

**The Presidential Task Force on**  
**Missing and Murdered American Indians**  
**and Alaska Natives**  
**Tribal Regional Virtual Listening Session**  
**Southern Plains, Southwest, Western,**  
**Rocky Mountain and Eastern Oklahoma Regions**  
**May 29, 2020**

Katie Sullivan: Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. Or as we call it, Operation Lady Justice. The purpose and the goal is to make the criminal justice system work better, so that we can more effectively and more appropriately respond to the concerns of American Indian and Alaska Native communities regarding missing and murdered people.

Katie Sullivan: Tara, if you could pick up. The PowerPoint just dropped off my screen.

Tara Sweeney: I believe it dropped off everyone's screen.

Katie Sullivan: Okay. Let me just hop into my email and keep this moving.

Tara Sweeney: Katie, I am happy to while they are taking a look at the Task Force members. I am Tara Sweeney, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. (Speaking Native language). I am from Barrow, Alaska, also known as (speaking Native language). We have our Task Force members here represented today. We can start with a brief introduction by Terry Wade.

Katie Sullivan: And I believe we have someone stepping in for Mr. Wade from the FBI today.

Tara Sweeney: Is it Timothy?

Katie Sullivan: Yes. Thank you. If you would like to do a brief introduction, that would be great. Thank you.

Timothy Dunham: Sure. Thank you. Good afternoon everybody. On behalf of Executive Assistant Director Terry Wade, my name is Tim Dunham. I am a Deputy

Assistant Director in the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division. My branch of CID houses our National Indian Country Crimes Investigation Program, so I am very pleased to be here today and look forward to the dialogue. Thank you.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you. And Laura Rogers? Acting Director for the Office on Violence Against Women with the Department of Justice.

Laura Rogers: Good afternoon. This is Laura Rogers at the Office on Violence Against Women. We of course focus on domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and we are very excited to be a part of this Task Force as our focus is on women, children, and men. And we are very excited to focus on Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and children. Thank you for taking the time to be part of this listening session today.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you. And Charles Addington, Deputy Bureau Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services from the Department of the Interior. Mr. Addington?

Charles Addington: Well, good afternoon everybody, and thank you for joining us today to be able to speak about this very important topic. My name is Charles Addington. I am the Director for Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, which provides law enforcement and public safety services to Tribes throughout the Nation. And we are so excited to be a part of this Task Force and look forward to the dialogue with everyone today and how we will move forward with addressing this issue of missing and murdered individuals in our Indian Country communities. Thank you.

Katie Sullivan: Great. And U.S. Attorney Trent Shores, who did a lot of outreach for this listening session. We appreciate that. Mr. Shores?

Trent Shores: (Speaking Native language) This is Trent Shores and it is my honor to be here. I am the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Oklahoma. I am also a proud citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. I know that we have a lot of citizens from Oklahoma Tribes, so hello to my fellow citizens out

there. We have an opportunity today to hear from you about your concerns, your ideas for how we can move forward to better and more comprehensively address the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous peoples in the United States. And in my role as the Chair of Attorney General Barr's Native American Issue subcommittee, I am committed and dedicated to this issue and will not only work for these issues in the Task Force, but will also bring them back to the Department of Justice as well. I look forward to hearing your comments today. (Speaking Native language)

Katie Sullivan: And we have Jeannie Hovland, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Affairs and Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, Department of Health and Human Services. Jeannie?

Jeannie Hovland: Thank you. (Speaking Native language) Good afternoon, my relatives. I greet you with a good heart. I am Jeannie Hovland. I am a proud member of Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and I am Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans. I am so honored to be here this afternoon with folks from the White House and Operation Lady Justice Task Force members from the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice. I so appreciate the President's support on this important issue and making this a priority of his administration. To the Tribal leaders and members on the phone, I want to say thank you from my heart for your years of advocacy to remember and bring justice and healing to our families and communities that have experienced the tragedy of missing or murdered relative. Please know that your voices have been heard and we are here to work in partnership with you to bring our relatives home and keep our communities safe. I am grateful that the Task Force has broadened this issue to include the Department of Health and Human Services, so we can have a holistic approach which is required to make a really positive impact. I look forward to hearing from you today on how we at HHS can support community-based prevention, intervention, and healing services. Thank you for this opportunity. (Speaking Native language). Thank you.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you. And then again, I am Katie Sullivan, Attorney General Barr's Representative as a co-chair with Assistant Secretary Sweeney on this Task

Force. It is such an incredible honor and I also cannot wait to hear what you all have to say and the feedback you want to give us today. Thank you. Our Task Force works on projects and accomplishments. Our most important job of the Task Force is listening to impacted Native communities. The Task Force has conducted listening sessions with NCAI's Executive Council, DOI's Tribal Interior Budget Committee, HHS ACF's Tribal Advisory Committee, HHS's ANA Grantees Meeting, and DOJ's Tribal Nations Leadership Council.

We have launched the Task Force website [OperationLadyJustice.usdoj.gov](http://OperationLadyJustice.usdoj.gov), which includes a schedule of Tribal outreach events, read outs from prior sessions, links to resource, facts, and fact sheets, Tribal and state efforts, as well as working group progress, so please utilize the website.

Our formed working groups are developing multidisciplinary cold case teams to review cold cases of those missing persons and murder cases; education and outreach campaign for affected AIAN communities; training for law enforcement, victim services, communities and families, comprehensive guides to available resources, relationships with existing Tribal and state task forces, [and] best practices guides for missing persons and murder cases including family communication and victim services.

Our ongoing specific projects include restarting the Volunteers in Police Service program to help utilize community volunteers in missing persons cases; establishing a Justice Connect section within the Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal, or LEEP; the FBI CJIS database, compiling ideas for legislation to solve some of the identified gaps or legal issues; and meeting with law enforcement, victim service programs, domestic violence coalitions, and others to hear about field experience in American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

We are coordinating efforts with other federal Commissions and Task Forces including the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children, the Federal Enforcement Working Group on Combating Human Trafficking and Online Child Exploitation in the United

States, the Attorney General's Initiative on Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, and the White House Council on Native American Affairs.

By November 26 of 2020, the Task Force is charged with developing and submitting a written report to the President regarding the activities and accomplishments of the Task Force, the status of projects the Task Force has not yet completed, and specific recommendations for future actions of this Task Force. By November 26 of 2021, the Task Force is charged with developing and submitting a final report to the President regarding the activities and accomplishments of the Task Force, so I am sure you all are aware of how crucial these listening sessions are.

Up on your screen right now are listening session questions. Broadly, what does the problem of missing persons or murder cases look like among the people in your community? What are some of some the major problems or challenges that your communities face? What are the major strengths and assets of your community in handling missing persons or murder cases? And, what are your visions for how to make your communities and people safer in the area of missing persons or murder cases?

At this juncture, I am going to turn it over so we can listen to you. Again, if you would like to speak, please just use the “hand-raise button” at the top of your screen, and Erika will be calling upon you. Tribal leaders, please, in the first 30 minutes. Thank you so much.

Operator: OK. First, we have Renee. Renee, actually we do not have a microphone for Renee. Tamra, your microphone is unmuted.

Renee Millard-Chacon: Can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, we can.

Renee Millard-Chacon: Can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, Renee, we can.

Renee Millard-Chacon: Hello, loves. Sorry about that. May I go ahead now, and go ahead and speak?

Operator: Yes, please do.

Renee Millard-Chacon: Thank you. (Speaking Native Language) Buenos días and good morning. My name is Renee Millard-Chacon. I am not a Tribal leader, so I do not know if you want me to go first, or would you like me to wait? I am a Diné/Azteca and Indigenous educator and activist in the Denver area. May I speak on that?

Operator: Yes, you can go ahead and speak. You have 3 minutes.

Renee Millard-Chacon: Thank you, ma'am. I am Renee Millard-Chacon. I am a Diné/Azteca woman with ancestors from Southern Colorado and New Mexico. I am an Indigenous Xicana activist and educator/teacher at Spirit of the Sun in Denver. Most importantly, I am the mother of two sons. I am determined to fight for social justice and climate justice for our future generations. I live in the land of the Cheyenne, Ute, and Arapaho people, now called Denver, Colorado, and after eight years with the U.S. Navy with my husband, we now reside in Commerce City, Colorado, that has been known for the insidious pollution of sun corn and other extractive industries choking POC with proven deadly environmental racism that has also contributed to sex trafficking in the Colorado area from truck stops for decades. The dynamic issues in addressing MMIW, Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, because of all these factors rural and urban, will be challenging, but long overdue.

As an Indigenous woman, I learned from the women before me, we have the resilient perspective of survivorship from fully realizing predatory charging by industries to exploit resources and people. Issues of environmental racism, exploitation of resources and land – first example is the first – human victims of the exploited effects of overconsumption and environmental resources spilling over to social injustice of marginalized and impoverished communities. We have survived this for centuries. We know what predators look like. Our first Nation sister started the movement decades ago. The term MMIW and girls started in Canada from the Highway of Tears.

The Department of Justice surveyed 2,000 American-Indian women on reservations (inaudible) and 84 percent of those women have experienced violence in their lives, 56 percent of those Native women experience sexual violence, and 90 percent of those women have experienced sexual violence as victims of non-Native perpetrators. Sixty percent of the Native women have experienced psychological violence in their lifetime. These items are seriously underestimated. The actual psychological and statistics of Native – psychological effects for Native women has no infrastructure in place to handle the amounts of these complaints or victim advocacy, which I am advocating for in the Denver area.

At the root of this is also predatory capitalism where people deeply impoverished will be the first to be hit with toxicity, both material, and socioeconomic resources, and social, and exploitation and trafficking in urban areas. This is modern colonialism in Indigenous communities. It preys on those easiest to harm without any protections or real victim advocacy in rural and sovereign communities. To provide for themselves, it puts them in a position to not have protection or awareness, and without those resources, to not hold predators legally accountable. It leaves people going invisible.

At the root of this is – again – is poverty and lack of representation and lack of access to basic human rights. We demand political officials and departments at the FBI, and similar justice institutions to gather and report accurate data about Missing and Murdered Indigenous women. We demand information be easily available for public record for families and investigators across state and federal jurisdictions, and we support the Green New Deal for transformation to change to 100 percent renewable energy because this is linked to climate justice.

The long legacy of this suffering has led to a dramatic inequity and inequality, and no enforcement or accountability to protect women, children, men or the earth being destroyed to outdated industrial industry, which it should never be OK to hurt local, poor, or rural communities like mine, and to protect them, we need to be the heroes. The U.S. government has a chance to correct this

corruption at the expense of our suffering by sharing the information, protection, and enforcement.

Stop protecting predatory polluters contributing to human rights abuses, and please start responding to America's environmental human needs during this pandemic, because our chance to be good ancestors is now. Thank you.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you.

Tara Sweeney: Erika, the next speaker, please.

Operator: OK. The next speaker is Tamra. Tamra, you are on. Please go ahead.

Tamra Borchardt-Slayton: Hello.

Tara Sweeney: Hi, and just a reminder; we are keeping the comments to three minutes per presenter. So, go ahead.

Tamra Borchardt-Slayton: Hi, can you hear me?

Tara Sweeney: Yes.

Tamra Borchardt-Slayton: Hi. I am Tamra Borchardt-Slayton. I am the Chairwoman for the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah. There are eight federally recognized Tribal Nations in Utah. Tribes in Utah count for just over one percent of the state population, but the homicide rate for Native Americans is four times that of white people. Recently, the Utah legislature passed the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Taskforce legislation to understand the scope of the crisis in Utah. This is an incredible first step to ending this crisis.

For more than a century, Indigenous people of this land have questioned the federal and state response to violence in Indian Country. The Indigenous people have raised concerns about how Supreme Court cases have effectively constrained the authority of Tribal Nations to prosecute non-Indian perpetrators who commit crime in Tribal Nations. Additionally, Indigenous Nations have reported the homicides and missing of their own Tribal members to federal and state authorities. These pleas [have] not elicited a reasonable

response from federal, state, county authorities on homicide rates and cases of missing Indigenous persons.

Hundreds, even thousands of Indigenous families all over the country mourn and grieve over the loss of loved ones. Justice failed these families for over a century. Presently, we have had to challenge the accuracy of data collected by law enforcement. The data did not reflect the reality experienced by thousands of Indigenous families in Utah.

We have had to accept, in many instances, public safety policy formulated for and implemented in Indigenous communities based on incomplete and sometimes erroneous data. When we rely on data-driven policy and the data is either incomplete or wrong, what good does data-driven policy mean and do for Indigenous nations? It [exacerbates] the crisis of murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirits. It leads to one in 10 Native women being a victim of homicide, at least a thousand going missing each year. It leads to thousands of Indigenous families feeling rejected by justice.

We are experiencing an epidemic of homicide and missing Indigenous persons cases for decades, and Indigenous scholars have offered perspective policies to measure, to address this crisis. These prescriptions include restructuring data collection methodology and infrastructure of state and federal law enforcement, restoring Indigenous nations' authority to prosecute non-Indians removed by Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe, fund Federal Law Enforcement Fund, Tribal court, increase training for state law enforcement on Tribal laws and concerns, create data sharing mechanisms between state and Tribes, and many others you've heard before.

Data collection methodology – often, data collection for Native American or Tribal affiliation – is not an option to law enforcement databases. In Utah, more than 50 percent of perpetrators remain classified as "Race Unknown" while some data categories may have an option for Native American Tribal affiliation, however this is not an option. Having data on Tribal affiliation can help Tribes better understand what is happening to their Tribal members in urban areas.

To understand the scope of the crisis, data on Tribal affiliation of victims is essential. At this time, this type of data is limited. Additionally, Utah mortality data shows that Native Americans are victims of homicide at four times the rate of white people, yet this data cannot tell us the demographic we need to know, and not only [to] understand the scope of the crisis, but to recommend appropriate policy to bring this crisis to an end.

[Regarding the] Violence against Women Act Full Faith and Credit provision – Tribal protection orders are often unwittingly dismissed because county, municipal, or state law enforcement have no training on Tribal protection orders. We know from anecdotal evidence that state and city law enforcement have not recognized protective orders from Tribal members as valid or even legitimate. Increased funding for municipal, country, and state law enforcement training on Tribal protective orders is important for those fleeing from harm (inaudible).

While criminal justice and law enforcement data is important to develop [an] appropriate policy to curtail this crisis, policy development with law enforcement data, however, will likely not touch this system and underlying factors of the crisis, understanding domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and trafficking as pathways of crisis, requires engaged data in risky behavior that tends to frame individual targets of violence.

Bringing an end to the crisis requires serious attention to underlying factors to alleviate risky behavior. For some victims, these factors include addressing, among many other things, the epidemic of PTSD experienced by many Tribal members.

So, in conclusion, because the MMIWG crisis spans multiple policy domains, jurisdictions, and regions, the response must be multi-pronged. For far too long, our communities and nations have grieved and mourned for our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews. It's time for a clear federal commitment to fund Tribal law enforcement, shelters, domestic violence and sexual assault organizations,

and to enact policy change that will bring justice to victims, families of victims, survivors, and families of survivors. Thank you.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you very much for your comments today. Go ahead, Erika, with the next presenter with another gentle reminder about three minutes.

Operator: Next we have Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty. Amber, you should be on. Amber?

Katie Sullivan: OK. Let's go ahead and move on.

Operator: That is all I have at the moment.

Katie Sullivan: OK. While people are getting their thoughts together and wanting to or getting ready to present, I think that a recap of some of the work that we have been doing with our pillars from the Executive Order would be very helpful. So, Mr. Addington, is there something that you can tell us about the cold case unit and where you stand with your working group at this time.

Charlie Addington: You bet. Well, thank you. Yes, just to give an update on the cold case task force, just in what we are trying to do to get these very important investigative teams established and put into place. We have seven locations throughout the United States that will be located in regional Task Force offices that we are getting established, and we have two agents that have already come on board. The second one will come on board today, as well as another one that will be on, I think, July 7, and we advertised the positions for all the rest of the locations, and they are going through the HR process right now to be brought on board.

So, we are just so excited that the Office of Justice Services is going to be able to team up with our other partners at the Department of Justice, our Tribal partners, FBI, all of our state and locals in these areas, to try to put together a multidisciplinary team to actually start working on cold cases in Indian Country. So, we look forward to this thing moving forward in the very near future, and we are excited.

Katie Sullivan: That is great. That is great work, and we know that the Department of Justice is so happy to have the opportunity, as always, to collaborate with you and your team, for sure, and we know that that has been a theme that we have heard in these listening sessions about the collaboration between Tribal law enforcement, BIA, and the FBI. So that is definitely a very important topic for us to be looking at and figuring out ways to combat any issues with that collaboration.

So thank you, Charlie, for that. Do we have, Erika, anyone who is ready to comment?

Operator: I have Grace Bulltail.

Katie Sullivan: Wonderful.

Operator: Grace, if you're having any issues connecting . . .

Grace Bulltail: Hello, I am . . .

Operator: There you are. OK. Go ahead.

Grace Bulltail: I want to comment about my niece and our family's fight for justice for her. My niece Kaysera Stops Pretty Places had just turned 18 years old when she went missing in Big Horn County, Montana, in late August last year. Big Horn County has the most reported cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women in the state, and amongst the highest rates of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women in the U.S.

When we reported Kaysera missing, there was no missing person report filed. When her body was discovered in Hardin five days later, she remained unidentified for two weeks. Her mother went to the funeral home, also run by the county coroner, and she was told that the body of her daughter was not there. We continued to report Kaysera missing to Big Horn County law enforcement; we still did not ever file a missing report for her.

There was no report of the discovery of this Jane Doe in the media or by law enforcement. After learning that the crime lab took two weeks to identify

Kaysera, the County Coroner had taken her remains before she was identified, and the turmoil in the Big Horn County Sheriff's Office led to an investigation.

And, that no one in our family was interviewed about her death even after she was identified, I have no other conclusion to come to other than that law enforcement did not care about Kaysera, or give her the dignity of treating her as a human being, let alone a girl that was a victim of a crime.

She did not choose to end up deceased in a stranger's yard, only to be discovered several days after she died. Based on my family's interaction with Big Horn County and the Montana Department of Justice, they do not care or cannot be bothered. Kaysera's death is not their problem.

If the weak link in the system is law enforcement, that needs to be addressed in your task force, and with the people who oversee justice in Montana. Our family has had to navigate this unjust system on our own, with no advocacy from any task force. We have pushed back, marched, protested, and demanded that county and state do more, or even do something.

We have repeatedly asked Montana elected officials for help, and for the U.S. Attorney General, our U.S. Senators and our calls for assistance have gone unheard.

Meanwhile, our families are left with no police reports and no answers. Our family had to wait 15 weeks to have an autopsy report from the County Attorney, who refuses to speak to us now. Even after the U.S. Attorney's MMIW Task Force has formed, nothing has changed for our family's request for answers and justice.

I reached out to the MMIP coordinator in Montana, and he told me he had to defer to Big Horn County officials. We have asked the Montana Department of Justice, and they said they will not help unless Big Horn County asks them to.

Well, the County Attorney did ask them to, and they told them no. And I have asked for advice from the MMIP specialist in Montana, and I still have not received a response. I am still asking, what can anyone do to help us? Thank you.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you so much for your heartfelt comments. Thank you. Do we have another presenter? Does anyone on the Task Force have any comments?

Operator: We have Delegate Amber. Are you able to speak?

Amber Kanazbah Crotty: Hi, good morning. Are you able to hear me?

Operator: Yes, ma'am, go ahead.

Amber Kanazbah Crotty: Thank you. (Speaking Native language) I am a Navajo Nation council delegate; I am the chairwoman of the Naabik'iyati' Sexual Assault Prevention Subcommittee; and I want to thank the Task Force for the opportunity to provide some comments regarding the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives on Navajo Nation.

The Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force was created to support our Diné families, who have had the challenge of dealing with law enforcement (inaudible) find their missing loved ones.

On Navajo Nation, me, as a Tribal leader, I cannot tell you how many Navajos are missing here on the Navajo Nation. That demonstrates just a lack of data sharing, that reflects the lack of communication and coordination, and that also reflects the lack of support that our families need.

So, we do have grass roots, all volunteers, who are going through NamUs, who are self-trained, and going through the databases trying to identify and get all of those Navajo missing relatives' information, so that we can actively look for them.

So, I appreciate Mr. Addington's update on the cold case. I would actually need more information. As a Tribal leader, I have not received a process in terms of how I can refer cases to the cold case unit, which I believe is very

important. We have a current case that spans many different jurisdictions, and their family needs the help and the support of our federal partners to solve her disappearance, and to recover her.

And I know that I am running late on time, but if I may, I would like to finish by saying that we've held a series of conferences on the ground with our community members. We have talked about our missing children in Shiprock; in Flagstaff, we've discussed our police response. In the city of Gallup, we talked about missing veterans and unsheltered relatives; in Tuba City, we looked at the unique challenges of our Navajo male relatives, who, here on the Nation, are active.

Operator: Hello? I have Vivian Billy.

Vivian Billy: What I got to do?

Operator: Vivian, your line is open, you can speak now.

Vivian Billy: Hello?

Operator: Yes, go ahead.

Vivian Billy: I am here on behalf of MMIP of Northern Oklahoma, trying to get a grip on what is going on here, and also trying to find out about the funding aspect of it.

Katie Sullivan: Hi, this is Katie Sullivan, when you talk about the funding aspect, do you mean ... one of the things we are trying to do is to look where there are gaps in funding. Right now, we are assessing and listening and looking for gaps, but there is not, at this juncture – it is more like we are trying to utilize what we already have and do it better. So, where aren't we?

I can say that in the last three years there has been set-aside money from the Crime Victims Fund on the victim services side of things, and so we have been trying very hard to build victim services, which I think there's a cross-section with this issue, for sure, in Indian Country.

So, those were unprecedented amounts that were a direct set-aside for Indian Country. We will be putting that money out this year, as a formula. There were competitive grants for the first two years, but, after getting feedback from all of you and our partners, we decided that a formula was a better fit, and would better extend that money.

This Task Force does not have funding attached, but we will be looking at places where we need to be requesting funding, and I think that is the legislative piece that was on the PowerPoint.

Vivian Billy: What is \$273 million about, in MMIW? Will it be disbursed to local MMIW chapters? Hello?

Katie Sullivan: Hi, we can hear you.

Vivian Billy: What is the \$273 million for the MMIW for?

Katie Sullivan: I am going to defer. Tara, do you know what they are commenting on? Is that DOI or DOJ money?

Tara Sweeney: I am sorry, I cannot answer that question, because I am not sure what appropriation you are referring to. If I had a little more context, I just do not know what \$273 million for MMIW – it is certainly not DOI, the Department of the Interior.

Operator: Vivian Billy?

Vivian Billy: Yes?

Tara Sweeney: Before we move on to the next speaker, operator, I wanted to provide some additional information. I know that the previous speakers have raised some issues about partnerships, about data, and about improved communication with families.

This is Assistant Secretary Sweeney. When you look at the Executive Order, it calls for best practices and clarity of roles, and what I want to highlight is that, under the best practices, looking at how we can improve the way law

enforcement investigators and prosecutors respond to the high volume of cases, and to any investigative challenges in the cases that involve female victims.

We are also charged with making recommendations on best practices for collecting and sharing data amongst various jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies. And, as we have heard from the previous speakers, you know, there are challenges there, and sharing information, and ensuring that the information that we are sharing is accurate.

Looking at developing the better use of existing criminal databases, NCIC, CODIS, NDIS, NamUs, are some of the existing data systems that are utilized, and working with Tribal law enforcement to also better utilize these databases where appropriate.

The Executive Order also calls for a clarity of roles. The lead for developing the best practices guidance for law enforcement, including the communication with affected families, is so important, and that is something that we continue to hear throughout these listening sessions – the feedback of families, and how important it is. HHS is going to be taking the lead on a communications kit that Commissioner Hovland can provide additional information on a little later.

[We are] looking at formalizing agreements or arrangements among law enforcement to promote the maximally cooperative, trauma-informed responses to cases. And that is extremely important, as we know, as so many of our community members have experienced trauma in their lives; and those that have been traumatized respond differently, and it is important for the first responders to recognize those signs.

And, just to wrap up, to develop and execute an education and outreach campaign for communities that are most affected by crimes against Natives. I raise these points because of the comments that we have heard so far about data, about partnerships, about the need for communication and assistance.

And, to the caller who was talking about her missing family member in Big Horn County, I do want to just let you know that the U.S. Attorney for Montana, Kurt Alme, is listening on the line, as well.

So, with that, I turn it back to you, thank you, Co-Chair Sullivan.

Katie Sullivan: Great, thank you. Do we have anyone who would like to speak? Erika?

Operator The members that have their hands raised, I do not have phone numbers attached to them, so it means they are not dialed in, so we cannot enable speaking mode on them.

Katie Sullivan: OK, great. Do you have a dial-in number that you can announce to the group, so they can dial in? Or, the dial-in, can you give us some logistics on that, or not? Because we definitely want to hear from these people.

Operator: If they can type their number into the “comment” box, I feel maybe that would be the best way, and then I can dial out to them, if they would pick up when we call. So, if they have anything that they would like to say, if they could place their number into the comment box and we will dial them in.

Katie Sullivan: OK, great. Thank you. In the meantime –

Operator: I have Jolene Holgate. Jolene, you should be unmuted. Go ahead.

Jolene Holgate: Hi, can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, you are on.

Jolene Holgate: OK, great. (Speaking Native language). My name is Jolene Holgate, and I am from a small community in Northern Arizona called Shonto. I am the project manager for the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Initiative, as a co-founder with the previous speaker, Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty.

As she has mentioned, we have held a series of community forums across the Navajo Nation to really understand the Missing and Murdered issue that is taking place.

One area that I definitely would recommend for the Task Force is to also take a look at the different areas that directly impact the Missing and Murdered crisis, and this includes human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual violence, gender violence, child abuse, issues within the foster care system, and unsheltered relatives. All those issues, I think, play within the overall systemic problems that our Navajo as well as Indigenous relatives are facing out there.

Then, another important point that I wanted to include are the issues that have risen out of the COVID-19 pandemic. I think many of us are very familiar that, because of the shelter-in-place orders, there has been a substantial increase in domestic and intimate partner violence, as well as sexual violence in general. So I think it is important for us to acknowledge that increase, and how that is going to factor in within the Task Force's work.

Some issues that took place on the Navajo specifically related to our missing relatives. There were curfews put in place that hindered a lot of the search and rescue efforts. As you know, every minute counts when searching for a missing person, and I think our federal, state and Tribal partners need to take a look at what those processes look like, how they can support those volunteer searches, what kind of curfew waivers can be provided to those individuals who are searching for their loved ones.

Another issue that we ran into, and I think a lot of Tribes have also endured, is the jurisdiction and database issues. For instance, a recent relative that was missing was put into one database but was not in another, and there was another relative where they were not in any of the databases.

So those were just two important issues that I did want to bring up, thank you again for allowing me time to speak and again thank you for the opportunity.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you so much for your thoughtful comments. Erika, do we have someone ready to go?

Operator: Yes, I have LaRenda Morgan – LaRenda you're enabled, go ahead. LaRenda, do we have you? I think she might have disconnected – she is back on, LaRenda? Maybe we will give her just a moment; I have Annita next.

Brenda Golden: Hello.

Operator: Annita?

Brenda Golden: No, this is Brenda.

Katie Sullivan: Brenda great, go ahead, thank you.

Brenda Golden: Hi, my name is Brenda Golden and I am an attorney in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. I am Muskogee Creek and I would just like to share a couple of things that happened in this last year during our legislative sessions. As some of you are from Oklahoma, you may remember that we had to shut down our legislative session in the middle of the pandemic.

And we had some bills introduced, specifically during the listening session that our state government had, some issues that came forward that kind of mirrored the same things that happened in Montana. The law enforcement agencies and police officers did not take missing persons of Indigenous people seriously and for that reason, the media was not alerted.

There was no kind of bulletin put out, they did not search for them, and so that is another repeat thing that happens across Indian Country is that, you know, we are told, "they are just out partying", or "they will show back up," and we are not taken seriously. And the other thing that was said over and over again during this legislative session was, "Why do we want to treat these Native people differently, or carve out a special class for them?"

When we ask for legislation to be passed to protect our women and our people. And I would like some assistance from possibly the Task Force or members of the Task Force in helping to address this kind of thinking that we are asking for some type of alert system when an Indigenous person goes missing.

Because the crossroads here in Oklahoma of I-40 and I-35 going coast to coast, human trafficking is a huge issue and if we could have some sort of alert when someone is in danger. Like now, our MMIW groups share when one of our sisters or one of our people goes missing, we put up flyers on social media we say, "red alert", and we share and share it. And say if you see something, say something, call the police and we are pretty much doing the job that the law enforcement agencies were doing.

So, we were asking for CLET training, which is the Council Law Enforcement Training that all officers have to receive annually. For them just to receive one hour on the subject of MMIW and the cultural significance that happens to us when one of our Native sisters goes missing.

And both of those were met with resistance because our legislators did not want to treat us special, and I would just like to point out that if we could get some assistance to overcome that kind of thinking that would be—

Katie Sullivan: Great, thank you, Brenda, very much. This is Katie Sullivan, and I just wanted to add one thing about the alert system. This is not unique for Indian Country but there was a law and a bill that was passed last year sponsored by Senator Warner from Virginia for any adult that went missing that there would be an alert system much like Amber Alert.

It is called Ashanti's Law and I know the Office of Justice Programs is providing technical assistance to the states about how that actually operates. Victims' advocacy groups were very instrumental in helping to create the law because there are some people who, you know, do not want to be found and do not want an alert out [because] they are leaving for their safety, as I know Laura Rogers will be able to talk about as well.

But there are instances like human trafficking and things like that where you want to get the alert out as quickly as possible, so there are some precautions in there but there is now an alert system for adults under this particular law. So, I did want to address that, it is not unique to Indian Country; it is a national mandate. Laura, did you have anything or did any of the Task Force members, FBI have anything to add?

Laura Rogers: Katie, I think you covered it nicely. I think though it is important to know that with our 904 Task Force coming back into force, we are going to be engaging in research with respect to American Indian and Alaska Native women to further investigate the effectiveness of state, federal, Tribal, and local responses to violence against women. Specifically, American Indian and Alaska Native women.

Make recommendations with respect to the responses and Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and trying to get down to the bare bones of, you know, what the issues are. We have a Task Force put together of all Native Americans with respect to advising us on this research – we are going to be getting going on that Task Force very shortly; we are very excited about that, we have been working hard on that. So hopefully we will have some new research with respect to that, so we should see some good results from that.

Katie Sullivan: Great, thank you.

Tara Sweeney: I just wanted Charlie Addington with OJS to talk about a feature that they have.

Charlie Addington: Yes, well good afternoon everybody. Just one of the things that we have done just for receiving information or receiving tips on these type of crimes or any other kind of crimes is we actually developed an app for smart phones, it is called BIA Tips and you can do it with an Android phone or with an iPhone, either one; you can download that.

You can actually have folks report information directly to us over that app and when it gets reported, the individual reporting can either remain anonymous or they can actually communicate directly with one of the agents that it gets assigned to through that app. So, it is a really good tool just to help with the reporting of crimes in Indian Country and you can just download it through the App store on any smartphone.

Katie Sullivan: Great.

Jeannie Hovland: Thank you; this is Commissioner Hovland with the Administration for Native Americans and I just also want to build upon the human trafficking aspect. We have the Office on Trafficking in Persons at Administration for Children and Families and we have partnered with them to produce some tools that are helpful for combating human trafficking and they are free, they are online.

One of the combating human trafficking Native tool kits and we partnered with Assistant Secretary Sweeney and Director Addington and BIE Director Tony Dearman, and have brought in training to our teachers also with Johnson O'Malley to help them identify what is human trafficking, what do you do if you observe it, and how do you respond to it?

So, educating those that have a reach into our Native communities into the youth, so it is appropriate for our youth, it is free. We have been talking with Director Addington on doing a training with HHS, Office on Trafficking in Persons in law enforcement. So COVID-19 kind of came into play and it is kind of hindered our training efforts, but we want to plan to do so.

And then also ANA and the Office on Trafficking in Persons produced for providers who see Native populations that may be victims of human trafficking, it is called SOAR for Natives and that stands for Stop, Observe, Ask, and Respond. It is free online training for professionals, for healthcare providers, counselors, social workers, for anybody and we really want to ask you to utilize that in your communities.

We are finding that education on what human trafficking is and how to respond to it is really [is] very much needed. So, we are trying to get that information out as much as possible. We need your help doing so; we are happy to provide you with those resources. And also, there was a comment earlier about looking at our vulnerable populations both in the urban settings and in our Native communities, those in the foster care system, runaway homeless youth, substance abuse issues, our elders.

So, at HHS, we're developing a framework to provide our services, to specifically target our vulnerable populations and strengthen them through education and awareness and programs. So, we hope to have this framework

available in the coming months, but definitely we want to take this upstream and look at [prevention] and strengthening our Native populations. So, thank you for bringing that up and continue to follow us at Operation Lady Justice as we produce these helpful tools.

Katie Sullivan: Great, I think we have some more presenters, Erika.

Operator: Yes, I am going to try LaRenda again. LaRenda, your line is enabled, please go ahead. OK; she might have stepped away, so I am going to move to Annita. Annita, your line is on, please go ahead.

Annita Lucchesi: Thank you, I will try to stay brief because I know that we are conscious of time but it is hard because I have so many questions. My name is Annita; I am calling from Sovereign Bodies Institute. We are the home of the largest database on Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit people.

We have worked with many of the folks who have called in and shared today, and I just, you know, want to offer my respect and my appreciation for the words they shared with the Task Force. I am also speaking as a survivor of trafficking myself and as an Indigenous woman who was missing and reports were never taken and who almost was murdered. I think Grace has done a really good job of highlighting some of the issues with law enforcement on the ground.

And I want to say that we have a project with over 30 families in that area and we have documented over one hundred cases in that area, all of them have the same problems that Grace has identified in terms of poor law enforcement response, inaccurate communication, lack of meaningful action on cases.

This is not just, you know, one case that has fallen through the cracks; it is systemic and you know, I put some questions in the chat with regards to that area specifically, I am wondering why Ernie Weyand was hired as the MMIP Coordinator for Montana when there was a lawsuit filed against him for racial discrimination in how he handled homicide cases of Native people in Montana as an FBI agent.

And you know, more largely, the families that we work with released an open letter in February asking for help from him and from other state and federal agencies and we got no response to that letter whatsoever from any state or federal agency. So I am wondering why that happened and how we can trust law enforcement to work with us in a good way, or even how we can trust them to develop best practices if they cannot be bothered to pick up the phone?

And to just, you know, close with some of my own experiences as a survivor. Police knew I was being trafficked; I was solicited by Spokane City police officers, they knew exactly what was happening to me. My trafficker was on Department of Corrections supervision and someone from DOC was in our house twice a week.

She would come in and saw a person-sized hole in the wall and me covered in bruises and believed his story that it was a tickle fight and then locked him up in jail for two weeks because there was a beer bottle in our backyard that faces an alley that tons of people walk through.

So there was a simultaneous complete erasure of the violence that I went through and intense racism and so I do not – it is hard for me to fathom how we can trust law enforcement to create best practices without talking to us or how we can trust them to create systems that better protect victims of trafficking or families that have gone through this crisis. Knowing that nationally these issues exist, and you know, myself first-hand I know what it is like to almost die because law enforcement does not take the violence you are experiencing seriously.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you for your heartfelt testimony, we have more people who would like to speak and I just want to make sure that we do have an opportunity to hear from everyone before our end time at 3:30.

Operator: OK. Next, we have on the line Carmen. Carmen your line is on – can you go ahead?

Carmen Thompson-Klineko: OK, can you hear me? Can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, we can. Go ahead.

Carmen Thompson-Klineko: (Speaking Native language). My name is Carmen Thompson-Klineko and I am Choctaw and Hualapai and there are 10 groups in Oklahoma MMIW chapters and those that support MMIW. They are the MMIW Southwest Oklahoma, Geneva Hadley; Charisse Redbone, MMIW Indian Capital; Maria Adair, MMIW Southeast Oklahoma Chapter; Olivia Gray, NOISE; Vivian Billy, Northern MMIW Chapter, MMIW Riverside; Deborah Maytubee MMIW U.S.A.; Cynthia Perkins, MMIW Chickasaw Chapter; Natalie Wallace, MMIW Comanche; Cindy Famerio, Warrior Woman's Society; Pam Smith with NOISE and (inaudible) MMIW Chapter (Inaudible;) and Darcie Scoon, a private investigator.

We all work together whenever there is a missing or murdered person and we got together with MMIW families and the MMIW chapters were all grassroots and we came together and asked what the needs were for the families. And I have been talking with Lisa Billy, I do not know if you guys know her?

But she is the one that I gave the proposal to, but a lot of them are wanting a database developed; and working with MMIW. A lot of times when we go on searches and we talk with the police officers, they do not know about MMIW. And a lot of times the law enforcement, like someone said, they do not take it seriously.

But a lot of the things that the families was wanting was, let me go over them really quick, was funding to do our own search and rescue. Follow up from OSBI, have their murdered families investigated, a lot of them do not get investigated by the law enforcement and support families.

There's a lot of need for their families. When someone's family member is murdered in Oklahoma and they live in Arizona, they have to come here to Oklahoma and that's a need. They need to be able to stay somewhere and collect their loved ones and to be out there in the woods MMIW they go out there and they search. We are not trained but we go and search for families

because there is no one doing it. We need the red alert on the news, we need advocates, search assistance, a mandatory reporting to NamUs –

Operator: OK do we want to move to the next or did you need to address?

Katie Sullivan: No, go ahead.

Operator: OK next on the line we have Chase Velasquez, you are on the line, go ahead.

Chase Velasquez: Can you hear me?

Operator: Yes, we can, go ahead.

Chase Velasquez: Good early afternoon, everyone. For those in the east coast, my name is Chase Velasquez, I am a member of the White Mountain Apache Tribe here in Arizona. I am the Assistant Attorney General for the San Carlos Apache Tribe in Arizona; I am also the Special Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Tribe and I work closely with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Arizona.

I think the purpose of today's discussion was for the Task Force to receive comment from those of us that are in the trenches as to what can be done to address this issue, and I think one of the opportunities that leaders of Tribes really need to take is their attorneys or prosecutors becoming Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys within the district of where the reservation is located.

That is available through the Tribal Law and Order Act, and I say that because these attorneys will be in the office on the reservation any time an incident happens such as a major crime. SAUSA is there to work collectively with the local law enforcement, whether that be the Tribal police, the assigned federal investigatory body, and to kind of shepherd this whole process along and keep tabs on a lot of these cases.

And I have been the SAUSA for San Carlos for two years now; we have a good working relationship with the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, the BIA and a lot of this takes working together and to be frank, a lot of the task is going to fall to the Tribes at the beginning when an incident arises to really keep hands on what is going on and to aggressively advocate and

communicate all of this to the U.S. Attorney's Office and the federal investigatory bodies.

And I am happy to say that our relationship has been good so far, we have had a lot of positive results. Are there still a lot of issues to be worked on? Yes, there is, but I think we will get there, and I think that is the main thing.

The main tool available out there for Tribes and I think that is one thing that the Task Force should be mindful of as far as putting more resources into the Tribal SAUSA program because it does work. So, I do think that is one tool that Tribes can take to address this issue of missing and the murder rates of Indigenous woman so that is what I wanted to comment on.

Katie Sullivan: Great, thank you so much for those comments. I appreciate it. I do want to just remind everyone that written comments can be submitted on Operation Lady Justice, all one word. OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov, so you can supply written comments and/or testimony to that email. Next presenter, please.

Operator: OK, next on the line we have Leonard. OK go ahead you are on the line.

Leonard Aguilar: Hello, can you all hear me?

Katie Sullivan: Yes, Leonard, we can.

Leonard Aguilar: Greetings everyone, I am Leonard Aguilar from the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo in New Mexico and I apologize, I just now logged on. I was in a board meeting since this morning and I had every intention to be on this call. I missed the majority of it, however, I wanted to probably ask a question to the Attorney General's office as well as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

I have been corresponding with you both for quite some time since January and I have not received any type of correspondences. I have reached out to our regional southwest, regional offices and I've been speaking with Interim Chief for OJS. I was responsible for passing legislation in the State of New Mexico regarding missing and unidentified persons.

Not specific to Native American population, but to missing and unidentified individuals despite their nationality and ethnicity. And my brother has been missing three years, eight months and 24 days of today; he is a Native American male and I do know I have had some pretty bad experiences with the State Office of Indian Affairs and various other agencies because my brother is not a Native American woman.

So, you know, I have to advocate for all the Native American males out there who are missing or remain missing. But this law that was passed in the State of New Mexico does not segregate or discriminate towards one gender, and so with that being stated I have a very good rapport with the NamUs organization.

I have brought forth to the table and opened the eyes of how many existing people that are also Native American and non-Native people that are in system in New Mexico that date way back to many years past. So I would like to know, first off, how is this listening session and discussion going to play out when we do not get any type of feedback and or responses from our Indian Affairs Assistant Secretary and/or operatives let alone our regional offices. We act solely on our own resources as individuals in searching for our loved ones –

Katie Sullivan: Erika?

Operator: Yes?

Katie Sullivan: First I just want to – this is Katie, Leonard and I do want to let you know that I did receive your voicemail message the other day. I passed it on to Marcia Good, our Executive Director. I believe that you spoke at the NCAI Taskforce Conference that we had as well.

And the legislation that you have put together in New Mexico is very exciting to us, I do not want to blame COVID but I do think that we got behind on some of the individual outreach; but you can expect to hear from Marcia. She is working with my scheduler so that we can talk. So, I did want to address

that specifically. I would just want to note that we are at about five minutes to the end of our session. Were there any other hands raised, Erika?

Operator: Yes, Katie we are trying to get Shawn Partridge on the line. She is dialing in right now.

Tara Sweeney: While she's dialing in, can I just provide some comments to Mr. Aguilar? I am sincerely apologetic. I have not seen anything from you come across my desk or received any phone calls but that's not to say that I do not want to have a conversation with you. And so, if you could provide your contact information to Marcia Good at the OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov email, then my office will be in touch with you.

You raised a good point about the inclusion of men in the efforts of this Task Force – and the efforts of this Task Force are to focus on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives, men, woman and children. So, it is important that we not leave our men behind as we move forward to try to arrest these alarming trends in our communities. And so, I appreciate your advocacy and look forward to having a conversation, thank you.

Meskee Yatsayte: Hi, I am still on hold.

Katie Sullivan: I think we can hear you.

Meskee Yatsayte: OK I was just waiting for you guys to call my name, my name is Meskee. I've been on hold for about 40 minutes.

Katie Sullivan: OK. Do you want to provide some comment?

Meskee Yatsayte: Yes (Speaking Native language). Hello everyone, my name is Meskee Yatsayte. I am the founder of Navajo Nation Missing Persons, also a member of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives and I am originally from Oklahoma, but I do live here in New Mexico. I know that Jolene had been on the call earlier and she did mention about COVID delays in searching.

I believe she was talking about me; I do have a missing relative, he is my closest uncle. We have been searching for him for 29 days. The one thing I

did want to mention is that I believe that when a person goes missing, they do need to be entered into NCIC immediately. We should actually make that mandatory because when the Navajo Police Department took my uncle's case and made the report, they never entered him in NCIC.

So when I found that out, I had to request for the county, McKinley County Sheriff to take my uncle's case so that they could put him into that database; and because of the COVID delays, we were not able to search for my uncle in the Gallup, New Mexico area. We were actually put on restriction where we could not get in there, and that caused a lot of dilemma for us and now our hope of finding my uncle alive was just totally demolished right there and then when they told us we could not search there.

The other thing I really quickly want to bring up is that we also need to focus on our unidentified Native Americans, we need to bring that to light, bring that to the media. A lot of people do not talk about that and I know there is a lot of feedback on that, but we do need to bring our unidentified relatives to light so that there can be connections to our missing.

And the other thing I also wanted to ask was, what do you guys consider a cold case? And one thing I also want to add is that the volunteer searches, we really do need that, all our Tribes need that. We do need funding to have our own volunteering searching group and cadaver dogs.

For us, this is day 29 for my uncle missing and there is only five of us out of my family – that are still searching for my uncle on foot. So, these are some of the things I just kind of wanted to bring up quickly; thank you guys for having me and letting me be able to talk.

Katie Sullivan: Thank you so much; we are nearing – well are actually at the end of our time. I would like to see if Tyler Fish has joined us and if so, would you like to make a few comments, Tyler?

Tyler Fish: Hi yes, absolutely, Katie. (Speaking Native language) Tribal leaders and Indian Country public safety advocates. My name is Tyler Fish, I am Muscogee Creek and Cherokee. I may have had the opportunity to meet some

of you previously as the Principal Tribal Liaison at the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. I am now the Acting Executive Director for the White House Council on Native American Affairs.

Over the course of the past three months, as you can imagine, my focus has been principally on COVID-19 response in Indian Country and through the challenges that have presented from the pandemic, your Operation Lady Justice team here has remained steadfast in their commitment to address the issue of Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.

And I know that many of you have continued your efforts to protect your citizens from the epidemic of violence that impacts Tribal citizens even through these challenges. That is significant because we know that this issue does not stop, regardless of the periodic or incremental crises or situations that affect our Tribal nations.

I think in many ways, it is reasonable for us to assume that violence against American Indians and Alaska Natives may be exacerbated by the conditions that we find ourselves [in] with the present coronavirus pandemic. So I make that judgment based upon the issues and concerns that many of you and others in Indian Country have brought to me over the past few months, that the fight to eliminate Missing and Murdered cases in Indian Country has not gone away and you have not let up your efforts regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic.

So I am very encouraged, I am grateful and appreciate our leadership from Deputy Assistant Attorney General Sullivan as well as Assistant Secretary Sweeney to really get our external engagement up and running again, but also for all the hard work that they both have been doing behind the scenes, even in the midst of the broader COVID-19 shutdown over the last few months.

So I just want to close briefly with the point to say that I thank each and every one of you for your commitment. I appreciate your comments and suggestions on this listening session to help us really tailor our approach to these critical issues in a way that is more relevant and responsive to the issues and the contributing factors that you're experiencing in your communities.

And this is a team effort, it is going to take collaboration and coordination among all of us to have real world lasting impacts. So in remembrance of our loved ones who have fallen victim to violence in Indian Country, I sincerely appreciate your partnership and I look forward to a time whenever we can all have these conversations face to face once again. So, thank you very much Katie, I appreciate the opportunity.

Tara Sweeney: Thank you, Tyler, and that concludes the listening session for today. This is Tara Sweeney; I want to encourage folks if you have detailed recommendations and we have heard a number of good ones today, I would encourage you to submit those comments to [OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov](mailto:OperationLadyJustice@usdoj.gov).

The comments received will be reviewed by the Task Force. It is also extremely important to understand that the information that is shared here helps guide our discussions as a Task Force, and we bring that back to our respective hallways within HHS, within DOJ, within DOI.

I sincerely appreciate the time that we have had today, and I look forward to participating in additional listening sessions. We have two more scheduled and a consultation scheduled for July 7 in Billings, Montana.

So, I wish you all well, and be safe. Thank you.

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