

# SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE ALUMNI

Magazine 2018



A collection of profiles of notable alumni and former students who have attended San Antonio College.





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# MARIA BERRIOZÁBAL

## COMMUNITY ACTIVIST



Sometimes an ordinary event can be the start of a life long journey. For María Berriozábal, her career in public service, including becoming the first Latina member of the San Antonio City Council, began in a Salvation Army dining room. At the time, Berriozábal was working full time as secretary for the organization while attending San Antonio College at night.

It was January of 1961 and the young Berriozábal was watching President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address. "I heard that speech alone in the dining room and it was like he was speaking to me," Berriozábal recalled. "I felt I was being called to serve my country."

At the Salvation Army, she first came into contact with homeless men, battered women, and families without enough food. She also came into contact with many of San Antonio's leading businessmen who served on the organization's advisory board and who were in a position to help.

Over the next decade, Berriozábal stayed busy working full-time in the

public arena while attending SAC at night. She was the legal secretary to the general council of HemisFair '68, a world's fair which took place in San Antonio. "I learned politics from the inside," she said about the job.

Later, she was recruited by Bexar County Judge Blair Reeves as an executive secretary. At the time, the county judge was in charge of all administrative duties, including budgets for the courts and the jail. The two worked together to get federal grants for projects such as workforce development and criminal justice planning.

Berriozábal left the courthouse after she married. She eventually transferred to UTSA where she received a bachelor's in political science 20 years to the day after she graduated from high school.

In 1981, Berriozábal ran and won a seat on San Antonio's City Council becoming the first Latina to serve on the council. She held the position for 10 years. In 1991, she ran for mayor of San Antonio.

While her race attracted national media attention, she lost the runoff election by only three points.

After the mayor's race, she was offered a teaching fellowship at the John F. Kennedy School at Harvard. Her life had come full circle. Thirty years after she heard Kennedy's call to action, she was now at an institution named in his honor, and she was inspiring a new generation of public servants.

Since then, Berriozábal has continued to put her own energy into public service at all levels. She represented the United States at several conferences at the United Nations including the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women. Most recently, she was appointed to serve on the Mayor's Housing Policy Task Force.

She offered advice for SAC students. "Truly listen to what individuals are saying. From what they say, you can understand where they come from," she said, adding, "we have the power to inspire. The power to encourage." ■





# JAVIER SALAZAR

BEXAR COUNTY SHERIFF

As the sheriff of Bexar County, Javier Salazar is in charge of a large organization with a massive mission. He is the leader of more than 1,800 employees—1,500 of them deputies—who manage the jail, take care of security at the courthouse, patrol the county, and investigate crimes.

Not too shabby for a lawman who began his career as a police officer patrolling the streets overnight while attending San Antonio College by day.

Salazar first came to SAC to pursue a radio/television/film major. “I really wanted to go into broadcasting. I grew up in a broadcasting family,” he said, adding that his father was a long-time local disc jockey. However, after a heart to heart talk with his father about the business, he was persuaded to go into law enforcement.

Salazar joined the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) and attended the department’s academy. After becoming an officer, he resumed his education at SAC as a criminal justice major. “I was working the graveyard shift and,

during the day, going to SAC and taking classes. I would get off work at 6 a.m., sleep in my truck, and then go to class at 8 a.m.”

He added that he applied many of the lessons learned in the classroom into his work at night. He graduated with an associate degree and later received a bachelor’s from Wayland Baptist University.

During his 23-year career in the SAPD, Salazar moved up the ranks, working as a bike patrol officer and later transferring into community policing.

He was promoted to detective in 1998 and worked as an undercover officer in narcotics. He served as an administrative sergeant for the police chief and handled executive protection duties for the chief, the city manager, the mayor, and visiting dignitaries. He also worked as an internal affairs investigator.

In 2012, he became a familiar face to San Antonians as an official spokesman for the police department. “I went back

to what I considered my roots working in TV again,” he said.

In 2016, Salazar successfully ran for Bexar County Sheriff and has made dramatic changes.

He established a Special Victims Unit (SVU) to handle adult sexual assault cases. He created a Public Integrity Unit, which investigates criminal charges against officers and public officials. He started a Citizen’s Academy to give the public an inside look at how the Sheriff’s office operates. And he brought back the Sheriff’s mounted unit, which employs retired race horses.

Salazar looks back at his own time as a student at SAC. He believes SAC has much to offer students who are thinking of going into law enforcement or any other program “I remember those years fondly,” he said. “I didn’t get a whole lot of sleep, but it was a good time in my life.” ■





# ZINA TEDFORD

CITY SECRETARY

**H**er dream in life was to go to college. Like so many other young women, Zina Tedford's aspirations were put on hold when she became a teen mom during her senior year in high school and decided to get married.

Although she was accepted to a four-year, private university in Louisiana, Tedford pressed pause on her educational quest to raise her family. But she didn't let those circumstances stop her. Eventually, she found a way to make her dreams come true and ended up becoming one of the first Latinas in the state to become a city manager.

Originally from Mercedes, a small town in the Rio Grande Valley near the U.S.-Mexico border, Tedford is the oldest of five siblings. Her mom, whom she describes as her hero, was the family caretaker while her dad served in the United States Army.

As an Army brat and then an Air Force wife, Tedford moved around and was exposed to many different cities and countries at a young age. After several years of marriage, however, Tedford divorced and became a single mom.

At that time, she realized that she would need to go to school in order to advance herself and her family.

Tedford moved to San Antonio in 1985 and chose to attend SAC because of the flexible class schedule and low cost of attendance. She worked two jobs, raised her kids, and somehow found time to do homework and go to class.

While at SAC, Tedford took most of her classes in the public administration field, but had an epiphany when she took her first criminal justice course. She was fascinated with the field and ultimately transferred to UTSA and earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice in 2000.

From a water billing clerk to the city manager, Tedford served the City of Kirby for more than 25 years. Today, she is retired and on her second stint in public office. She is the City Secretary for the City of Shavano Park, an incorporated city within the San Antonio metropolitan area.

A key member of the city's administration, Tedford reports directly

to the city manager and often provides guidance and mentorship.

Recently remarried, Tedford has five children and seven grandbabies and says her most prized accomplishment is her children—all of whom are successful in their own right. Following in their mother's footsteps, Tedford's three biological children are all in a public service field. Her oldest, Michelle, is a teacher; her middle child, Joey, is a lawyer; and her baby, Diandra, is a nurse.

Starting college in 1988 and finishing in 2000, Tedford describes that it was a long, and sometimes painfully slow, process to earn her degree. But ultimately, she persisted and made her dream come true becoming a shining example of the saying, "If you can dream it, you can achieve it." ■



# RODOLFO MONTEZ JR.

## ASTROPHYSICIST



Rodolfo Montez Jr. studies the evolution of stars, especially ones that are dying and which will transform into iconic nebula. He is also an X-ray expert on nebulas, studying both diffuse and compact emissions from the celestial bodies. An astrophysicist, he conducts his research at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, a collaborative center between the Smithsonian Institution and Harvard University.

In addition, Montez is part of the Chandra X-ray Center, which manages the Chandra X-ray Observatory, one of NASA's four Great Observatories, which are orbital satellites that provide incredible images from space. He is one of a handful of scientists who organize the scientific competition for the observations by the billion-dollar X-ray telescope.

His career may have been dramatically different however, had he not attended San Antonio College.

In high school, Montez excelled at science and math, his favorite subjects.

When it came time to talk about his future, he told his guidance counselor he wanted to be a scientist. He didn't get the response he was expecting.

"My counselor laughed and said don't do that – you will never get a job," said Montez. "So I asked what I should do and he suggested that I go into accounting."

He received a Presidential Scholars scholarship and attended SAC intending to go into business administration. Near the end of two years, Montez needed a science credit and took an introductory astronomy course taught by Alfred Alaniz. The class reignited his passion for science. "I was talking to my friends so much about the astronomy class that they were the ones who told me why don't you do that instead of accounting?"

At first he was reluctant to change his career path, but after a talk with Alaniz, Montez began taking additional math and science courses. He credits SAC for giving him the opportunity to explore his interest in science, which

eventually led to him pursuing physics at the University of Texas at Austin.

While at SAC he earned associate degrees in both business administration and applied science. He then transferred to UT Austin, where he double-majored in astronomy and physics. While an undergrad, he spent a semester doing research at an observatory in Chile, a summer at MIT Haystack Observatory, and a summer at San Antonio's Southwest Research Institute as part of the National Science Foundation's Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program.

He then attended the Rochester Institute of Technology where he earned his doctorate in astrophysics.

Montez still visits SAC to talk about his work with students in Alaniz's classes. Coming to campus reminds him of the sage advice he received from his friends to pursue astronomy. "I don't know if I have ever told them thanks for pushing me in that direction. I probably should do that," he said. "But they know that they are the cause." ■



# ELAINE KEARNEY

## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



Elaine Kearney, the managing principal of TBG Partners, a local landscape architecture firm, had an untraditional start at San Antonio College. Before coming to SAC, Kearney had already earned a bachelor's degree at San Antonio's prominent four-year school, Trinity University. Armed with a degree in economics, but wishing for a profession that offered more creativity, Kearney was motivated to explore a career in the field of design.

Though fortunate to have graduated from Trinity debt-free with help from scholarships, financial aid, and her parents' support, she now had to pay for her own classes. Like many students, Kearney chose to attend SAC because of the affordable tuition and flexible classes. She was working part-time, going to school part-time, and learning to juggle life's responsibilities for the first time on her own.

Kearney recalls being happily surprised by the course offerings at SAC. The architecture department's classes in drawing, drafting, and architectural

history appealed to Kearney's creative side. She was impressed by the professors, and possibly even more so, by her fellow students. Most of her classmates had full-time jobs and families to support, which made her realize that if they could juggle those responsibilities successfully, so could she.

For two semesters, Kearney focused on learning everything she could from her professors and sought out to build an impactful portfolio. When one of her professors at SAC mentioned landscape architecture during class, she was intrigued by the notion of a profession which combined place-making, design, and an understanding of natural systems.

Towards the end of her time at SAC, Kearney visited Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass. Upon returning home, she applied for and was granted admission to Harvard's Graduate School of Design. In 2004, she earned a master's degree in landscape architecture.

Since then, Kearney has worked at recognized firms in Cambridge, Mass. and Portland, Ore. Currently, she leads the San Antonio studio of TBG Partners, an Austin based firm which is committed to reshaping raw spaces into livable places. In addition, she has also taught as an adjunct instructor at Boston Architecture Center, Portland State University, and Trinity University.

These days, Kearney returns to the SAC campus in a different capacity than when she first stepped foot on campus. Her current firm completed the landscape architecture at SAC's newest building, the Victory Center, which serves veterans and active duty military. The courtyard garden is a dedicated space for veterans to connect with nature in a peaceful space.

With all of her projects, Kearney aims to create beautiful spaces that serve the client's needs, but also have a bigger purpose. ■





# CRUZ ORTIZ ARTIST

The smell of bleach and water transports him to his childhood years. He recalls his mom grabbing him by the ear and demanding that he clean the walls after he had just defiled them with his drawings. Eternally being called *necio*, a Spanish term for someone who is being naughty or foolish, Cruz Ortiz remembers being that creative child who always knew he would one day become an artist. Now his work has received both critical and commercial acclaim.

Born in Houston, Ortiz moved to San Antonio, and later enrolled at San Antonio College. Starting right out of high school, he didn't have the kind of supportive parents that provided him the opportunity to go to college. So, he was literally on his own and had to figure it out for himself.

He began working full time in construction while also taking night courses at SAC. However, due to work and life, he would frequently take a class or two and drop out. Still, he loved his time at SAC and refers to it as "The Cruz Ortiz Enlightenment Period."

Never wanting to leave the comfort of the SAC art department, Ortiz decided to transfer to UTSA after being in and out of school for nearly a decade. He chose to attend UTSA instead of an art school so he could get a broad liberal arts education and learn about economics, history, and more. Eventually, he graduated in 2000 with a bachelor of fine arts degree and a concentration in printmaking.

Before becoming a full-time artist, Ortiz taught art at the Healy Murphy Center and Robert E. Lee High School for 15 years. "I wanted to help save the world," said Ortiz. "I thought teaching would help me get to my goal."

Working professionally ever since his days at SAC, his art went global after he was an artist-in-residence at the Art Pace gallery, an international artist residency organization and non-profit gallery located down the street from San Antonio College.

Today, Ortiz is a celebrated artist who has had exhibits in cities all over Texas and California, and as far away as

Puerto Rico, Ireland, France, Spain and England. Known for printmaking, Ortiz operates his own label and runs, along with his wife Oliva, Snake Hawk Press, a cutting-edge, boutique design firm and creative factory serving international brands such as Southwest Airlines, Red Bull, and Absolut Vodka. Ortiz also gives back to both his alma maters and has done work for UTSA and San Antonio College.

Deeply rooted in the community, Ortiz and his wife are frequently spotted around town at major festivals, political rallies, and Fiesta events. Together, they aim to reach the growing Latino and Millennial markets by providing innovative and interesting graphic design, illustration, marketing, and branding.

While he is a self-described Chicano artist, Ortiz says there is some debate among art historians if his art is actually considered "Chicano." But Ortiz doesn't care. He simply wants to make art. ■





# JERRY REYES

## FUNERAL DIRECTOR

From an early age, San Antonio College alumnus Jerry James Reyes knew he wanted to help people during the most difficult times in their lives. And he found his calling in the funeral profession. His compassion and devotion to his work has led him to a career in assisting the funerals of international royalty, actors, musicians, astronauts, and former first ladies.

“It has been an honor and a privilege in being of service to many high-profile families,” he said. “I will always be humbled and grateful for the educational foundation that I received at the San Antonio College mortuary science program.”

Growing up in southern New Mexico, he entered the funeral profession at 15, working for Baca’s Funeral Chapels in Las Cruces, N.M. He pursued his bachelor’s degree at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and in 1999 he earned a bachelor’s in business administration.

Reyes then decided to shift gears and attend school for mortuary science.

He began researching programs across the nation. In the fall of 2000, Reyes took a leap of faith and moved from the only home he had ever known to pursue his associate degree in mortuary science at SAC.

Reyes stayed busy. He worked full time, attended school full time and served as the vice-president of Rho Sigma Gamma Mortuary Science Community Service Fraternity. Through this student organization he became engrained in the San Antonio community. He recalls one of his favorite events was when the fraternity adopted the children of St. Peter–St. Joseph Children’s Home during the holiday season. The students coordinated a holiday party for the orphanage and took the children toys.

In 2001, with encouragement from SAC faculty, he decided to explore opportunities away from the rural life he had known in New Mexico. He first worked in El Paso for a funeral home where he received several awards for customer care.

In 2008, he left Texas and became the mortuary supervisor for the world-

renowned Forest Lawn Memorial Parks & Mortuaries in Los Angeles, Calif. “I had the personal honor and privilege to be part of the team serving families from all walks of life as well as dignitaries, sports figures, members of the arts and entertainment industry, and to be part of many historic funerals,” he said.

In 2012, he moved to Houston to work at Geo. H. Lewis & Sons – The Funeral Directors, one of the most prestigious funeral firms in the nation. He is the first minority to serve as vice president and chief operating officer for the company.

At Geo H. Lewis & Sons, he has had the honor of assisting on the funerals of famed Texas ranchers, oil barons, as well as the services for two former First Ladies one from the United States and another from Nicaragua.

Reyes feels fortunate to have been able to pursue his calling to help others during their time of loss and grief. “My journey has been one of experiencing amazing things and being part of many historical events and celebrating the lives of many extraordinary people,” he said. ■





# ANNA U. BUSTAMANTE

## MUSIC EDUCATOR & BOARD MEMBER

A self-described ‘activist behind the scenes,’ Anna Uriegas Bustamante has spent the majority of her life advocating for her community and educating future generations. She has been an educator in the Southside Independent School District (SISD) for 35 years and has served on the Alamo Colleges District Board of Trustees since 2008.

The second oldest of six children, Bustamante grew up in a musical household. Both her parents played accordion and loved to sing. Her father performed as an accordionist, bajo sexto player, and vocalist in a conjunto group for 40 years. Naturally, Bustamante followed in their musical footsteps by becoming the choir director at her church and forming a mariachi group at her high school while still a SAC student.

Today, Bustamante teaches classical guitar and leads the mariachi and conjunto programs at her alma mater, Southside High School, where she has been for nine years. Before that, she taught music education and bilingual education at the elementary school

for about 25 years. While she loves to teach, she also loves to perform and frequently entertains alongside her pupils. In addition to being a vocalist, Bustamante plays trumpet, classical guitar, and some piano.

Bustamante came to San Antonio College in the fall semester of 1976 and stayed for about two years, before transferring to Texas A&I University in Kingsville where she earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and music and a master’s degree in educational leadership. “I didn’t know of any other choices—but I knew that if I wanted to become a teacher, I would have to attend college.”

Bustamante claims that her experience at San Antonio College had a transformational change on the trajectory of her life. According to Bustamante, SAC was the only institution of higher learning offering mariachi as a credit course at that time.

Bustamante and others were encouraged to transfer to

Texas A&I to join the SAC mariachi director as he established a mariachi program at the university. While at A&I, she performed with the university group Mariachi Javelina and the professional group Mariachi Ortiz, which has the distinction of being the first mariachi group to play on the steps of the U.S. Capitol building. Although she transferred to A&I before graduating from SAC, Bustamante proudly received a reverse transfer degree during SAC’s 2016 Commencement Ceremony.

Her passion for music is matched with her passion for serving her community. Now in her third term on the Alamo Colleges District Board of Trustees, Bustamante represents District 3 which includes parts of the downtown and King William areas and the South and Southeast parts of Bexar County up to the Atascosa and Wilson county lines.

In addition to teaching, Bustamante stays busy with the Alamo Colleges Board and El Carmen Catholic Church where she has been part of their music ministry, along with her siblings, for 42 years. ■



# MARY JANET REYES

BROADCAST DIRECTOR



SAC alumna Mary Janet Reyes has made a career working mainly behind the scenes in broadcasting. She will be the first to say being in the media is in her blood.

She currently is a broadcast director at KAGS-TV, the NBC station in Bryan-College Station, working in a control room during newscasts, managing camera shots, giving cues to anchors, and making sure the program ends on time.

She would not have it any other way.

Reyes came to San Antonio College to enroll in its highly regarded radio/television/film (RTF) program. Around the same time, she began interning at KSAT-TV, the ABC station in San Antonio, first in the newsroom and later in the engineering department. For two years, she worked as a master control switcher, the person in charge of what viewers see on their television screens.

While at SAC, Reyes took just about every class the RTF department had

to offer. She would spend hours on campus and never wanted to leave. "That is how I knew I was in the right place," she said. She graduated with both an associate degree in radio/television/film and an associate degree in applied science in RTF.

She was also hired full time at KSAT-TV, where she worked until she married and moved to Houston. She was hired by KPRC-TV, the NBC affiliate, and worked in master control and engineering for ten years.

She left the broadcast field to raise her daughter. But after a hiatus of several years, Reyes was ready to get back into broadcasting and reentered the business as a news director for a Brenham radio station.

For the first time, she worked as an on-air talent, announcing news from the studio and doing remote broadcasts from the field.

In October 2017, Reyes jumped back into television as a director for KAGS-TV. "I'm glad to be back in the business

again", she said, adding "I have made it my goal to learn something new every day and that has been easy as there is always something new to learn."

Looking back over her career, Reyes said SAC gave her a good foundation in broadcasting.

"I still use the skills I learned at SAC. That is where I got my basic learning" she said. "I don't know if I could have gone straight into the business without having the background from SAC."

She also has advice for students interested in pursuing a broadcast career. "I would tell them to go to SAC and take almost everything that is offered (in the radio-television-broadcasting program) because there was nothing in there that I ever felt was a waste," she said. ■





# RAMIRO SALAZAR

LIBRARY DIRECTOR

The old saying “life is what happens when you are busy making other plans” certainly applies to San Antonio College alumnus Ramiro Salazar. When it came time for him to go to college, his goal was to become a social worker. Instead SAC set a path that would eventually lead him to a career where he is now the director of the San Antonio Public Library (SAPL).

Salazar grew up in Del Rio. After high school, he enrolled at SAC with five friends. On campus, he took a work study job in the periodical section of the library, a position he enjoyed.

From SAC, he transferred to Texas A&I in Kingsville to pursue a degree in social work, and once again worked at the college library. Later, he accepted a full-time job at the Kingsville Public Library.

When he received his bachelor’s degree, Salazar came to a crossroads. “The plan was to join some of my friends at the University of Michigan,” said Salazar, adding the university had a stellar reputation for its social work program.

Instead, he accepted a fellowship to Texas Women’s University to pursue a master’s in library science.

Upon completing his master’s degree, Salazar accepted a job as the director of the Eagle Pass Public Library. From there he came back to San Antonio, where he was head of the Main Library, the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum, and director of technical services.

In 1991, in order to gain more administrative experience, he became the director of libraries in El Paso. He also served as director of libraries for Dallas and briefly served as the interim assistant city manager in Dallas before coming back to San Antonio to be the SAPL director in 2005.

In his new role, Salazar worked ceaselessly with officials, the SAPL board, and stakeholders to raise the profile of the library and to pursue its mission to create a community of readers and an informed public. When he returned, the library was not seen as an integral part in building a better community for San Antonio. Today, that perception is changing.

Under Salazar, the SAPL has invested \$91 million to add ten new libraries and renovate 13 existing branches.

The Central Library downtown has also received substantial improvements including expanding its Texana collection and its genealogy program.

The library’s digital collection is now flourishing. It recently broke usage records with more than five million checkouts from the online collection. In addition, the library enhanced its free public wi-fi service and recently created a Latino Collection and Resource Center at the Central Library which includes 13,000 items for scholarship and research as well as a space for lectures, workshops, study rooms, and community events.

Salazar credits SAC for helping with his education. “For someone coming from a small town,” he said. I know that the decision to go to SAC, known for its more personal approach and quality educators, was extremely valuable.” ■



# JOSEPH A. PUENTE

## COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR



Joseph A. Puente, a former high school football player, decided to attend San Antonio College after graduating from San Antonio's Churchill High School in 2008. Ten short years later, he is working on Capitol Hill.

An average student in high school, Puente knew that he wanted to take classes at SAC for at least two years before transferring to a four-year university. For accountability, he and a few friends decided to enroll at SAC together. They made a pact that they would stay for two years and then graduate and get on with life as soon as possible.

When recalling his time at San Antonio College, Puente says he grew as a man while at SAC. Although he had an idea of what he wanted to be, he didn't know how to get there. Thankfully, with guidance and support from his professors, Puente found a pathway that led him to our nation's capital where he works as the communications director for Congressman Gene Green, a Democrat serving as the

U.S. Representative for Texas' 29th congressional district.

Puente, which means "bridge" in Spanish, is proud to be working in the midst of the nation's capitol in Washington, D.C. and explains that even though there is a divisive nature to politics, he is a firsthand witness to a lot of bipartisan legislation and across-the-aisle cooperation.

Puente explains that his favorite part of the job is the access it provides. Recently, he was involved with the House Energy & Commerce Committee hearing for Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg. Although he experienced Zuckerberg's testimony personally, he was still impressed by seeing it on C-SPAN.

As communications director, Puente's day-to-day duties include working with the media, writing press releases, statements, newsletters, and talking points, talking to reporters, maintaining social media, and providing general communications counsel. He works on a team of about seven in the D.C.

office, with another five in the office back in Houston.

An Aggie for life, Puente gives credit to his SAC professors for helping him find a pathway and showing him that he could be successful in the classroom.

With self-discipline and hard work, Puente upheld the pact he made with his friends. He transferred to Texas A&M University in 2010, after completing his basics at San Antonio College. And, in 2014, he became the first person in his family to earn a college degree.

"You can't be comfortable with being comfortable. You need to challenge yourself to find out who you really are."

Puente plans to pursue his master's degree in public affairs one day and eventually return home to San Antonio. For now, he is a proud Aggie with a bachelor of arts in telecommunication & media studies and a minor in journalism. ■







# ARE YOU SAC PROUD?

If you have attended San Antonio College  
and would like to learn more about  
the SAC alumni Association, please  
email [sac-alumni@alamo.edu](mailto:sac-alumni@alamo.edu) or  
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