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Dear Tebogo, I thought you might be interested in the enclosed statements by Mandela and Shipe. The reading of them was the highpoint of the session. Statements by George Bizos and Gertrude Shipe were also read. Here's wishing you and Lyndell all the best during the holidays and in the new year. Yours, Tom

2.12.91

Remarks at the Special Tribute and Memorial Meeting for Gwendolen Carter
African Studies Association, November 25, 1991, at St. Louis, by Thomas Karis

All of us who happen to be on the platform this morning are speaking for many of you who, like us, have been inspired by Gwen Carter. I hope this meeting may transmit some of that inspiration to those who did not know her.

Seven years ago, Gwen was honored at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Dick Sklar described her as belonging to "a very select group, a special company of Western scholars who have communed with the heart of her beloved Africa. That company includes the fabled Mary Kingsley, Olive Schreiner, Margery Perham, [and I'm glad Dick added] Ruth First, perhaps a few others, and, surely, our American pride, Gwen."

All of us have anecdotes about Gwen's joy in life, her energy, enthusiasm, curiosity, her warmth and vibrancy, which made memorable one's first meeting with her, her courage, and her generosity, especially in assisting students and young scholars. For me, the key to an appreciation of Gwen Carter was her gift for friendship. On her many trips to Africa, she would meet graduate students, and the meetings would be the beginning of a warm relationship. Students were immediately asked to call her "Gwen." They happily did favors for her and learned that she could be counted on to follow their careers and to help them in every way she could.

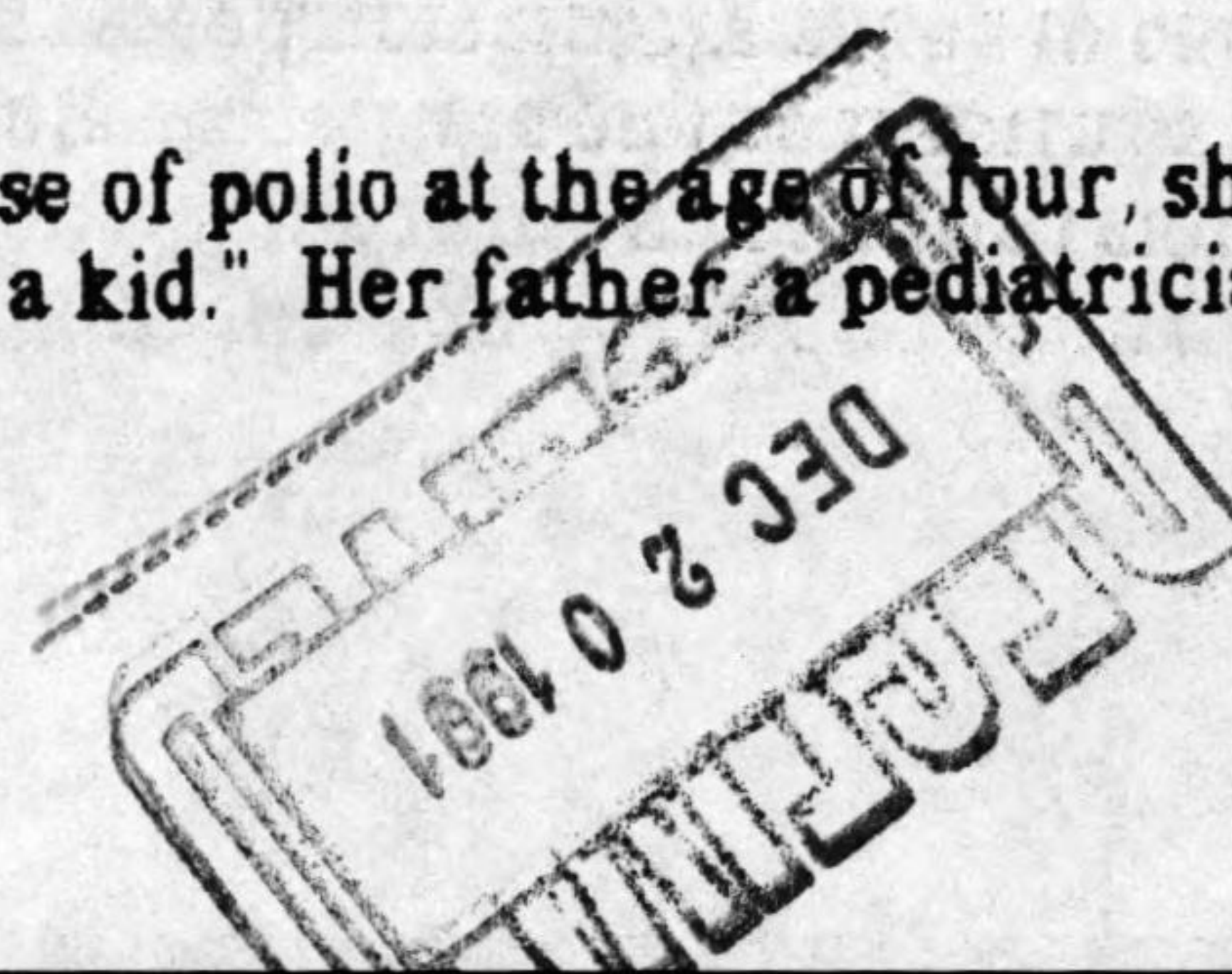
When Gwen was 19 she visited England and was influenced by her Uncle John, the mayor of Oxford, an editor, and a radical. Gwen's description of him, later, was a description of herself. She recalled "his tremendous drive, his tremendous love of life, his willingness to charge into any kind of situation, and his fearlessness. All of this appealed to me very much, and his conviviality."

Some of you may wish to know the source of this quotation and a few others in these remarks. They come from a taped interview that I conducted as part of an oral history project of the American Political Science Association. When I went to Gwen's home in Florida in 1980, she did not think we could talk for more than a couple of hours. The interview went on over a period of three days.

I first met Gwen just over 40 years ago. She became my closest colleague and one of my closest friends. For the last four years, Gail Gerhart and I have been working on three additional volumes of the documentary history entitled From Protest to Challenge, which will cover the quarter-century from 1964 to 1991. I can hear Gwen's voice now, exerting gentle and loving pressure, as she asks: are you nearly finished?

I hope that I can suggest in these remarks how Gwen's personality, values, and intellectual influences shaped her scholarship.

Even before coming down with a severe case of polio at the age of four, she was -- in her own words -- "extremely independent as a kid." Her father, a pediatrician, and



her mother were "extremely permissive" and did not forbid her from doing anything that she thought she could do. Gwen remembered with satisfaction that when other children her age were not allowed to cross railroad tracks unless accompanied, she -- walking with crutches -- would lead them across.

She had -- again in her words -- a "very happy childhood," with no "hang-ups or resentment or problems." Living with legs that were useless presented many problems that she did not bother talking about. One evening in Washington, invited to an elegant dinner party, Gwen found it impossible to get up the front stairs. She would normally give one crutch to a friend and hold on to the banister. We went to the basement, but there too the stairs had no banister. Gwen solved the problem by doing what she did as a child, she said. She sat down on the stairs and managed to lift herself up step by step, emerging into the kitchen rear-end first while all the guests stood watching with astonishment. Gwen pulled it off with laughter -- she thought it was great fun.

Having great fun -- for example, going to the ballet and the theater -- was a part of Gwen's joy in life that I have no time to illustrate; perhaps other speakers will. As a scholar, Gwen found joy in travel, in meeting all kinds of people, and in seeing for herself. She travelled widely in Europe in the 1930s. In 1948-49 she had an exhilarating 13-month trip around the world, visiting Commonwealth countries. During three of those months, she discovered Africa, driving over 18,000 miles. She had a student assistant, but special hand controls enabled her to drive herself. In South Africa, she attended political meetings far off the beaten path. In 1958-59, Gwen saw much of Africa at a historic time.

What she discussed and observed in her many travels was absorbed in the light of her rich intellectual experience. Gwen moved from old-fashioned political economy at the University of Toronto, to history at Oxford, to political theory at Harvard, and to comparative politics. She could write rapidly and with clarity, skills due, I think, to the breadth of her background and the confidence this gave her. Graduate students now struggling to finish dissertations can find inspiration -- if not dismay -- in her example. At Harvard she was determined to graduate in her third year. Therefore, she wrote her dissertation on the British Commonwealth in only three or four months. At the end, she had five typists busy typing different sections as she finished them, with a friend running back and forth. She recalled that because of the need to keep the typists busy, the sections were not well integrated, but she met the deadline. Incidentally, her oral defense was sometimes awkward since, as the only woman in the room, she had to pour the tea. Later she revised and published the dissertation.

During 21 years at Smith College, Gwen taught political theory mainly and also a famous course on Africa. She was "fascinated" by Hegelianism but "never swallowed" it, she said, and always found the political realism of Machiavelli more appealing. Nevertheless, T. H. Green was her intellectual hero while she was at Oxford, and his Hegelianism continued to influence her. She found in Green "the unfolding of something in the world that I saw and I think still see as a kind of organic whole in its main features, but also the pragmatic ability of individuals and of groups to change it in a particular period." Gwen did have a special interest in talking with leaders. She knew the importance of leadership but never treated leaders in isolation from the historical and political process. She enjoyed contacts with people at all levels and across the political spectrum. Her acceptance by them was due to the sense she conveyed of open-mindedness and fairness, attributes that were all the more admirable because she held strong opinions.

As a Canadian opposed to colonialism, Gwen sympathized with the British Labor Party. She strongly supported Roosevelt and the New Deal. Gwen detested Joe McCarthy -- when he visited Smith College, she found him "slimy". George Wallace -- "that wretched man" -- came to Smith at the time of the crisis over James Meredith. Gwen and another professor stood in front of the building where he was to speak, holding protest signs calling on students to boycott his appearance. She admired Jimmy Carter and his commitment to human rights.

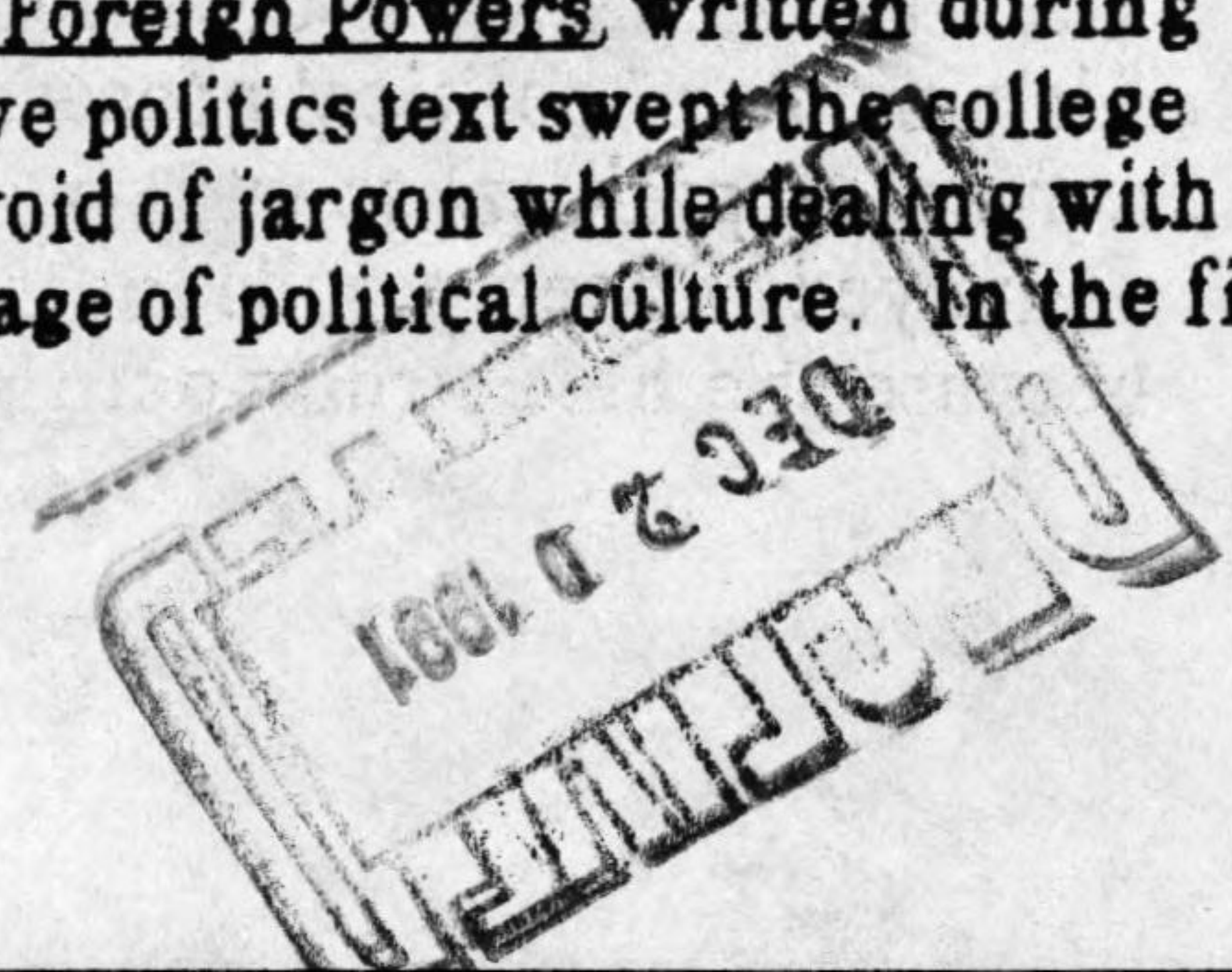
As the focus of her interests in South Africa shifted from white to black politics, she met many leaders of the African National Congress and others in the liberation movement. The South African government reciprocated by refusing visas for a dozen years, beginning in the mid-1960s. She herself, of course, refused to visit Rhodesia after UDI. As late as 1985 the South African Security Police detained her for a couple of hours at Jan Smuts airport and strip-searched her male assistant.

Gwen was committed to liberal values. In her scholarship, she was not a theoretician or system builder. She rejected inevitability. Marxism yielded insights, she believed, but she was impatient with Marxists or any writers whose historical analysis was empirically weak or obscured by jargon. She dismissed ideologues but related easily to individuals on her left whom she respected. It was wonderful to see how she and Jack Simons and Bram Fischer took to each other. She had a special interest in the role of women and dedicated one book to Helen Suzman, Helen Joseph, and Winnie Mandela.

In living through the turbulence of the late 1960s and early 1970s, at Northwestern and within the ASA, Gwen responded with sympathy, tolerance, and equanimity. She reacted with some amusement to the so-called "Extended Family" report, an exercise in McCarthyism of the left by some radical students, which identified virtually every Africanist who was or had been related in any way to the U.S. Government or to a foundation. Gwen was the star exhibit. A full-page cartoon, reminiscent of Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart, featured her as "the African Queen" in a gondola. She had become a great fund-raiser, and hundreds or thousands of graduate students benefitted. Some critics of "the establishment" looked askance at the fact that she was often met at airports by Ford Foundation or American embassy officials. That they did so was "lovely," Gwen thought.

In 1958 her pioneering work on the South African political system appeared, The Politics of Inequality. During 1962-66, at an early stage in African political development, Gwen, as an editor, brought to fruition three books covering nineteen countries. Later, she edited eight other country studies. Her skill in galvanizing colleagues to begin and complete research was a wonder to behold. Only one with her gift for leadership and friendship could be so tough without the other party being quite aware of what was happening. Her influence could also be seen in the way in which she dealt with the debate about African one-party states. Gwen insisted that judgments about democracy should be based upon empirical analysis of the functioning of the political system rather than on inferences from the existence or non-existence of certain formal institutions.

To appreciate what underlay the approach of these books, I shall conclude by going back to 1949 and the first edition of The Major Foreign Powers, written during Gwen's early years at Smith College. This comparative politics text swept the college market. Its writing was clear and lucid, happily devoid of jargon while dealing with all the processes others later dealt with in the language of political culture. In the five



following editions, appearing over the next twenty years, Gwen wrote and revised the sections on Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, and John Herz wrote on Germany. They expressed their basic questions and values with simple clarity: "Does the institution work well or badly, is the system good or bad?" To them, "a society is bad which lacks the traditional democratic freedoms of thought, speech, press, and association. But a society is not good which is marked by poverty, ignorance, unemployment, or social and racial discrimination."

I can visualize Gwen sitting in the audience and thinking: he has exceeded his ten minutes. So I must sit down. You can see -- her influence lives on.

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