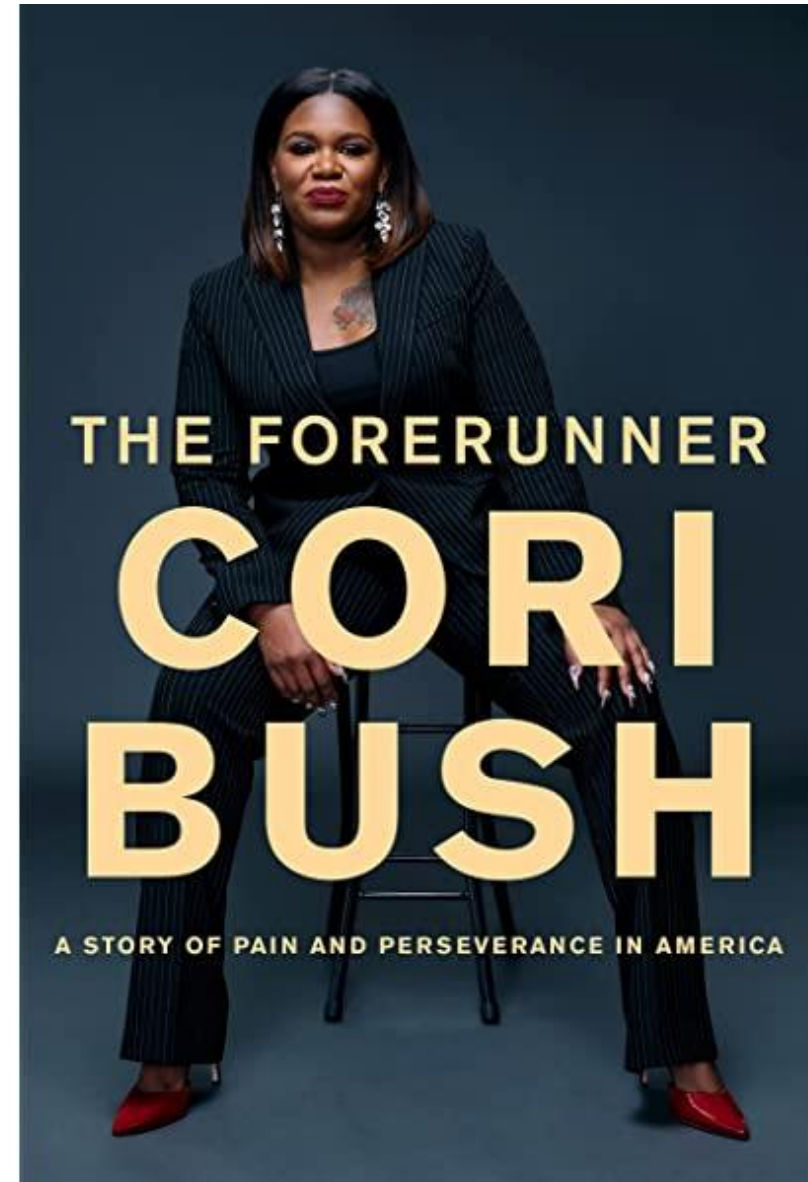


*The Forerunner.
A Story of Pain
and
Perseverance in
America*

By: Lelani Gorham, Elsie Muhirwa & Milagro Lara



Agenda

Introduction



Video



3 Part Discussion



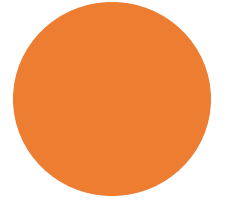
Final Discussion

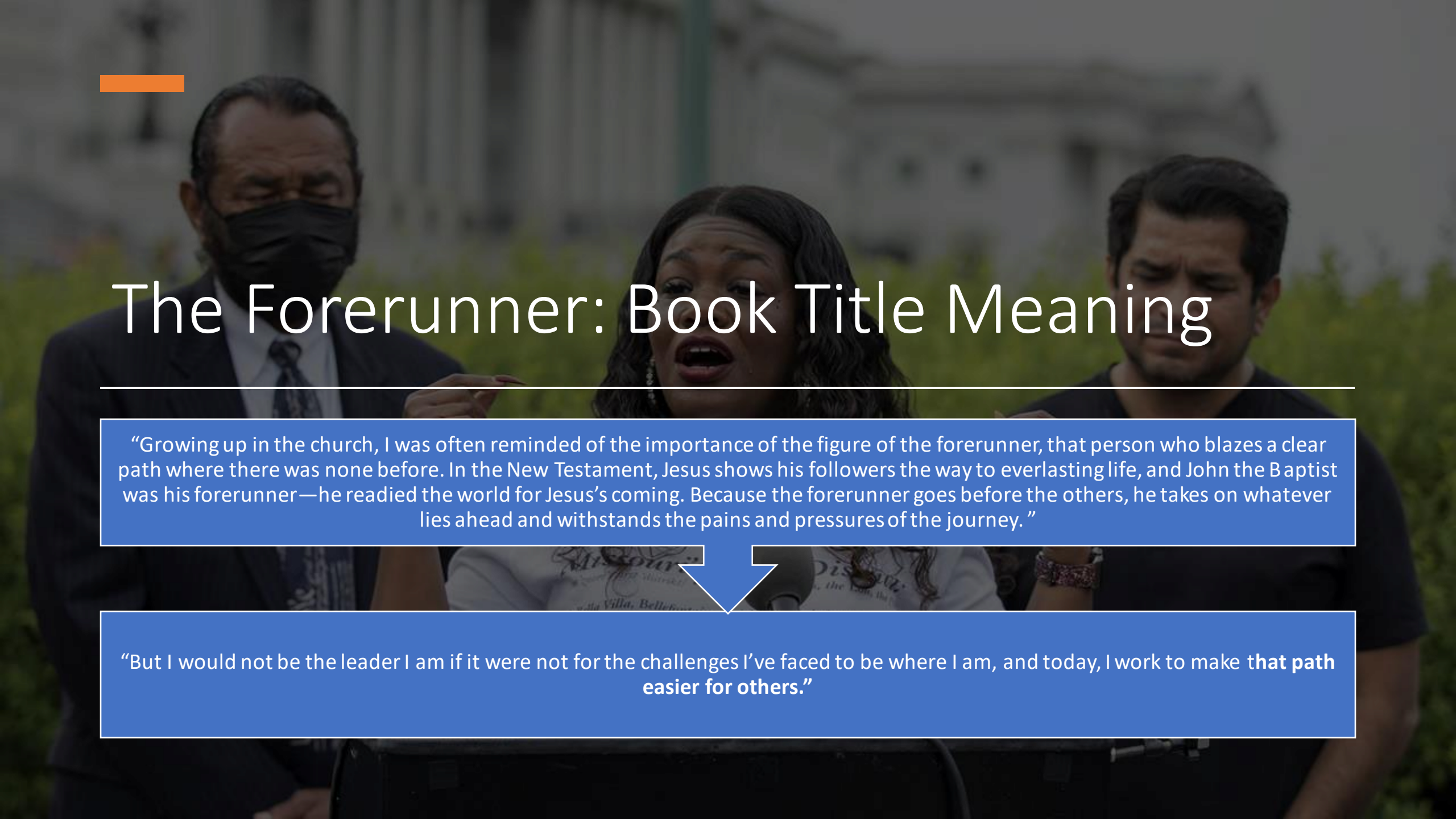


Cori Bush

Who is Cori Bush?

- Cori Anika Bush is an American politician, nurse, pastor, and Black Lives Matter activist serving as the first African-American woman to serve as U.S. representative for Missouri's 1st congressional district.
- Bush was born on July 21, 1976, in St. Louis and graduated from Cardinal Ritter College Prep High School & went to Harris–Stowe State University.





The Forerunner: Book Title Meaning

“Growing up in the church, I was often reminded of the importance of the figure of the forerunner, that person who blazes a clear path where there was none before. In the New Testament, Jesus shows his followers the way to everlasting life, and John the Baptist was his forerunner—he readied the world for Jesus’s coming. Because the forerunner goes before the others, he takes on whatever lies ahead and withstands the pains and pressures of the journey.”

“But I would not be the leader I am if it were not for the challenges I’ve faced to be where I am, and today, I work to make **that path easier for others.**”

Prologue

- “But this time? I was a mom, in my scrubs, visiting a house I was considering renting from someone I thought I knew. How had this happened?”
- “As a mother of two, I know what it’s like to endure health complications during childbirth, to deliver a baby four months premature and watch him spend the first months of his life in the neonatal intensive care unit.”
- “As someone who has been either uninsured or underinsured for most of my adult life, I know what it’s like to be burdened by thousands of dollars in medical debt and to have to seek out routine medical care in an emergency room rather than with a primary care doctor.”
- “As an organizer and activist in the movement working to save Black lives, I’ve seen too many Black children die at the hands of police officers. ”
- “And as someone who has been evicted, has been unhoused, and has worked low-wage jobs, I know what it’s like to struggle to pay rent, keep the heat on, and put food on the kitchen table.”





**Cori Bush Delivers Speech
After Missouri Win**



Discussion Question

What does hearing her speak make you feel like?

What type of politician do you think she is?

Part One

1

Chapter 1

2

Chapter 2

3

Chapter 3

Chapter 1

St. Louis, Mississippi





“But despite this richness of culture, the truth is that we live in a lethal environment in St. Louis, and we’re dying. The St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department kills more people per capita than any other metropolitan police force in the country. A child is more likely to die of gun violence in St. Louis than anywhere else in America. It’s as I said. We’re dying.”



Background

- Mom: Barbara
- Dad: Errol Bush
- Older Brother: Perry Bush
- Younger Sister: Kelli Bush

“When I was growing up, my immediate family consisted of my parents, a brother, Perry, who’s two years older than me, and a sister, Kelli, who was born a few months shy of my sixth birthday.”



Chapter 2

Themes

Sexual Harassment,
catcalling, body changing,
long relationships
beginning & gang violence.





- “Those months at my first high school had shattered my self-confidence and motivation. While there, I had learned and internalized that it was safer to hide that I was smart and that expressing my opinions and curiosity made me a target.”
- “Instead of receiving attention for my intelligence, now I was noticed for the way that I looked.”

CARDINAL RITTER COLLEGE PREP HIGH SCHOOL

WELCOME
BACK
SCHOLARS





Terrell (on and off for 9 years)

- “Terrell had been shot. He was okay, but it was a harrowing reminder that we were headed in different directions. He had stopped going to high school. He was living a fast, dangerous life, while at fifteen, I was looked at as the good church girl. ”
- “My sophomore year, I found out Terrell had been cheating on me. His mother told me he had a baby on the way. When I confronted him, he confessed.”
- She kept taking him back for 9 years



First Free Will Baptist Church





- No scholarships & Military plan fails
- “Six weeks later, just before I was scheduled to start at Tuskegee, I found out I was pregnant.”
- Abortion #1

Men

Nate: "Nate was six feet four inches, dark-brown-skinned with a box haircut." Raped Her

Justin: Raped her

Craig (Terrell's friend): "Craig was light-skinned and about five feet nine with curly hair and a light mustache." Got her Pregnant-> Abortion #2





Before her abortion she told her doctors & nurses she did not want to go through with it but they DID NOT listen

Craig is shot & dies



Chapter 3

Dropped Out of College

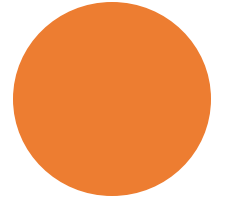


“During my first couple years at Lighthouse Preschool, I spent my days with toddlers, two- and three-year-olds, who were bursting with energy and brimming with honesty and humor. I adored them. With them, I learned how to be loving and nurturing while also offering the structure and discipline that they needed. I learned that they craved direction and instruction and that they liked repetition.”



DeVon

- “From the very beginning, I knew how DeVon made his money. He never exposed me to the drugs or the transactions. He kept that part of his life carefully tucked away, away from me”



Chapter 3 cont'd

"We are so accustomed to putting the needs of others first. We're expected to be strong. When things go wrong, when someone hurts you, you move on. We don't have time for that kind of talk, and even if we did, who would care enough to listen?"



Part Two

1

Chapter 4

2

Chapter 5

Chapter 4



Chapter 4

- "I felt like my old self, an inquisitive girl who devoured books. It felt good to be back in a classroom learning new things."
- "I yearned to spend more time with my kids, but I knew I couldn't stray from the path I had chosen, and never doubted that I'd made the right choice."
- "Being coached to apply that pressure took me back to the clinic where a doctor had shoved down on my stomach after my abortion. I was triggered. I just couldn't do it."



Chapter 4 cont'd

- "I would give them tips and show the things other people didn't take the time to show them. I tried to do for them what I wished more people had done for me when I was a student."
- "If I have to have a Xanax to be able to work, I shouldn't do this"
- "In years, the lessons I learned from my clients deepened my understanding of humanity and how I could best be of service."

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

- "It was my food and my air."
- ""walk," I said gently to the three-year-old girl, "you will walk""
- "Our community was heartbroken and outraged. And so was I. I fell asleep watching the news."





Discussion Question

What similarities can we see between Cori Bush and other Black female leaders who had deep ties to spirituality?

Part Three

1

Chapter 6

2

Chapter 7

3

Chapter 8

Chapter 6

Chapter 6:

- “My time as part of that mobile response team expanded my understanding of the public health impacts of policing and violence. Police violence is a leading cause of premature death for young Black boys in this country, and it is fully preventable. When our community’s lives, livelihoods, and peace are threatened by the conditions of a lethal environment– be those toxic air or contaminated water or racist policing– we need public health solutions” (165).
- “It might be hard to remember, but before Michael Brown was killed there was not a lot of regular mainstream media talk about police murder. When someone died at the hands of the police, there wasn’t typically a call for mass movement. There was no national outcry. A death would be dealt with as an isolated incident, a family tragedy, maybe something the local community unites over, to grieve together. People didn’t, time after time, express their outrage and their grief on the streets” (166).
- “But the pastors seemed to be more concerned about us protestors than they were about these systemic injustices. They didn’t like where we marched, or how we marched. They wanted us to stop cursing, stop yelling our demands at the police. To us, there was no book, no instruction manual that laid out how to respond when the state kills somebody, one of our own sons, and tries to pass it off as a justified death, to cover it up” (174).





Chapter 6 (cont.)

- “It was then that I felt God's answer for me was clear: I needed to keep marching, keep protesting. Yes, I was tired, and yes, I was sick of all the ways were dismissed and vilified. I was sure then of what I felt in my heart. We were all ladders out there, and we need to continue on our paths. The criticism were the natural responses of the power that be, those who were threatened by what we were building together” (177)
- “When we’re all so privately caught up in our struggles to survive, we become deprived of those moments as a community, those moments of having space to learn about one another and imagine a different world that can work for all of us” (181)

Chapter 7

Chapter 7

- “How could I run? How could I not? What if my son became the next hashtag? What if he was gone and there was more I could have done to keep him here? What if I had the opportunity to make change, but didn’t give it my all, because I felt unprepared for the position?” (198)
- “I understood their reluctance and distrust because of how often we had been let down by elected officials during the protests and prior to them. But for me, an inside/outside strategy was necessary. If people on the inside are the ones who write the laws, appropriate the money, and vote in favor of a particular agenda that those on the outside have to live out each day, people with the heart of those on the outside must be in both places” (202)
- “To me, Black people need quality health care and education, free college tuition, and student loan debt forgiveness. We need a living wage, safe and affordable housing, reliable public transportation, environmental justice, broadband access, economic equity capital, and an end to mass incarceration and police violence” (216)



Chapter 7 (cont.)

- “A man can put on a white shirt, a suit, and a tie and be seen in the same outfit multiple times in a week. When a woman is photographed wearing the same blouse a handful of times over the same period, she’s criticized” (206)
- “Folks have low expectations of Black women because they want us to be low– out of the way, silent, available only when called upon and just enough so that they can claim to support Black women. They give us a ceiling, and they are surprised, even angered, when we stand taller. They think we can aspire to and achieve only small feats because that’s all they believe we deserve. Folks want to be in control of us and put a cap on our brilliance because of their own insecurities and shortcomings” (217)



Discussion Question

What steps can be taken to address the double standards faced by Black women in political leadership? What can be done to ensure that they are given the same opportunities and support as their largely white and/or male counterparts?

Chapter 8

Chapter 8

“I decided that I’d take whoever was with me and wouldn’t worry or be upset about those who weren’t” (228)





Chapter 8 and Present Day

- Won the U.S. representative seat for Missouri's 1st congressional district.
- Committee Assignments
 - House Judiciary Committee
 - House Committee on Oversight and Reform
- Several Caucus Memberships
 - Congressional Black Caucus
 - Pro-Choice Caucus
 - LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus



Final Discussion Questions

- What are the similarities between Cori Bush and the many Black women Leaders discussed in this class?
- How do the lived experiences of politicians factor into their ability to rally support? Do you believe Cori Bush's campaign would've been as successful if she didn't possess these experiences/identities (i.e nurse, single mother, etc.)?
- Why is it so hard for others to believe Black women?





Rolling Stone

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