

NCCJ ANYTOWN™ 2006 Leaves An Impression



ANYTOWN DELEGATES MAY 2006

ANYTOWN™ is a week long residential community building and leadership camp for high school age youth. The mission of the program is to educate, liberate, and empower participants to become effective, responsible leaders in our pluralistic society. A diverse group of high school students come together to spend one week working to understand one another, find common ground, form an independent community and make lifelong friends.

Delegate is the term that ANYTOWN™ participants are known as. Synonyms for delegate include, ambassador, representative envoy and agent. As delegates, ANYTOWN participants gradually exceed all of these roles and take away a unique element of their experience with them that knows no formal term.

For more information on **ANYTOWN™**, contact the NCCJ offices at (860) 683-1039, ext. 102

The ANYTOWN™ Experience...

In Their Own Words - A Delegate's Perspective

By Jonathan Rosado

I applied for Anytown thinking that I was going to talk about racism, sexism, ...etc. Didn't think that I was going to come back a changed man. I feel that I arrived at camp as a boy and came out a man. The week at Anytown was the best experience that I have ever had. An unforgettable week filled with laughter, tears, hopes, and dreams.

This program has opened upon my face, but of those who shared that week us to think before speaking or has taught us to listen to others words on a whole other level. me in such a powerful way

"The hardest thing to take in is the so-called "reality" that I went back to at the end of the week.."

that I now see how much pain I have caused others without even realizing it, and I just don't want to go back to being that insensitive boy that I once was. I wear the Anytown hug proudly to remind me of the things we learned there. The hardest thing to take in is the so-called "reality" that I went back to at the end of the week. To see the kind of person I used to be. To hear the things I used to say. It hurts to know that I used to harm others the same way. The change that needs to come in this world seems impossible, when I find my self losing a friend because he can't see, or respect the man that I have become. I take this as finally finding out the truth about people, and knowing who my true friends are. For others it is a sin to lose someone who has known them for so long, which is why they forget the feeling of Anytown, which is the reason why it is so hard to create change. I feel that everybody should go to Anytown, because that's the only way people in this world will ever change for good. I know that sooner or later a change is going to come. I would like to thank Adrienne for recommending me for Anytown, Natalie for running the camp, and everyone involved in Anytown for giving me the best time of my life, and making me a man.

"Before ANYTOWN, I would love to pick on people and I was just mean. I didn't realize that people were really hurt at the things I said and jokes I have played. ANYTOWN helped me do a 360, and I really relate to the people I bothered.... I don't pick on people and I learned to speak up for myself so I am not getting bullied either.."

- Ricky Ruiz
Delegate, 2006

The ANYTOWN Experience...

A Staff Member's Perspectivecontinued from page 1

Sergio Y. Oppenheimer
NCCJ Adult Program Specialist



ANYTOWN 2006 Delegates

"ANYTOWN, ANYTOWN, yellow black white red or brown
Makes no difference when you come down to ANYTOWN, our ANYTOWN

An out stretched hand, a friendly face, another creed, another race, These are the things we have by grace at ANYTOWN, our ANYTOWN..."

These are the words that the ANYTOWN staff shout and sing at the incoming buses to greet the delegates. Never fails, students coming out of the bus are often confused about what and why staff are singing. "Singing is part of the ANYTOWN culture, that's how we welcome you," one counselor tells a delegate as she picks up her luggage. Hesitant and indecisive about what that means, the delegate follows the staff up the hill toward the cabins.

Building community is no easy task; it is about *trusting the process*. We spend the initial two days talking about social justice, what it means [in theory] and defining: power, racism, adultism, classism and heterosexism, among others. The beginning of camp is always slow for me at ANYTOWN because I live through emotions and actions. However, I realize the need to connect the theory with the emotional. These two days are like the "ice breaker" of camp. Delegates do not entirely trust this new-woods environment, plus there is a whole lot of information being shared that all too often is considered taboo..... uneasy topics. Luckily, we spend a lot of time in large and small discussion groups that allow for group development and process.

In the initial days I am anxious and excited about what's to come. I find myself and other staff talking about the third day—the day when theory is put into practice through activities which help make connections to critical thinking. Although unfamiliar with the camp, male delegates are concerned that they will cry, particularly in front of other boys. Girls are just curious about what will come ahead and staff is concerned about what will happen next and how will delegates react.

Like a tidal wave change across not normally talk engaging with disintegrate and vulnerable to each other by sharing our innermost fears and dreams. Youth begin to feel empowered by trusting themselves to ask questions and listening to each others answers. Conversations are happening all throughout camp about justice and how to make a better world.

"Building community is no easy task; it is about trusting the process."

of epiphany, I begin to see ANYTOWN. Delegates that would to "different" people are new individuals. Defenses start to we start to make ourselves

During singing time, voices that once sounded absent and meek are today, vibrant and excited. I begin to see what I thought the world would be like while I was growing up. Natalie was right; I can hear her voice resonating in my ears: saying, "trust the process."

"ANYTOWN was an incredible experience that changed the ways in which I perceive the world. It instilled a motivation in me to create social change."
-Dan Kagan, Delegate,

BRIDGES

BRIDGES is a two-day human relations program where 20 students and two teachers are guided through a series of activities that promote a positive self-image, critical thinking skills and a positive view of others. Participants develop insights and new views of themselves, an understanding of their own prejudices and where they might have learned them, a deeper tolerance for other cultures, for new comers to this country, and for the racial, ethnic and cultural problems that confront our society.

For more information on how your school in your community can participate in **BRIDGES** please contact the NCCJ offices at (860) 683-1039, ext. 102 or contact kbenkert@nccj.org.



"I have learned to really think about what I am saying. I will step in whenever I hear people discriminating."
- Duggan Middle School student

BRIDGES participants 2006

Bridges 2005-2006

Students who attended NCCJ's 2005-2006 BRIDGES program reported learning and becoming increasingly more conscious of racial overtones at school and in society as a whole. Youths hastened to report that they were developing a new awareness of the terms stereotype, prejudice, discrimination, social power and oppression. Youths understood more how their own backgrounds impacted their way of thinking and acting. Students surveyed reported that after attending the **BRIDGES** program they were far more likely to verbalize their feelings and take action against racism when they saw it occur.

In 2005 and 2006 NCCJ's youth educational program BRIDGES saw tremendous growth in the communities of Central Connecticut and Western MA. **BRIDGES** programs were most recently facilitated at the high schools of Wethersfield, Manchester, East Windsor, Windsor, Rocky Hill and Conard High in West Hartford, to name just a few.

In Western MA **BRIDGES** visited Duggan Middle School, Munson High, The Springfield High School of Commerce, Springfield Central High School and Holyoke High. Palmer High School, Palmer, MA initiated a "Diversity Club" following their participation in the **BRIDGES** program.

Wethersfield High School in Wethersfield, CT has implemented a recruiting program for the NCCJ ANYTOWN™ Camp

BRIDGES continues to be a major programming staple of the NCCJ's work within the youth community of Connecticut and Western, Massachusetts.

NCCJ'S ANYTOWN™ YOUTH ACTION COALITION (YAC)

Robert Meeropol Visits the NCCJ Youth Action Coalition



Robert Meeropol, Executive Director of the Rosenberg Fund for Children (RFC)

May 15, 2006

Robert Meeropol, Executive Director of the *Rosenberg Fund for Children* (RFC) and author of *An Execution in the Family* and *We Are Your Sons: The Legacy of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg* (1975) visited the Youth Action Coalition (YAC) on May 15, 2006. A number of area youths gathered together at the NCCJ office in Windsor to hear a brief presentation and engage in a question and answer session. Mr. Meeropol briefly recounted the execution of his parents, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg for conspiracy to commit espionage in 1953 along with a poignant account of he and his brother's experiences following their parents execution. He concluded his presentation by defining the series of events and how it led him to his work today. Additionally, he entertained questions from the group of both a personal nature as well as general suggestions for success in making an impact in the society in which we live.

Robert Meeropol shares his powerful message of peaceful activism annually with audiences at dozens of universities, community centers, literary festivals, bookstores and other venues across the country. Members of the NCCJ's Youth Action Coalition were pleased to have Mr. Meeropol visit and share his expertise with the group.



YAC participants, 2006

The Youth Action Coalition (YAC) is a group of former Camp ANYTOWN™ attendees who meet to continue social justice training and engage in youth community projects. YAC meets monthly at the NCCJ offices in Windsor. For more information on the YAC group contact the NCCJ offices at **860-683-1039, ext. 102.**

YAC INITIATIVES.....WHAT YAC HAS BEEN UP TO!

In the past year YAC members have been busy in the community:

- Rallying for immigrant rights at the CT State Capitol
- Making their presence known in the region as successful facilitators
- YAC youth were invited to the 2006 Youth Peace Summit to assist in planning and facilitating the one day event in May of 2006



YAC members Osiris and Jenny, July 2006

NCCJ YAC MEMBERS RAISE FUNDS FOR ANYTOWN™ SCHOLARSHIPS

NCCJ Youth Action Coalition (YAC) members and NCCJ staff worked together on July 27 & 28 and August 10 & 11 in 2006 to raise scholarship money for NCCJ's Camp ANYTOWN.™

Carwash customers came from nearby Windsor, as well as neighboring towns to support the YAC efforts. Cars were rinsed, washed, dried and vacuumed.

Despite record breaking temperatures, all staff and YAC members had a great time!



YAC members, July 2006

MESSAGE FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“The Times They Are A Changin’”

by Andrea C. Kandel, Ed. D.

One thing one can always count on is change – nothing ever remains the same and that includes the NCCJ. For the past 78 years, NCCJ has operated as one 501 (c) 3. That means that we were one organization with many regional offices around the country. As of October 1, 2005 we, The National Conference for Community and Justice for Connecticut and Western Massachusetts became our own independent affiliate along with more than 30 other regional offices around the country.

So what are the benefits of becoming an independent affiliate? Well, one huge benefit is that we will be responsible for our own ship: we will operate as a separately incorporated affiliate fiscally and operationally by our local board. We will have the benefit of offering local programs tailored to meet the unique needs of our area, as well as those programs in place across the country.

Additionally, **all** monies from grants, gifts and donations that the NCCJ receives stay in the community to fight against bias, bigotry and racism through adult and youth programming strategies that meet the challenges of our pluralistic society.

In Connecticut and Western Massachusetts we will continue to deliver the same top quality educational programs and services local residents and leaders have come to expect from us. In addition, throughout fiscal year 2006, NCCJ will release the findings of our landmark attitudinal study, “NCCJ’s Taking America’s Pulse III” to highlight changes in attitudes, behaviors and perceptions that people in our community and nation have regarding one another.

One thing you can always count on is change, another is that NCCJ for Connecticut and Western Massachusetts will be here working to make our communities more inclusive and just through advocacy, conflict resolution and educational initiatives for youth, educators, workplace leaders, news and media organizations and across faith lines.

NCCJ ANNUAL HUMAN RELATIONS AWARD CEREMONIES 2006



2006 NCCJ Annual Human Relations Award Banquet, Western Massachusetts

Honorees left to right:
Eva Schnurr, Peter Straley, Mable Sharif, Beth Green, Judge Sidney Cooley



2006 NCCJ Annual Human Relations Award Banquet, Hartford, Connecticut

Honorees left to right:
David & Shirley Weintraub, Lawrence Gottesdiener, John Motley
Not pictured, Bernadine Silvers and Youth Award Recipient—Jennilee Carrasco

NCCJ Annual Human Relations Award Banquet

The NCCJ has continued their time-honored tradition of honoring individuals within Hartford, Connecticut and Western Massachusetts who best exemplify the mission of the NCCJ in their daily lives. 2006 saw eleven outstanding individuals who all contributed significantly in their regions. The Board and staff of the NCCJ wish to congratulate and thank all honorees for their diligent work in combating racism, bias and bigotry, assisting the underserved, disadvantaged and vulnerable in their communities.

Hartford, Connecticut

David & Shirley Weintraub
Lawrence Gottesdiener
John Motley
Bernadine Silvers
Jennilee Carrasco—Youth Award Recipient

Western Massachusetts

Peter F. Straley
Judge Sidney M. Cooley
Beth Green
Mable Lene Sharif
Eva Schnurr—Youth Award Recipient

INTERFAITH DIALOGUES

NCCJ Launches Interfaith Pilot Program

NCCJ launched a pilot program titled *Toward Interfaith Understanding: A Dialogue Across Faiths* in the Greater Hartford area. This pilot program was supported by a grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. The project engaged groups of 10 to 12 religiously diverse adults in interfaith discussion to explore current and historical faith traditions as a way to dispel myths and stereotypes and to uncover ways to build bridges of understanding among people of different faiths.

Each group met once a week for two hours over a five-week period throughout the months of November, January, February and March throughout Hartford. Sessions were held at the Muhammad Islamic Center, the Hartford Seminary, One World Bahai Center and the Greater Hartford Jewish Community Center.

The program is based on a National Study Circle Model for democratic dialogue.

Those that participated felt that they developed relationships that would not have been accessible had it not been for these dialogues.



Key Program Components:

- Experience & Belief
- Religious Values and Leadership
- Experiencing Spirituality
- Religion and Public Life
- Looking Forward

"Interfaith is about building bridges of understanding among people of different faiths."

-Suendame Berinci
NCCJ Program Facilitator



Toward Interfaith Understanding: A Dialogue Across Faiths

ADULT PROGRAMMING

ADULT PROGRAMMING INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- Community Conversations on Race (CCRSM)
- Diversity Training in the Workplace
- Customized Training available for your company, school, faith community or organization upon request.

WHERE CCR HAS BEEN LATELY...

Fall 2004 Community Forum, *Last Chance for Eden* film and discussion with filmmaker with Lee Mun Wah at University of Hartford

Spring 2005 *Perceptions of Racism in Minority Children*, Public Forum at St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center

Entire Year 2005 Participant Action Forums, MDC, Town of Windsor, CT Legislative Building and Western New England College

May 2005 Action Forum, Town of Windsor on "Addressing the Achievement Gap, Schools & Communities: Working Together"

February 2006—Community Forum, *The Exonerated*, in partnership with TheatreWorks and the CT Network to Abolish the Death Penalty

ACTION PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Conscious Conversations: All are welcome every Thursday at 8:30pm for open discussions that take place at the West Indian Club in Hartford, 3340 Main Street, Hartford, CT. For more information contact Alphonso McGriff at **860-242-2345**.

Every Wednesday at 7:30pm on Hartford Public Access Channel 5 issues are put on the table. All perspectives are welcome. Send emails to thinking works@aol.com or call in live at **860-524-8920**.

Achievement Gap Subject of Windsor Conversation on Race Panel Discussion

January 2006

Early in January of 2006, Doreen Richardson, Board of Education member for the Town of Windsor opened various eyes to every day racism within the community. An article in an area publication *The Reminder*® quoted Richardson; "I hear all the time comments like 'You really think people are so racist?' And it amazes me, because when people think of racism they think of the Ku Klux Klan. They think of Adolf Hitler. They think of the extreme forms. They do not think of structures and institutions that have been predicated on the notion of superiority and inferiority and dichotomy, and that in those institutions policies and practices that have become embedded and ingrained in how they function persist over time, even though individual personalities change."

Doreen Richardson, a marketing professional at ING, continues her community involvement with the Windsor Board of Education on the Achievement Gap in Connecticut schools and to promote Community Conversations on Race as an educational forum to dispel myths and elevate discussion on racism.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON RACE (CCRSM)

CCR is a five session, two hour weekly circle made up of 8-12 culturally diverse individuals, led by volunteer facilitators, who aid participants in exploring personal experiences and public policies that affect race relations.

The goal is to gear participants to work towards developing action plans gathering from personal, collective and organizational levels. For more information on Community Conversations on Race (CCRSM) contact Judith Barlow-Roberts at 860-683-1039 ext. 105, jbarlow@nccj.org or visit our website at www.nccjctwma.com.

CCR Process

Participants will learn to:

- Recognize and identify their own prejudices and backgrounds.
- Establish in an active dialogue with other members of a group.
- Commit to making social change



"The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by its minorities."
-Lord Acton

At this time Connecticut schools have the largest Achievement Gap in the nation, while having one of the overall highest achievement rates at a national level. Ms. Richardson illustrated this fact with state data supporting this gap. African American and Hispanic students are the most impacted by the Achievement Gap. Students lacking basic skills are at an elevated risk for poverty and high rates of crime, incarceration or poor health, which result in huge costs for the public to bear. Windsor's Superintendent of Schools Dr. Betty Feser, referred to the Achievement Gap as the "biggest challenge" facing our schools in CT. Windsor residents have identified NCCJ's CCR as an effective means of dialogue process as an addressing the issue of race in Windsor Public Schools. The Town of Windsor, Human Relations Commission and the Windsor Board of Education are working in a three-way partnership to raise awareness, define, examine and mobilize parents and the community to actively engage in positive change aimed at reducing the Achievement Gap.

"When people think of racism they think of the Ku Klux Klan. They think of Adolf Hitler. They think of the extreme forms."



Study Circles on Race:

The Metropolitan District Commission is an organization that values diversity, going beyond simply the talk. Diversity is encouraged by implementing an environment of understanding and respect through education, advocacy and positive change.

A 16-year employee of the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), Lori Hudson believes that working for positive change is a continuous effort.

"Sometimes there's frustration and it feels like spinning wheels, but you don't give up," she said.

Hudson, a senior customer service representative, is the current chair of the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, a group of employees formed to monitor a wide range of activities at the MDC, the Hartford area water and sewer agency, with about 600 employees. The Affirmative Action Advisory Committee (AAAC) is focused on Multicultural and Diversity issues within the district. She said that she sees her service on the committee as "a way to do something positive for employees."

As chair, she said her main goals for the committee include:

- Dispelling misconceptions about the committee, and using the internal newsletter to keep employees abreast of the committee's activities;
- Working with members of ad hoc groups to advocate for a fair and equitable workplace. Ad hoc was formed after the conclusion of the study circles to continue the conversation and to address issues that deserved further discussion.

A Vital Part of The Metropolitan District's Affirmative Action Program

Those study circles were implemented with the assistance of NCCJ, which trained the facilitators. To date, about 100 MDC employees have participated in the program.

Communication, Hudson said, is vital. "We want employees to know that we're available (to hear concerns); that we want to hear from them; that we want to speak to those people who will be agents of change for whatever those issues might be," she said "There are some negative views about the AAAC because people don't know that the committee is supposed to do. People really don't know what we are. We're an advisory committee. We can't really implement policy, we can't discipline, only advise," she said.

Hudson has seen various issues come to the fore that led to the MDC forming the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, and is hopeful for the future. "We do have the backing of (CEO) Chuck (Sheehan), who's very open to some of the ideas that we have. He seems to be really behind us in this work. That in and of itself gives you hope that we won't just be another committee; that we'll actually accomplish something."

NCCJ

Opening eyes, minds, and hearts.



We are beginning to see through the same lens - it begins with each of us.

There is more work to be done. Add NCCJ to your corporate gift list today.

FOND GOODBYES...

The NCCJ bids farewell to two invaluable and endearing staff members this summer.

Youth Program Specialist, Natalie J. Thoreson will leave the NCCJ in late August to complete graduate work. Natalie has been a veteran staff member for over four years at the NCCJ. She has coordinated BRIDGES, YAC and ANYTOWN and successfully developed a process oriented curriculum that serves the NCCJ youth constituency. Natalie has been known as an agent of change and an "eye-opening" conversationalist here at the NCCJ.

Adult Program Specialist, Sergio Y. Oppenheimer leaves the NCCJ at the end of July for graduate school in San Jose State University, San Jose, CA. He will pursue a graduate degree in social work, focusing on children & family. Sergio headed and facilitated the Community Conversations on Race (CCR) program as well as diversity training and special events during his two years at the NCCJ. Sergio has brought an infectious energy and enthusiasm to his work and colleagues here at the NCCJ.

Natalie and Sergio will be dearly missed. The staff and management of the NCCJ wish Natalie and Sergio well in their endeavors!

WHAT IS HAPPENING...?

August 20-25 Camp ANYTOWN™

NCCJ's Camp ANYTOWN™, a week long residential camp for youth. Held twice annually at Camp Jewell in northwestern CT. Contact 860-683-1039, ext. 102 for more information.

September 14..... Community Conversations on Race (CCR) Kick Off Meeting

12:00pm – 2:30pm at the Secretary of State's Office in the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, CT. Keynote speakers: Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz and Deputy Secretary Lesley Mara. This is a great opportunity to hear more about CCR and how to become involved. Contact Judith Barlow-Roberts at 860-683-1039, ext. 105 for details.

September 15-17..... Peace Jam 2006

This year's Peace Jam will be held at the University of Colorado in Denver, CO. Celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, The Peace Jam perpetuates its challenge of bringing together youth, Nobel Prize Winners and peace activists.

September 21 – October 19..... Community Conversations on Race (CCR) – Session I

10:00am – 12:00pm at the Secretary of State's office, Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT for a five week period. Contact Judith Barlow-Roberts at 860-683-1039, ext. 105 for details.

September 29 NCCJ Presents Holly Near in Concert

Academy of Music, Northampton, MA. Celebrate an evening of music for social change with Holly Near, a unique blend of musician, songwriter, entertainer, and activist. See details below.

October 4 – November 8..... Community Conversations on Race (CCR)

35 Chestnut Street, Springfield, MA. Contact Judith Barlow-Roberts at 860-683-1039, ext. 105 for details.

October 10..... Out of the Shadows: Immigrants in the American Landscape

Join Democracy Works for food, fun and lively discussion on the hot topic of immigration. 5:00pm Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main Street – Sequoia Club, Wethersfield, CT. For more information contact Democracy Works at 860-727-1157.

Fall 2006..... Public Broadcasting Services (PBS)

This coming fall, PBS will air the Emmy award winning Civil Rights documentary Eyes on the Prize as part of the *American Experience Collection*. Check local listings for dates and times.

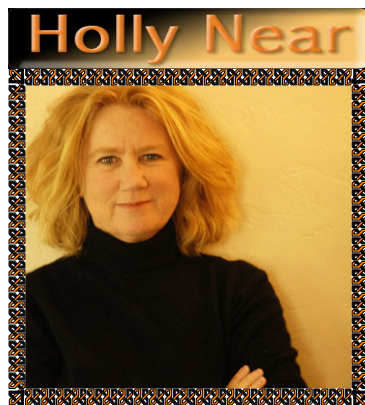


WE OPEN MINDS

Art and Activism

"I do not separate my music from my heart nor do I separate my ideas from my daily life. I open my self up to learning as much as I can about humanity and this mysterious life experience, but I do not relate to political work as a series of "causes". Moment by moment, I integrate what I learn into my personal life, personalizing my politics. It is from this personal place that I write my songs."

- Holly



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Pianist John Bucchino.**

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For sponsorship opportunities please contact the NCCJ offices at (860) 683-1039, ext. 106

Proceeds Benefit the NCCJ of CT and WMA, Inc.

September 29, 2006

Tickets \$25—\$30

The Academy of Music

Northampton, MA

NCCJ WELCOMES TWO NEW STAFF MEMBERS !

The NCCJ is pleased to welcome **Kelly Benkert** as our Youth Program Specialist. Kelly comes to the NCCJ with a B.A. in Human Services from Notre Dame University in Indiana where she was actively involved with programs which provided support and assistance for homeless and economically disadvantaged individuals. Kelly lives in neighboring Holyoke, MA.

The NCCJ also welcomes **Judith Barlow-Roberts** aboard as the Adult Programming Specialist. A native of Windsor, CT, Judith also retains deep family ties to Mississippi. Judith earned a B.S. degree from Springfield College in Human Services and a Masters Degree from the University of Mississippi. During her work at the William Winter Center for Racial Reconciliation, she documented the civil rights activism work of her grandfather, esteemed civil rights activist, C.C. Bryant of McComb, Mississippi. She currently resides in Windsor, CT with her husband Christopher and son Julian.

The NCCJ is pleased to support Holly Near's music and it's vision for peace.

We are more alike
than unalike...



The NCCJ wishes to thank the following individuals who have supported the work of the NCCJ throughout the 2005-2006 year:

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