

REJECTIVE BEHAVIORS TOWARD AFRICAN-AMERICAN SLAVES IN COLSON WHITEHEAD'S *THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD* NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify types of rejective behavior that depicted in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* and analyzed how the African-American slaves react toward these rejective behaviors. To conduct this research, the researcher used qualitative method, content analysis approach and multicultural criticism. The data source of this research was *The Underground Railroad* novel written by Colson Whitehead. The data were taken in the forms of words, sentences, clauses, phrases and narration that related to act of rejective behaviour experienced by African-American slaves and their reaction toward this rejective behaviour that suitable with Allport's rejective behaviour theory and responses to rejective behavior theory. As analyzed, the results showed that all types of rejective behaviors were depicted in the novel. First, verbal rejection where in the action there were an indication of verbally insult like name calling, making fun of cultural makers and joking about physical attribute. Second, discrimination where in the action there were an indication of segregation and unfairly treatment between whites and blacks. Last, physical attack where in the action there were the indications of violence acts. Furthermore, the result also showed how African-American slaves react to these rejective behaviors that they experienced.

Key words: Race, Racism, Rejective Behaviors, Reaction toward Rejective Behaviors.

ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tipe-tipe perilaku penolakan yang tergambar di dalam novel karya Colson Whitehead yang berjudul *The Underground Railroad* serta menganalisis bagaimana reaksi budak Afrika-Amerika terhadap perilaku penolakan. Peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif, pendekatan analisis konten serta kritik multikultural. Sumber data penelitian ini ialah novel *The Underground Railroad* karya Colson Whitehead. Data penelitian ini berupa kata, frasa, klausa, dialog, dan narasi yang berhubungan dengan tindakan perilaku penolakan yang dialami oleh budak Afrila-Amerika dan reaksi mereka terhadap*

prilaku penolakan ini yang sesuai dengan teori prilaku penolakan dan teori respon terhadap prilaku penolakan oleh Goldon W. Allport. Seperti yang dianalisis, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, semua tipe-tipe prilaku penolakan tergambar didalam novel. Pertama penolakan verbal, dimana didalam tindakan ini terdapat indikasi penghinaan secara verbal seperti saling mengata-ngatai, membuat lelucon terhadap budaya lain maupun penghinaan secara fisik. Kedua, diskriminasi, dimala didalam tindakan ini terdapat indikasi pemisahan serta perlakuan berbeda terhadap kaum kulit puih dan kulit hitam. Yang terakhir, penyerangan fisik, dimana di dalam tindakan ini terdapat indikasi tindakan kekerasan. Lebih jauh lagi, hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan reaksi budak Afrika-Amerika terhadap tindakan perilaku penolakan yang mereka alami.

Kata kunci : Ras, Rasisme, Perilaku Penolakan, Reaksi terhadap Perilaku Penolakan

A. INTRODUCTION

The issue of racism always becomes an interesting issue to be discussed. Racism happens because this world consists of multiple races. Races divide people into some aspects such as physical traits, cultures, habits, customs, ways of life, etc. In general the people in this world want to be treated equally, it does not matter who they are, what their jobs are, who their descendants are, gender, or position, all human beings deserve the equality in all life aspects. However, there are some people who assume that there are certain races that did not deserve to be treated equally. People who have this kind of idea can be defined as a prejudiced person

Prejudice means having a certain expectation of an individual or group based on subjective factors. According to Allport, prejudice is a feeling favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience (6). Prejudice itself has two essential factors, includes belief and attitude (Allport, 13). Belief factor is when the prejudice statement just based on the person mindset about minority groups and if it is demonstrated the action called rejective behavior.

Rejective behaviour is an act of rejection toward an individual or groups of people from different races. It may be caused by some races who assumed that their groups are superior. There are three types of rejective behaviors including verbal rejection, discrimination and physical attack (Allport 48). As those racial conflicts widely occurred, many authors are inspired by this phenomenon and started to write literary work discussing racism. From several works, the researcher chooses *The Underground Railroad* Novel by Colson Whitehead to be analyzed.

Therefore, this study analyzed the issue of rejective behavior within the literary work which is in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* novel. By using the theory of rejective behavior, the researcher tried to find out types of rejective behaviors that existed in the novel. The researcher also

tried to explain how African-American slaves in the novel react to this act rejective behavior after they experienced this act. Further, beside of this topic, other topics will not be used to analyze the subject.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Multiculturalism in Literature

Multicultural means exactly with its name, multi- means multiple (plural) and -cultural means about culture which is defines a society of people from their daily actions and lives to their historical stories of ancestry and long preserved traditions. According to Parekh, multicultural society is a society that consists of several kinds of cultural communities with all their strengths, with little difference in conceptions about the world, a system of meanings, values, and forms of social organization, history, customs and habits (3). Multiculturalism describes how people live in different parts of the world. In other words, multiculturalism is the theory that learns about culture and beliefs. One of the media that portray the multiculturalism issue in the society is literature.

According to Carter, literature is essentially a mirror of the society in which it is produced (69). In accordance with Carter statement, Duhan also states that literature is the reflection of the society where it can be good values or society ill itself (192). According to Cai, he makes the conclusion that the most popular and accepted definition of multicultural literature is, “literature about racial or ethnic minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the white Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States, whose largely middle-class values and customs are most represented in American literature” (12). Therefore, literature cannot be separated from the society. It means that literature can be reflect the situation of the society such as economics, politics, diversity, social life and certain historical event. Based on definition, it can be said that multiculturalism and literature are related to each other where, through literature, we can build a clear understanding of the multiculturalism as it is portrayed in the text.

2. Character and Characterization

Characters are the people in the story. According to Klarer, characters in a text can be rendered either as types or as individuals (17). There are some cases where the characters are not people or human beings, in fantasy genre for example, they may be animals, robots, or creatures from outer space, but the author endows them with human abilities and human psychological traits (Griffith 60).

Characterization is how the author’s presents the character in the story. Moreover, characterization is also a method to find out the identity of a character in the story. According to Kenan, Character, as one construct within the abstracted story, can be described in terms of a network of character-traits. These traits, however, may or may not appear as such in the text. It is

these indicators that I seek to define under the heading of ‘characterization’. (62-63). Characterization divided into two types; they are *Direct Definition* and *Indirect Presentation*.

Direct definition is when description of character that is done directly by mentioning the original traits of the character in the story. In contrast to direct definition, indirect presentations is a process of characterization that does not mention traits of the character but rather shows and exemplifies it in various ways and make the reader conclude the traits of the character itself.

3. Setting

Setting is one of intrinsic elements in a novel. Setting may provide particular information about placement, social condition, historical time, geographical location and timing in which the action of a text develops. According to Griffith, Setting includes several closely related aspects of a work of fiction. First, setting is the physical, sensuous world of the work. Second, it is the time in which the action of the work takes place. Third, it is the social environment of the characters: the manners, customs, and moral values that govern the characters’ society. The fourth aspect—“atmosphere”—is largely, but not entirely, an effect of setting (68).

4. Prejudice

Historically, the word *prejudice* derived from the Latin noun *praejudicium*, meaning a precedent or judgment based on previous decisions and experiences. Prejudice can be defined using a unipolar (negative) component, as in thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant or incorporating a bipolar (negative and positive) component, as in a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on actual experience (Allport 6). Based on the definition above it can be said that prejudice is an unjustified or incorrect attitude (usually negative) towards an individual based on the individual’s membership of a social group. It includes an “attitude” component and “beliefs” component. Beliefs component is when the prejudice only based on the individual or people mindset toward other. Meanwhile, the attitude is either negative or positive action that being shown and is tied to an overgeneralized or erroneous “beliefs”.

5. Rejective Behavior

Rejective behaviour is an act of rejection toward an individual or groups of people from different races. According to Allport, he identifies five types of rejective behaviour that involve the rejection of out groups, it include: antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, extermination. But next Allport simplifies this scale of intensity, reducing the five degrees of exclusion or rejection into three, verbal rejection (antilocution), discrimination (segregation), and physical attack. In this explanation Allport also combine

sporadic physical attack and threats with organized violence and extermination.

a. Verbal Rejection

Verbal rejection and antilocution have different term but they have the same meaning, which involves the hostility manifested by insult or joke, inscribed in the modes of verbalization of prejudice. Verbal rejection (antilocution) occurs when individual or group of people have negative images toward others. According to Allport the verbal rejection comprised name calling, making fun of cultural markers, and joking about physical attributes and differences, as well as pointing out that the targeted individual is different than the mainstream (50).

b. Discrimination

Discrimination is unequal treatment that is perpetrated by human to another human based on people's race, gender, ethnic, religion, sexual orientation, or social class status. According to Allport, discrimination involves denying individuals or groups of people and not treats them in equality as they may wish (51).

c. Physical Attack

Physical attack is a severe form of racism. Physical attack is a violent act done by individual or group of people toward people from subordinate race group. Physical attack on racial out-groups have frequently been perpetrated by proponents of segregation and correlated with other overt forms of discrimination (National Research Council 58). Physical attack commonly used to refer to unlawful, violent, destructive, or threatening. According to Allport, physical attack is an act of violence or semi-violence that is fueled by heightened emotion of prejudice (6).

6. Trait due to Victimization

Traits due to victimization are the behavior among victim of rejective behavior. According to Allport, Traits due to victimization are a subject about how targets of discrimination and oppression may react (142). Allport argued that ego defensiveness will develop among member groups that are set off for ridicule, disparagement and discrimination (143). It can be said that ego defense is the way how victims respond to prejudice, and on the strategies that they adopt to defend themselves from the threat that it imposes. There are certain form of ego defenses that frequently happened to victims who experience the prejudice including:

a. Obsessive Concern

Obsessive concern is the basic response of minority group who are the object of prejudice where the victim will focus on the self. In this case, Allport

believes that targets of prejudice are haunted by feelings of anxiety over whether they will suffer insult. As a consequence, the victim of prejudice will experience deep feelings of insecurity (144).

b. Denial of Membership

Denial of membership is an avoidance reaction carried out by victims of prejudice. Perhaps the simple response a victim can make is to deny his membership in a disparaged group (Allport 145). Denial of membership comes easily to an individual or a member of minority groups who have no distinctive color, appearance, or accent, and who do not, in fact feel any loyalty or attachments to their group.

c. Withdrawal and Passivity

Withdrawal and Passivity is a response from the victim of prejudice where they are trying to survive from an act of prejudice. It is usually given by the victims of rejective behaviors where the victim tried to avoid act of rejective behaviors. According to Allport, the victim of prejudice has hidden their true feelings behind a façade of passive acquiescence (146).

d. Clowning

Clowning is a response from the victim of prejudice where if the master wants to be amused, the slave sometimes obligingly plays the clown (Allport 146). Victims of prejudice did this clowning act to avoid an act of prejudice that may be done by majority groups.

e. Slyness and Cunning

Slyness and cunning is a form of response by victims of prejudice as a means of gaining pretty revenge.

f. Self-Hate

Self-hate is a response expressed by victims of prejudice where they feel shame for possessing the despised qualities by the majority group, whether these qualities be real or just imaginary.

g. Aggression toward Own-Group

Aggression Against Own Group means response victims of prejudice where they find that the hatred is clearly limited to other members of their group. This is can be predicted that all manner of intragroup troubles may ensue and it may lead the in-group bickering (Allport 152).

h. Prejudice against Out-Group

Prejudice against Out-groups is a response that is shown by victims of prejudice itself where they have negative orientations toward the majority group. The victims of prejudice become prejudiced because they have been a victim of prejudice before (Allport 154). Victim's

i. Sympathy

Inversely proportional to prejudice against out-group, sympathy is the response from prejudice victims where they empathize with other victims. This feeling comes because they have experienced prejudice before. In short, Allport stated that being a victim themselves may either disposes aggression or sympathy toward out-groups (155).

j. Fighting-Back

Fighting back is the simple possibility response of all responses. Allport mentioned that the victim of prejudice may fight back whenever they can. It is not often that the victims of prejudice will fight back in a way to do ceaseless protest. Their style of response that counter-aggression make them occasionally so compulsively militant (155-156). Sometimes the victims of prejudice will fight back in a way to do the same thing or more severe than the majority group done to them.

k. Enhance Striving

Enhanced Striving is one response to the victims of prejudice where they redouble their efforts to overcome their handicap. It is because they assume that their handicap that causes prejudice. In this case, their handicap can be their skin color. So, some members of minority groups view their handicap as an obstacle to be surmounted by an extra spurt of effort (Allport 156).

l. Symbolic Status Striving

Symbolic Striving status is a response where minority members want status in society. This happens because sometimes members of minority groups especially fond of pomp and circumstance. Allport states that “a curious instance of symbolic status striving may be found in the pretentious use of language” (157).

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative method. According to Natasha and Cynthia, qualitative research is an effective research method in procuring cultural-specific information about the value, opinion, behavior and social context of a particular population (1). The researcher also used content analysis approach, by using content analysis approach, the researcher find out kinds of rejective behaviors and the response to the rejective behaviors in the certain contents of a particular text in the novel. In addition, this research also uses multicultural criticism theory since this research is multicultural research. By using multicultural criticism theory, the researcher only focus on the issue of racism, which is analyzing rejective behaviors toward African-American Slaves and how they react to these rejective behaviors in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* novel.

1. Data and Data Source

The data source of this research is *The Underground Railroad* novel written by Colson Whitehead. In this research, the researcher take some data in the forms of words, sentences, clauses, phrases and narration in the Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* that contain values of rejective behaviors as primary data. The secondary data of this research are review of previous studies, journals, articles, and theories from the experts that support this research.

2. Data Collection

In this research, the researcher collects the data in several steps. First, the researcher read Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* novel closely. Second, the researcher underlines the possible data that related to the research question. Last, the researcher collects the data in the novel that contain values of rejective behaviors.

3. Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the researcher did some analysis activities. The researcher analyzes the data that have been collected through some steps. First, the researcher carrying out the process of data reduction which is sorting, selecting, focusing on important matter, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of the raw data that have been collected from the novel.. Second, the researcher organizes the data that have been collected to make it easier for the researcher to do the analysis. After that, the researcher does the analysis by using some evidence that have been collected in data. And last, drawing the conclusion, In this step, the researcher draw the conclusion of this analysis to answer the research questions that have been formulated.

4. Triangulation

In this study, the researcher uses data triangulation to make the data more reliable and to avoid biases by getting the data not only by getting it from words, sentences, clauses, phrases and narration in the Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* that contain values of rejective behaviors, but also from review of previous studies, journals, articles, and theories from the experts that can support this research as secondary data.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

a. Verbal Rejection

The first type of rejective behaviors that was analyzed was verbal rejection. It was shown when slaves in Randall plantation held a birthday party for Jockey. At the time, suddenly the Randall brothers appeared in the middle of the party and were among them. The slaves stepped aside to give a

way to them because of the fear and respect. Terrance and James was Randall plantation owner. When they join this party, they often tease each other.

(DATA6 VR02)

Terrance liked to tease his brother. “James,” he said, “you need to keep better account of your property.”

“Don’t meddle.”

“I knew you let your slaves have revels, but I had no idea they were so extravagant. Are you trying to make me look bad?”

“Don’t pretend you care what a nigger thinks of you, Terrance.”

James’s glass was empty. He turned to go (Whitehead 39).

Based on the dialogue above, it proved that there was an act of verbal rejection when Terrance and James were teasing each other. The way James mention his slaves as nigger was identify as racial “slur” This act was categorized as act of verbal rejection.

In response to this act, slaves who saw Randall’s brother were teasing each other only saw them in fear. But, suddenly Terrance Terrance ordered the slaves to dance. Actually it was not just an order, but a coercion in which Terrance wanted to show his power among his slaves which is shown that he could do anything to his slave and the response that was given by the slaves could be seen in the narration below.

(DATA3 RVR01-CL01)

Terrance tapped his cane. His face sank as he took in the crowd. “You’re not going to dance? I have to insist. You and you.”

They didn’t wait for their master’s signal. The slaves of the northern half converged on the alley, haltingly, trying to insinuate themselves into their previous rhythm and put on a show (Whitehead 39).

When the slaves trying to avoid their feeling with pretended that they were happy was identified as response toward verbal rejection. When Terrance told them to dance, they did not wait for signal from their master. They immediately gathered and pretended to be happy while dancing. The words “trying to insinuate” were identify that the slaves trying to force themselves to follow the rhythm of the music. Also, words “and put on a show” was identify that the slave just pretending, they did it with aimed to avoid any act of rejective behavior that might be done by their master. Accordingly, the response that given by the slaves was categorize as clowning response. Clowning was a response that given by the victim where the victim trying to avoid an act of prejudice that bay be done by their owners. By the whole explanation proved that cloning response existed in the novel.

b. Discrimination

The second type of rejective behaviors was discrimination. It was portrayed when the slaves attended in Jockey's birthday party. Jockey was one of the older slaves in Randall plantation. When he celebrated his birthday, it was always on Sunday because the slaves worked half day. He was allowed to celebrate his birthday due to his age, But, other slaves did not allow to have a birthday. It could be seen from the narration below.

(DATA03 DS01)

The feast took precedence, unless you had a pass to go into town to sell crafts or had hired yourself out for day labor. Even if you were inclined to forgo the extra wages—and no one was so inclined—impossible was the slave impudent enough to tell a white man he couldn't work because it was a slave's birthday. Everybody knew niggers didn't have birthdays (Whitehead 13).

From this narration, act of discrimination happened when slaves in Randall plantation were not allowed to have a birthday date. In Data 03 there was a statement "Everybody knew niggers didn't have birthdays". This statement identified that at the time each Negro must be aware that they did not have a birthday date and they were could not do anything about that. This statement was also supported by Lovely question as those in the data 04 when she asked the Cora what if Cora was allowed to choose a birthday. "If you could pick your birthday, what would it be?" Lovey asked (Whitehead 14). Based on Lovely's statement before, it could be known that the slaves could not have a birthday date. It was identified that there was an unequal right toward the slaves in getting the opportunity.

In responses to this act of discrimination, Cora gave her answer about lovely question before. She was directly answered Lovely question. Cora's response can be seen in the data below

(DATA2 RDS01-WP01)

Everybody knew niggers didn't have birthdays."If you could pick," Lovey said.

"Can't pick," Cora said. "It's decided for you."

"You best fix your mood," Lovey said. She sped off (Whitehead 14).

The data above portrayed that Cora gave the response by answering that Negroes "can't pick" their birthday. It happened because it was already set to them. From this statement, it can be known that Negroes just accepted what happened to them included in accepting that they did not have a birthday date. This happened because at the time, Negroes had no educational background so they did not know about the date. Cora's response was identified as passive response because she accepted and did not do anything

related to the act of discrimination. So it can be said that, in this case Cora's response could be classified as withdrawal and passivity response.

c. Physical Attack

The last type of rejective behaviors is physical attack. It existed when Ajarry, Cora's grandmother was captured from her homela nd for sale as a slave. At the time, Ajarry was taken using a ship to across the ocean. While in the ship, it was not uncommon for Ajarry to got bad treatment by the captors. As could be seen in the passage below.

(DATA1 PA01)

The noxious air of the hold, the gloom of confinement, and the screams of those shackled to her contrived to drive Ajarry to madness. Because of her tender age, her captors did not immediately force their urges upon her, but eventually some of the more seasoned mates dragged her from the hold six weeks into the passage (Whitehead 4).

From the passage above, an act of harassment occurred to Ajarry when the captors dragged her from the waiting room on the ship and raped her. The sentence "did not immediately force their urges upon her" showed that the captors did not immediately rape Ajarry. It was because of her age but in the end they still raped her. The words "dragged her" also showed that there was an act of violence experienced by Ajarry because that word identified that there was coercive acts committed by the captors toward Ajarry. By the way author telling in the narration that the captors dragged her means that the violence truly happened, which is proved that physical attack was portrayed in the novel.

In response to this act of harassment, Ajarry hated herself and she was trying to kill herself as could be seen in the following evidence.

(DATA1 RPA01-SH01)

Because of her tender age, her captors did not immediately force their urges upon her, but eventually some of the more seasoned mates dragged her from the hold six weeks into the passage. She twice tried to kill herself on the voyage to America, once by denying herself food and then again by drowning (Whitehead 4).

The response that was given by Ajarry after she got an act of harassment was self-hate response. Self-hate was a response that given by the victims of prejudice where they felt ashamed on themselves and they would hate themselves. After Ajarry got an act of violence, she was trying to kill herself because she did not want to experience another act of rejective behavior in the future. From the statement "She twice tried to kill herself" it identified that Ajarry tried to hurt herself because of a harassment act she got on the ship. Ajarry was trying to kill herself by denying herself food and trying to

jump from the ship. The portrayal of Ajjary's response in the story was portrayed by the way Author directly mention the situation in the story. The author described in detail Ajjary's response of rejective behavior in the story by saying that "She twice tried to kill herself".

2. Discussion

Based on Allport's theory, there were three types of rejective behaviors. As discovered in the findings, the three types of rejective behaviors were depicted in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* novel including verbal rejection, discrimination and physical attack. These findings were also similar with Idris's research in previous study. He concluded that all elements of rejective behavior were proved in the representation of his research. From those three types of rejective behaviors, the researcher found out that physical attack was the most dominant action appeared in the novel. It happened because at the time the white people had dominant power in the society and the slaves were the inferior. This result was also similar with a research conducted by Lakshmi entitle *A Post-Colonial Contemplation of The Subjugated Afro-American Captives in Colson Whitehead's The Underground Railroad*. The result in Lakshmi's research found that violence action was the dominant action that portrayed in *The Underground Railroad* novel.

By using Allport's theory of trait due to victimization the researcher found how African-American slaves responded to rejective behaviors that happened to them. There were twelve types of response stated by Allport including obsessive concern, denial of membership, withdrawal and passivity, clowning, slyness and cunning, self-hate, aggression toward own group, prejudice against out group, sympathy, fighting back, enhanced striving, and symbolic status striving. By all these responses, there were only six responses found in this research.

From these types of response that had been found in the novel, withdrawal and passivity response became the dominant responses that depicted in the novel. Withdrawal and passivity responses were the responses where the victim just accepted all of the action addressed to them without giving any resistance and sometimes tried to ignore act of rejective behaviors in order to avoid further act of rejective behaviors that might happen to them. Furthermore, the researcher also found discovery that some characters in the novel not always did the passive response, but also sometimes they tried to fight-back. This response proved that some characters in the novel not always give the passive response after they experienced the act of rejective behavior, but they also tried to fight back when they were fed up with all of the action that done to them so far.

However, from those types of responses, there were six responses of rejective behavior that were not found in this novel. They were denial of membership, slyness and cunning, aggression toward own group, prejudice against out group, enhanced striving, and symbolic status striving.

In consequence, the results of this study contradicted with a research in previous study. In research conducted by Tania Musmita entitle Seizing Liberty in the Novel *The Underground Railroad* (2016) by Colson Whitehead was different with the result of this research because there were different theory that was used in analyzing this novel. In Musmita's research found that there were two ways in seeing the seizing liberty in *The Underground Railroad* novel, they were taking opportunities smartly and enhancing curiosity. Meanwhile, in this research found that there were three types of verbal rejection portrayed in *The Underground Railroad* novel, they were verbal rejection, discrimination and physical attack.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it was found that all types of rejective behaviors were found in the novel including verbal rejection, discrimination, and physical attack. The most dominant type that existed in the novel was physical attack. It was portrayed since the beginning of the story and happened throughout the end of the story. In accordance with the analysis, the researcher also showed how the victims react to these rejective behaviors. This research proved that there were six types of response to these rejective behaviors including obsessive concern response, withdrawal and passivity response, clowning response, self-hate response, sympathy response and fighting-back response. However, there were six responses that were not found, they were denial of membership, slyness and cunning, aggression toward own group, prejudice against out group, enhanced striving, and symbolic status striving.

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