveness of programs and social science research recidivism can be reduced by twenty-six (26%) to forty percent (40%)....

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Furthermore, the public stigma of having been a prisoner takes the form of social barriers, such as "the black box" on employment applications, which force an ex-prisoner to disclose that he or she is a felon regardless of how long ago the crime occurred and regardless of the personal and moral advancements an ex-prisoner may have since made. So there is no hope; therefore, the crimes become more violent and the drug use reaches epidemic proportions.

When I came to prison (in 2002), the 'Clicksters' (i.e. prison gangs) ran the general population. There was a social order, and code of conduct, and a moral code that each prisoner lived by. If you violated it by become an informant, child molester, and or a rapist you were not allowed to move around freely your life was on the line, but for anyone else they worked, if a promise was made (i.e. give your word) you kept it and drugs were very costly not only in money but also with your life if you owed money and gave word and you did not keep it you would be found in the morning rolled in your white sheet like a burrito with crimson dots all over your body. But then drug use was down, but in 2006, in the state of New Mexico and U.S. prison system started to lockdown their prison gangs. This provided an opportunity for another social order to replace the equilibrium of the prison gangs had more or less ensured, and it opened the floodgates as prison then became a rite of passage for street and city or town gang members that replaced the gangs in lockdown and in turn created social disorder in all U.S. prisons. So now anyone can come to prison sell drugs even if you're a RAT (i.e. informant) or child molester and these so-called gangsters became a full-blown addict

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And anyone that is only Semi-Violent also get lockdown. So on the general population the drug dealer/addict is king-of-Hill now. Some one like myself were placed in 24hr./7day-a-week lockdown. This meant isolation of 23 hours in a 9' by 12' cell and one hour outside locked in a cage and 15 minutes for a Shower no other contact allowed. I've spent almost six and a half years [in lockdowns?] yes... and by the time I was released I had undergone a drastic psychological change to add to my Combat P.T.S.D., which got me a sentence of twenty-six and a half years total and that is roughly about eighteen years total in the prison system plus the over four years I served before 2006. Then my crimes prior to 2006 were that of Marijuana and property crime after 2006 I was a violent career criminal. It was after the first four and a half years I went out into the real world and found out first hand that no one wants you, or will give you a chance because you are a convict an ex-felon and so I had to survive my own family members betrayed me that sent me into a downward spiral that took me years of self-therapy and counseling and a mixture of psych drugs to finally get where I am today. I hold a Sacred degree of Doctor of Theology and a Sacred degree of Master in Nontheistic Counseling (ie Christian counselor) with the Honorary title of 'Summa Cum Laude' and my Bachelors in the Study of Theology Honorary title of 'Magna Cum Laude' and I'm on my last Semester for an Associates of Arts degree. And in that I worked on my own the State and Geo groups are not the reason I did this I learned 'no' one is there with open arms you have to fight for everything you get and fight to keep it...

Now what caused a combat veteran as myself [I served in the Persian Gulf-war 1990 to 1991], and around the country I suffered from undiagnosed P.T.S.D.; and the Federal Government turned its back upon my return. I earned two Bronze Stars and a total of eighteen medals, and two Combat patches where were you America when I called? when you called I was willing to give my life for my Country and the ideals of God, Country and the American way of life. So in turn I fell victim to my P.T.S.D. and turned to alcohol and drugs, and began to self-medicate. That worked for a time, but I began to get into trouble and lost my C.D.L. for a D.W.I. I was not guilty for and that began my life as a criminal and brought me where I am today. And I lost everything and everyone including my very freedom for which I fought. But that's all water under the bridge." I survived a war and I survived fifteen years of incarceration.

Now the drug problem is now so prevalent in the prison system that it is now an epidemic, and it is not the illegal drugs like heroin of the past, it's a prescribed drug that fights heroin in the body from you getting high or getting sick....

As for myself, I have never done illegal drugs in prison that reason is due to me losing a good friend in 2003 to an infection caused by a virus that got into a homemade syringe that he injected straight into his blood system he died a miserable death three days later he was about to parole he had his family come back into his life and he lost it all for a shot of Heroin. That's the reason I do not want drugs in my own life to do all these years and die because of something like that that truly to me is insanity....

So prior to my incarceration, I had started to self-medicate and in that process I became or transformed into a full-blown addict - but that again is "water under the bridge"....

Facts of the system: CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE IN PRISON -

Now we can get to the heart of the facts that show what I believe to be wrong with the American Justice and prison system. Now 93% of people in prison are male, 7% are female, 38% of people in state or federal prisons were black, 35% were white, and 21% were Hispanic in 2011. So that is 1 in every 13 black males ages 30 to 34 was in prison in 2011, as were 1 in 36 Hispanic males and 1 in 9 white males in the same age group. Black males have a 32% chance of serving time in prison at some point in their lives, Hispanic males have a 17% chance; white males have a 6% chance. Nearly half (47%) of people incarcerated in state prisons in 2011 were convicted of non-violent drug, property, or public order crimes. People convicted of drug offenses were 17% of state inmates in 2010 and 48% of federal prison inmates in 2011. Now these facts come from breaking down mass incarceration in the 2010 Census: State-by-state Incarceration Rates by Race/Ethnicity - Nationally, according to the U.S. Census, Blacks are incarcerated five times more than Whites are, and Hispanics are nearly twice as likely to be incarcerated as Whites. Whites are 64% of U.S. population, 39% of U.S. incarcerated population, national incarceration rate (per 100,000). So that is 450 per 100,000. Hispanic 16% of U.S. population, 19% of U.S. incarcerated population, so that is 831 per 100,000. Black 13% of U.S. population, 40% of U.S. incarcerated population, 2,306 per 100,000 in national incarceration rate. Why such disproportionate incarceration rates in our criminal justice system? This disparity impacts our communities. (11)

Now spending time in a 9'x12' foot cage is now way to spend years of ones life. As this would bring about a combination of fear, distress, hopelessness, boredom, distrust, grief, and finally depression. Now as a survivor who managed to live through 16 years of an often crazy and dangerous maze. I may be older and may be wiser, I'll never be the same after my questionable experience with the American way of punishment. Notwithstanding that we live better then most peoples of the world like in the third world countries....

It's well documented - and not surprising to most observers familiar with Americans sprawling criminal justice and correctional system - that we ex-offenders face numerous difficulties given the wide spread use of background criminal and credit checks, with the information age there's no place to hide or lie these days. So with the information age most ex-offenders become re-offenders the fact that upon release their are only mediocre jobs and the managing for our corrections system are based on punishment instead of the corrections. So from arresting, and convicting, to the locking up criminals - they have had a very poor job in changing the mindsets and behaviors to ensure that offenders don't become repeat offenders after release from prisons, jails, and detention centers.

This is a costly, and incendiary, and mind-numbing "lock-up and control" program that often promotes more failures and collateral damage. This amazing system

It seems to work against the public's and the inmates best interests....

[Now this information comes from Author Krannich Ronald in 'Best jobs for Ex-offenders'.]⁽¹²⁾

From all objective indicators, we live in a very dangerous society where public safety is a major concern. But the truth is closer to this reality: We live in an over-criminalized society that creates numerous self-fulfilling prophecies - it inflicts serious long-term damage on those who come into contact with the criminal justice system, starting with an appalling justice system that continues to put non-violent criminals into the clutches of a criminal justice system then to prison setting them become offenders, outcasts, and outlaws locking them in cages, authorities and dogooders in the system try to "fix" offenders by dumbing down and regimenting daily life (correction officers), teaching with minds (psychologists and therapists), harvesting souls (faith-based operations), and telling sorry stories about the ugly sociopaths behind bars (media)....

The end result of such incarceration is often a chilling and costly experience for prisoners, predictably, punctuated with fear, distrust, fragile hope, boredom, grief and depression. While getting tough on crime may make for great photo ops for politicians and public officials in reality this system is very costly when it produces negative results for everyone involved - victims, offenders, and taxpayers the direct and collateral cost -

Probably over \$200 billion a year - are astounding. If taxpayers knew the true costs of this "get-tough-on-crime system," they might become outraged and cynical about those who claim to be trusted and cost-effective gatekeepers. For example it cost \$203,000 per year to jail someone in New York City and \$210,000 per year to house a juvenile offender in California. Some observers say it cost \$25,000 a year to incarcerate a young person and \$70,000 a year to imprison someone over 50 years of age or older. Don't believe such numbers. It's most likely much, much more, especially when you factor in the costs of collateral damage and lost opportunity costs.....

Now here are some the profiteers of the new age of corporations that are here in New Mexico as of yet we will start with the GEO Group and their C.E.O. George Zoley his salary & compensation was 9.6 million in total for 2017 his salary base against the correctional officers is 271-2 dollars they are the lowest paid at \$35,630 per year.

CoreCivic formerly the Corrections Corporation of America (C.C.A.) The second largest for profit prison contractor they took over the Federal Bureau of Prison Contract of 1,129 beds and hold 84 correctional properties have now had deaths due to medical neglect in October 2016 the ICE contract netted \$150 million and 3.7 billion for company that is \$2.5 million monthly at a taxpayer cost of \$55.43 dollars a day for at that time 847 detainees. Core Civic C.E.O. Donon Henninger in 2017 salary

And Compensation was \$3.4 million last year his median employee makes \$38,236 and that is 62:1 dollar per year. With other Corporations Companies with gross Revenue between 1 Billion and 5 billion median employees are paid \$62,900 per-year....

Then their sub-contractors for medical care from Corizon Health care of New Mexico was fired from the contract in 2016 their President & CEO Stuart Combell at 12647 Olive Blvd. St. Louis, Mo 63141 Corizon Health care Inc. 105 Westpark Drive Ste. 200 Brentwood, TN. 37027 there is an article by the Santa Fe New Mexican include with this Research Paper that showed the New Mexico Corrections Department turned a blind eye to these Corporations handling of New Mexico inmates. The contract was then given to a shell corporation in 2016 it is called Centurion Correctional Healthcare in New Mexico LLC as I said a shell corporation is a joint venture between Centene Corporation and M.H.M. Services Inc. their CEO is Steven H. Wheeler of Centurion.

Headquartered at Centene Plaza, 7700 Forsyth Boulevard, Saint Louis, Missouri 63105 and it came to existence on May 24, 2016. They also have provided government sponsored healthcare for Medicaid, States Children's Healthcare (CHIP) as well as Aged, Blind or Disabled (ABD) and also U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs etc. Now lets take a look at New Mexico. (12)

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Now we come to the State of New Mexico budget, it's at \$289,621,500 per year, the national budget for Corrections in America is \$42.8 billion range. In New Mexico from 1987 until now, the state Corrections budget has risen from \$12,000,000 [in 1987] to \$49,000,000 [in 2008], and then to \$74,000,000 [in 2011]. From 1987 to 2007, there was only a 21% increase in spending for education whereas there was an over 127% increase in spending on corrections. Now this should be on programs to help the offender stay out, but sadly it is not due to the private prison system - The Geo Group Inc. is Headquartered at One Park Place Suite #700 621 NW 53rd St. Boca Raton FL 33487 the following information was taken of the Geo group Inc. web-site (Google) the Revenue of this company is \$1.61 billion (in 2011). Net income by quarter is \$77.5 million [in 2011]....

America's annual Correctional and recidivism Statistics are staggering. We truly live in an "arrested Society" - 707 of every 100,000 Citizens behind bars; 2.2 million people locked up in state and Federal prisons (up from 339,000 in 1960) at the cost of 55+ or - billion a year; 10-12 million people circulating in and out of Jails and detention Centers; over 5 million people on parole and probation; and over 77 million with an arrest record. Because of the "war on drugs" of president Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy Reagan in the 80's and tough sentencing laws and practices since then, it's not surprising to learn that the majority of today's prisoners are for nonviolent drug offenders. I myself am not a nonviolent offender as my military training and P.T.S.D. had that effect.....

National Statistics on Recidivism:

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Bureau of Justice Statistics Studies tracked 404,638 prisoners in 30 states after their release from prison in 2005. These are their statistics within those years of release, about two-thirds (67.8% percent) of those released were rearrested within five years of release, about three-quarters (76.6% percent) of those released were rearrested. Of those prisoners who were rearrested, more than half (56.7% percent) were rearrested by the end of the first year...

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs:
[Special Report Dated May 2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9 Year Follow-up period (2005-2014).
by (BJS) Statisticians Maribel Alper, Ph.D. and Matthew R. Durose and former Statistician Joshua M. Michman.]

The following is from their Report and the Recidivism Rate is showing that prison reform and Judicial offices must change the way they look at crime and punishment and look more to "Rehabilitating" as President Trump and the Senate and House have finally agreed on prison and law reform in the "First Step Act" Bill that came into law this year we may well be doing the right thing...

Now the Report Starts with 5 of 6 (83%) State prisoners released in 2005 across 30 states were arrested at least once during the 9 years following their release. The remaining 17% were not arrested after release during the 9 year follow-up period. About 4.99 (44%) prisoners released in 2005 were arrested

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At least once during their first year after release. About 1 in 3 (34%) were arrested during their third year after release, and nearly 1 in 4 (24%) were arrested during their ninth year. [page 1 NKJRS]

The Bureau of Justice Statistics analyzed the offending patterns of 67,966 prisoners who were randomly sampled to represent the 401,288 State released in 2005 in 30 states. In 2005, these 30 states were responsible for 77% of all persons released from State prisons nationwide. The findings are based on prisoner records obtained from the state departments of corrections through BJS's National Corrections Reporting Program and criminal history records obtained through request to the FBI's Interstate Identification Index and state repositories via the International Justice and Public Safety Network (NIJIS).

So in the reports HIGHLIGHTS they go on to say The 401,288 State prisoners released in 2005 had an estimated 1,994,000 arrest during the 9-year period, an average of 5 arrest per released prisoners. Sixty percent of these arrest occurred during years 4 through 9. An estimated 68% of released prisoners were arrested within 3 years, 79% within 6 years, and 83% within 9 years. Forty-four percent of released prisoners were arrested during the first year following release, while 24% were arrested during year 9....

Now these characteristics are part of the larger picture of the legislative embrace of the theory of incapacitation as the solution to crime that have largely driven the public's perception of skyrocketing incidents of violent crime. And due to the laws that remove the discretion of our elected judges in the sentencing decisions, they have led to lengthy and in some cases, absurd sentences.

About 1 in 4 state prisoners released in the 30 states in 2005 were in prison for violent offense -

Among the 401,288 prisoners released in 30 states in 2005, an estimated 9 in 10 (89%) were male. Eighteen percent were age 24 or younger at the time of release, 51% were ages 25 to 39, and 31% were age 40 or older. Thirty-two percent of released prisoners were in prison for a drug offense, compared to 30% who were in prison for a drug offense, compared to 30% who were in prison for a property offense, 26% for violent offense, and 13% for a public order offense.

Within the 3 to 9 years recidivism of prisoners was at sixty-eight percent of those prisoners released, while 79% of prisoners were rearrested after 6 years following release. At the end of 9 year follow up period, the percentage of prisoners arrested after release increased to 83%....

Forty-four percent of prisoners released in 2005 were rearrested during the first year following release. Sixteen percent of released prisoners were rearrested for the first time during the third year.

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Although crime rates fell to 43.4% from 1998 to 2007 for violent crime - and 32.6% for property crimes - the prison population grew from 744,000 in 1985 to 2.3 million in 2007 and now it is as high as 2.5 to 2.7 million....

Now there is a great difference between federal and state prisons, as the majority of incarceration does occur at the local and state levels. About 87% of those imprisoned in the U.S. are held at state prisons, and that only leaves 13% of the total in the federal prison system.

Adding to this this problem is that the statistics show that police arrest more than 11.5 million people each and every year. [The Sentencing Project Facts about Prisons & People in Prisons Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics January 2014]

So it is the legislators, police, and prosecutors that act as the powerful force which is mass-incarceration, as they are agents of crime creation. Corrections has grown and now is an epidemic at the hands of this influential triad, as it has crept its way even into lives of everyday Americans. But most shocking is that the people are most affected are the poor and homeless from whom police are specifically designed and implemented to seek, as it is now a crime in America to be homeless; and this brings us to unjustly place them into jail and ultimately prison....

Stephanos Bibas, a professor of law and criminology at the University of Pennsylvania law school, described today's criminal justice system as a "capacious, onerous machinery that sweeps everyone in; plea bargains are what keep that machinery running smoothly."

IN CONCLUSION:

As judge Raymond J. Dearie of the Federal District Court in Brooklyn has recently said, this country must "jettison the madness of mass-incarceration" and find alternative to overly-punitive sentencing in order to address the problem of crime in America. The research throughout this paper support this very thing; It demonstrates that on average; whites have a significantly greater probability of a charge reduction when they plead guilty, and (b) a significantly greater estimated probability of a charge reduction if they were to be convicted at a trial; "and if they were to be convicted by a pleading of guilty, they have an increased probability of a charge reduction of over 50.1% for Hispanics (i.e. I am Spanish my victim was white) and blacks, whereas whites have a 55.8% chance. A difference of slightly over 5% may seem insignificant, but when you consider the hundreds of thousands of arrests and in that prosecutions that is a large disparity that exist in the Correctional System as a whole.

As myself I've spent almost seventeen years in the New Mexico prison system, I have seen these new faces of prison. Drugs have taken over - and not just outlawed drugs such as heroin and cocaine, but that of prescription drugs like Suboxen and it has taken over the country its an epidemic that shows no way of ending the prison system is bursting at the seams. So what should be done? America you need to flex and put an end to mass-incarceration as you may be its next victim.....

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