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## Phoenix House Foundation oral history collection12335999

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Oral History Archives at Columbia

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Oral History Archives at Columbia
<b>Creator:</b>	Phoenix House (Organization)
<b>Title:</b>	Phoenix House Foundation oral history collection
<b>ID:</b>	12335999
<b>ID:</b>	OHAC
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	2014-2015
<b>Physical Description:</b>	183 Gigabytes 433 digital files (Born-digital transcripts and audio)
<b>Physical Description:</b>	1.5 Linear Feet 3 boxes (Transcripts)
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Phoenix House was founded in 1967 as a therapeutic community to treat addiction in an 85th Street apartment in New York City. In the following decades, Phoenix House expanded to locations throughout New York City and ten states. At the time of the interviews, Phoenix House was serving over 5,000 individuals and remained committed to supporting individuals and families by providing a wide range of services including prevention, early intervention, treatment, continuing care, and recovery support. The Phoenix House Oral History Collection documents three periods of Phoenix House's work: origins, growth, and established leadership. In the first period, spanning from 1967 to the 1970s, narrators detail the founding of a therapeutic community, the dynamics of this community, and the influences of other self-help drug treatment organizations such as Synanon on the program. In the growth period, narrators speak of opening up new facilities, and designing and launching new programs. Topics covered include the political and funding challenges of expanding Phoenix House's reach, increases in medical and mental health staff, and partnering with state departments of corrections to provide the Phoenix House program as an alternative to incarceration. In the final period, narrators describe changes in the therapeutic community model, further expansion of programs across the United States, acquisitions of competitors, new funding challenges, and transitions in leadership.</p>

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## History

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Phoenix House was founded in 1967 in New York City when six heroin addicts decided to move into an apartment on 85th Street and support each other after leaving a detoxification ward. They reached out to psychiatrist Mitchell Rosenthal, who had worked on addiction in the U.S. Navy. Rosenthal was working for New York City's Addiction Services Agency, which Mayor John Lindsay had founded earlier that year. Phoenix House soon became a part of the ASA and began expanding rapidly. With the help of philanthropist Jack Aaron, a non-profit foundation was set up to provide additional support for Phoenix House. By 1972, Phoenix House separated from the ASA and became a non-profit. Treatment at Phoenix House followed the therapeutic community model, with addicts further along in recovery supporting those beginning treatment. In time, Phoenix House expanded to locations throughout New York City and ten states. In 1983, Phoenix House founded the first Phoenix House Academy, an accredited residential high school where students could continue with their studies while being treated for addiction. At the time of the interviews, Phoenix House was serving over 5,000 individuals and remained committed to supporting individuals and families by providing a wide range of services including prevention, early intervention, treatment, continuing care, and recovery support.

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## Scope and Content

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The Phoenix House Oral History Collection documents three periods of Phoenix House's work: origins, growth, and established leadership. In the first period, spanning from 1967 to the 1970s, narrators detail the founding of a therapeutic community in a detoxification ward in Morris Bernstein Institute, the dynamics of this community, and the influences of other self-help drug treatment organizations such as Synanon on the structure and mission of the program. In the growth period, narrators speak of opening up new facilities, and designing and launching new programs. Topics covered include the political and funding challenges of expanding Phoenix House's reach, increases in medical and mental health staff, and partnering with state departments of corrections to provide the Phoenix House program as an alternative to incarceration. In the final period, narrators describe changes in the therapeutic community model, further expansion of programs across the United States, acquisitions of competitors, new funding challenges, and transitions in leadership.

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## Scope and Content

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Narrators include Phoenix House founders, former residents, employees (resident directors, regional directors, clinical directors, public relations professionals, directors of human services, and more), and collaborators such as journalists, politicians, philanthropists, legal counsel, and public servants. Many of these categories overlap, as Phoenix House has adhered to a self-help model, hiring its former residents to "seed" the therapeutic community model at new facilities. Interviews address locations include New York, southern California, and Texas. Within New York, recollections cover Hart Island, Phelan Place in the Bronx, various locations on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Coney Island, and East Harlem. Interviews address the period between 1928-2015.

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## Scope and Content

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The collection is comprised of interviews with the following narrators: Frank Barron, John Bell, Leslie Bennetts, Ronald Coster, George De Leon, Norwig Debye-Saxinger, David Deitch, Tony Endre, Sara Ann Fagin, James Ferguson, Howard Friend, William Fusco, Nancy Hoving, Howard Josepher, Peter Kerr, Herbert Kleber, Kandy Latson, Lawrence Lederman, Conrad Levenson, Barry McCaffrey, Kevin McEneaney, Ira Mothner, Carlos Pagan, Peter G. Peterson and Joan Ganz Cooney, Chris Policano, Mitchell Rosenthal, Jean Scott, Amy Singer, Morty Sklar, Jerry Taylor, and Ronald Williams.

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## Arrangement

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Interviews are arranged into one series, alphabetically by narrator's last name.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Oral History Archives at Columbia

### Revision Description

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### Access Restrictions

Access: Open.

### Acquisition

Columbia Center for Oral History Research, 2016

### Custodial History

The Phoenix House oral history project was undertaken by the Columbia Center for Oral History Research from 2014-2015. It was instigated by Dr. Mitchell S. Rosenthal in February 2014 on recommendation from Dr. Robert Caro, who used the Columbia Center for Oral History Archives extensively in his research. The goal of the project was to conduct a series of interviews in order to document the history of Phoenix House and its leadership in drug treatment innovation.

### Restrictions on Use

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## Related Materials

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### Related Material

Digital transcripts and audio can be accessed via the [project website](#) created and maintained by the Columbia Center for Oral History Research.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Therapeutic communities
- Addicts -- Rehabilitation
- Drug addiction -- Treatment
- Substance abuse -- Treatment
- Drug abuse -- Treatment -- United States
- Teenagers -- Drug use -- United States
- Drug courts -- United States
- Fund raising
- Oral histories (literary works)
- Interviews
- Rosenthal, Mitchell S., 1935-
- Phoenix House (Organization)

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## Collection Inventory

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### Interviews

Title/Description	Instances
Frank Barron, 2015 March 6 and 2015 April 7	box 1

#### Scope and Content Note

Barron discusses the origins of Cravath, Swaine and Moore, LLP's relationship with Phoenix House. He explains his own exposure to the therapeutic community model. He elucidates Phoenix House's relationship to the justice system, which was its largest client, and his legal battles that allowed Phoenix to retain its treatment structure. Finally, he talks about more recent efforts to improve Phoenix's data management structure.

#### Scope and Content Note

Interview by Lance Thurner.

#### Biographical / Historical

Barron was a senior partner at Cravath, Swaine and Moore, LLP. Through Cravath, which had been associated with Phoenix House since the early 1970s, Barron became acquainted with Mitchell Rosenthal,

and he served as pro bono legal counsel throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As a litigation lawyer, Barron handled all Phoenix House matters that were heading to court.

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John Bell, 2015 March 11

box 1

**Scope and Content Note**

Bell begins with a discussion of his initial turn to drug use as a coping mechanism for dealing with academic stresses. After multiple arrests and stints in jail, Bell eventually winds up at Phoenix House, having resolved himself to getting and staying clean. Bell takes great comfort in the therapeutic community, likening it to the community he grew up in. He discusses his growing attachment to Phoenix House and to the people there during his time in-program. Eventually, Bell narrates how he got a job at the payroll department in Phoenix House and the insights he has gained during his time in the organization.

**Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Cameron Vanderscoff.

**Biographical / Historical**

John Bell is a long-time employee of Phoenix House, working in the payroll department and in client relations.

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Leslie Bennetts, 2014 March 4

box 1

**Scope and Content Note**

Bennetts chronicles her experience profiling Mitchell Rosenthal for Vanity Fair. She also discusses Nancy Reagan's renegeing on the Lake View facility, and her involvement with "the drug issue" more generally. The interview is peppered with details about being a female journalist during the 1970s-1980s.

**Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Caitlin Bertin-Mahieux.

**Biographical / Historical**

Leslie Bennetts was born and raised in New York City and has been a journalist for over 40 years. At the beginning of her career, she spent fifteen years as a newspaper reporter. She began covering so-called "women's issues" at *The Philadelphia Bulletin* in the early 1970s, and has continued to write about women, marriage, families and parenting ever since. (Her controversial book, *The Feminine Mistake* was published in 2007). After five years at *The Bulletin*,



Bennetts spent ten years as a reporter for *The New York Times*, where she started as a writer for the Style page and went on to cover national politics, metropolitan news, City Hall, and cultural news. She was the first woman ever to cover a presidential campaign for *The Times*. Bennetts has been a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair* since 1988, writing on subjects that have ranged from movie stars to priest pedophilia, industrial pollution and U.S. anti-terrorism policy. In October 1989, her profile piece called "Mitch's Mission" ran in *Vanity Fair*. The story chronicled the aftermath of the failed Nancy Reagan Center in California. She has kept in touch with Rosenthal over the years. Bennett's 2005 cover story on Jennifer Aniston was the best-selling issue in the magazine's history to date. In 2016, she published a biography of Joan Rivers.

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Ronald Coster, 2015 April 15

box 1

### **Scope and Content Note**

Coster discusses his "conversion" to the self-help model and his experiences managing increasingly complex financial matters in Phoenix House, whose largest sources of income at that time were government contracts. He explains tensions with the New York City government, which resulted in an eviction from Hart Island, among other issues. Coster chronicles the expansion of the organization including how it gained national stature, the various consulting firms it hired, its relationship to Corrections, the maintenance of government donors, and increased medicalization.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner

### **Biographical / Historical**

Trained as an accountant at Syracuse University, Coster came to Phoenix House in 1972 after several years working at New York University. He was hired as one of the first professionally trained staff members, with the expectation that his financial expertise would help keep orderly accounts and win trust with state and local governments as Phoenix House split from the Addiction Services Agency. Throughout nearly 20 years at Phoenix House, Coster continued to serve in this capacity as government liaison, and he rose to the position of Executive Vice President after Frank Natale left.

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George De Leon, 2014 September 8

box 1

### **Scope and Content Note**

De Leon discusses his work in clinical psychology at the Veterans Hospital as both his introduction to therapeutic communities and to Mitchell Rosenthal. He discusses the international and national growth of therapeutic communities as well as the policies and research that have made them what they are today. De Leon also examines different training and rehabilitation techniques popular in Phoenix House, and the future uses he sees for therapeutic communities.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Kristin Murphy.

### **Biographical / Historical**

George De Leon was a psychologist and academic who conducted all of the early Phoenix House studies researching the mechanisms engaged in the therapeutic community. He obtained his PhD from Columbia University and at the time of the interview he was Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at New York University Langone Medical Center. He researched at Phoenix House for 20 years (1967-1987), becoming intensely involved in the day to day of the organization. He wrote the textbook *The Therapeutic Community*.

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Norwig Debye-Saxinger, 2015 January 7

box 1

### **Scope and Content Note**

Debye-Saxinger tells of his involvement with Rockefeller's Narcotics Control Commission beginning in 1971, and the state's effort through that agency to contract out the provision of direct services for addicts to third party agencies. Phoenix House's practice of "hiding" privately raised funds in sister organizations is discussed. He chronicles two major policy changes he helped orchestrate that were critical for Phoenix House-welfare checks could be signed over to a residential institution directly, and money from the sale of a facility owned by an institution could be reinvested within a year and not counted against funds provided by the state. He narrates a shift in addiction treatment from forming a part of the criminal justice system to a more medical issue. The waning of appreciation for the therapeutic community model affected both his and his colleague Julio Martinez's roles in state government and his role in Phoenix House in the ensuing decades.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Born in Germany but educated in the US, Norwig Debye-Saxinger joined the Nelson Rockefeller administration in 1971 as part of the Narcotics Addiction Control Commission, which he stayed with until 1992 through its many iterations. As part of the state government, Debye-Saxinger was responsible for much of the granting of state funds to addiction services agencies. He also played a critical role in adjusting key state policies that allowed Phoenix House (and others) to receive welfare checks directly from the state, which eased organizations' participation in the real estate market. While in Albany, Debye-Saxinger was Julio Martinez's assistant director for 10 years. In 1993 he began working for Phoenix House as a liaison with the state. Until the present, Debye-Saxinger has continued to aid Phoenix House in negotiating state regulation and licensing, and lobbying for important changes to the law, most notably, Governor David A. Paterson's changes to the Rockefeller Drug Laws in 2009.

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David Deitch, 2014 October 9

box 1

### **Scope and Content Note**

Deitch begins by discussing his early drug use and exposure, as well as his struggle to get clean at Synanon. After narrating his experience with the Synanon group, Deitch explains how he tried to impact policy as an administrator at Synanon, and eventually again at Daytop. Through his connections with the rehabilitation world, Deitch met Mitchell Rosenthal before Phoenix House is established, and uses his knowledge to help advise Rosenthal. After leaving Synanon, Deitch discusses his subsequent involvement with Daytop Village and briefly touches on his time working for the New York City government.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Kristin Murphy.

### **Biographical / Historical**

At the time of the interview, David A. Deitch was Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego. He had founded the Center for Criminality and Addiction, Research, Training, and Application (CCARTA) at UCSD in 1999. He previously held academic appointments at

Temple University, the University of Chicago, and the University of California at San Francisco. In the non-profit public health sector, he was a co-founder of Daytop Village, Inc. and served as Senior Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer for Phoenix House. He has also served in the Carter Administration and the United Nations and has consulted for the Johnson Administration and other government agencies around the world.

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Tony Endre, 2014 September 30

box 1

**Scope and Content Note**

Endre discusses the evolution and subsequent decline of the therapeutic community model. He details the establishment of Odyssey House in 1967. He chronicles his tenure at both Phoenix House and New York City's Addiction Services Agency, describing life as a City employee. He narrates his involvement in setting up new facilities, and how he ran them.

**Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Turner.

**Biographical / Historical**

Tony Endre, a Brooklynite by birth and upbringing, was the principle founder of Odyssey House and went on to have a long career in addiction services in and around New York City. Over the course of four decades, Tony worked at nearly all of the leading institutions, including the City's Addiction Services Agency, Phoenix House, Odyssey House, Samaritan House, APPLE, and Daytop Village. At Phoenix House, he was the director at Hart Island for many years, and later served as director at the Long Island City facility. Of modest education, Tony's expertise came from his experience as an addict and criminal in his early adulthood, and then from his experience of recovery with a group of ex-addicts in the detox ward of Metropolitan Hospital.

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Sara Ann Fagin, 2014 November 12

box 1

**Scope and Content Note**

Fagin discusses her tenure as Mitchell Rosenthal's executive assistant and her subsequent role in fundraising and development. She narrates her own avenues to understanding addiction. She talks about moving to Hazelden, comparing its environment with Phoenix House's and assessing the translation of her skills from a nonprofit to a for-profit setting. Finally, she reflects on the state of the therapeutic community method given increased state regulations.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Cameron Vanderscoff.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Sara Ann Fagin has had a long-term engagement with Phoenix House, initially from 1978-1994 and on an intermittent basis in recent years as a consultant. She started working as Mitchell Rosenthal's executive assistant and later transitioned, at his encouragement, to the development office. Subsequently, she was employed at Hazelden, another addiction treatment institution.

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James Ferguson, 2014 October 6

box 1

### **Scope and Content Note**

Ferguson describes Mitchell Rosenthal's vision for Phoenix House. He narrates his experiences as a Phoenix House board member.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

James Ferguson was formerly the Chief Executive Officer of General Foods, a position from which he retired in 1987. While at General Foods, he moved to New York City and became involved in numerous non-profit boards and organizations, including Phoenix House.

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Howard Friend, 2014 November 5

box 1

### **Scope and Content Note**

Friend describes Phoenix House's Coney Island facility, where he initially entered treatment. He narrates how he became a resident director. He gives particular attention to the adolescent programs he opened for Phoenix House in California, beginning in 1982. He discusses some of the issues regarding work with adolescents. He speaks on Phoenix House's relationship with the Orange County government, and compares California populations to their New York counterparts. Finally, he deals with the effects of the increasing medicalization of substance abuse treatment.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Howard Friend was born and raised in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. A difficult childhood led to drug use and homelessness, and the search for a warm bed brought him to Phoenix House in 1969. After undergoing treatment at Coney Island for two years, he became a therapeutic community house director, serving Phoenix House in Prospect Place, Phelan Place and locations in Manhattan. In 1982, he was asked to Orange County, California to serve as director in the new facility working with adolescents. He remained in charge of adolescent programming in Orange Co. until his retirement in 2012.

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William Fusco, 2014 October 15

box 2

#### **Scope and Content Note**

Fusco describes the working class community in Sunset Park during the 1950s and 1960s, and his entry into Phoenix House on 88th Street in Manhattan. He narrates his role in establishing new Phoenix House locations like East 116th Street. Moving to acquisitions, he worked at Phelan Place, Prospect Place, and Putnam Valley. He then speaks on the establishment of Dynamic Youth Community in Brooklyn, his own therapeutic community venture for adolescents. Particular attention is given to the changing therapeutic community model.

#### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Turner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

William "Bill" Fusco was born and raised in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, in a working class family. He became involved in "street life" as a young teenager. A few run-ins with the law landed him at Phoenix House in 1968. Fusco was in treatment for two years, and eventually came to serve the organization as a "pioneer," opening up and renovating new houses. He left Phoenix House in 1970, and subsequently dedicated his life to furthering the therapeutic community model. He soon established Dynamic Youth Community in the Midwood neighborhood of Brooklyn, which extends the therapeutic model to work with at-risk youth and their families.

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Nancy Hoving, 2014 October 1 and 2015 February 5

box 2

#### **Scope and Content Note**

In the first session, Hoving discusses her professional relationships with therapeutic community pioneer Efrén Ramirez and with Mayor John V. Lindsay,

both of which were instrumental in Phoenix House's evolution. She speaks on drug rehabilitation policy in New York and nationwide during Phoenix House's inception and the cultural stigma surrounding addicts. She waxes on her impressions of the self-help method. She also talks about Phoenix House's expansion into California. In the second session, she discusses the transition at Phoenix House, which resulted in Howard Meitiner's departure, and segues into a broader discussion about leadership at the organization, especially the roles of Mitchell Rosenthal, Alfred "Tony" Endre, Andrew Kolodny, and the board. She identifies issues of succession. Hoving speaks to the intersection of social services, medical services, and business.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Caitlin Bertin-Mahieux.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Nancy Hoving is a philanthropist, socialite, and public service worker during the John V. Lindsay mayoral administration of New York City. She is the wife of the late Tom Hoving, former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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Howard Josepher, 2014 July 24

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

Howard Josepher narrates his experience as a drug addict sent to Odyssey House on a court mandate. During his time at Odyssey House, the organization split, and Josepher and a group of other addicts ended up at Phoenix House as some of the first residents. Josepher recounts his time at Phoenix House in light of his past experiences of different detox programs. He describes his troubles with the legal system while hiding from American authorities in Britain. After graduating from the Phoenix House program, Josepher becomes regional director at Phoenix House. He then talks about graduating from Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work, and the formation of his private practice, which he still operates today. Josepher also discusses his quest for a greater purpose and his attempts to find it through a discipleship in India. Josepher moves on to his work during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and how his experiences at Phoenix House influenced that work. Finally, Josepher discusses the methodology of abstinence-based rehabilitation programs and touches upon current debates surrounding drug treatment.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Kristin Murphy.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Howard Josepher is founder (1988), president and Chief Executive Officer of Exponents, Inc., an organization for people with and recovering from addiction, many formerly incarcerated or living with HIV. He is also a former resident and regional director of Phoenix House.

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Peter Kerr, 2014 November 24

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

After an overview of his life and career prior to his arrival at the *New York Times*, Peter Kerr reflects on his writing on the "crack epidemic" of 1985 and 1986 in New York City, which was a key moment in his career. He discusses both his own process in as a journalist—how he found stories and which sources he trusted—and his journalism's motivations and social impact. He describes his perspective on Phoenix House as an outsider using it as an expert source on drug matters. He also discusses his later employment there, which ended after two years of struggling to find a vital and new brand for Phoenix House. The interview closes with Kerr's thoughts on the challenges Phoenix House faces at the time of the interview, the routes it has not taken, and a larger reflection on change and continuity in New York City.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Cameron Vanderscoff.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Peter Kerr was a *New York Times* reporter who covered the "drug beat" in the 1980s. Later, he was Vice President of Public Affairs at Phoenix House.

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Herbert Kleber, 2015 January 23

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

Kleber describes his experience working at the "narcotics farm" in Lexington, Kentucky after completing his residency at Yale University. He then describes his return to Yale with a heightened interest in exploring pharmaceutical treatments for addiction, such as Naloxone. Kleber moves on to his tenure as the Deputy for Demand Reductions in George H. W. Bush's White House. Particular attention is given here to his struggle to secure more government support for methadone treatment, and the interaction of national



and New York City politics surrounding substance abuse treatment. He recalls his convictions as a board member of Phoenix House. Finally, Kleber discusses the future of narcotics treatment, which, he asserts, will largely depend on the funding structure.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Dr. Herbert Kleber is Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Division on Substance Abuse at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Dr. Kleber has been a pioneer in the research and treatment of substance abuse for over forty years. He and his colleagues have helped develop and improve both medications currently used to treat substance abuse and the psychosocial approaches that accompany them.

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Kandy Latson, 2014 August 20 and August 21

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

Latson describes growing up in Raccoon Bend, Texas, and his relationship with his family. He narrates his experience in the US Army during the Korean War, with particular attention to the racism he encountered there. He discusses his introduction to Synanon while living in Los Angeles as an addict, and his education in that environment. He also mentions his involvement with the Nation of Islam. Latson describes various stages of his spiritual awakening. Finally, he tells of his introduction to Mitchell Rosenthal and Phoenix House.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Kristin Murphy.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Hollis (Kandy) Latson was born in Raccoon Bend, Texas in 1936. As an early and prominent member of Synanon in California, he was recruited to Phoenix House by Mitchell Rosenthal.

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Lawrence Lederman, 2014 September 17

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

After detailing his early life in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, Lawrence Lederman narrates his process of becoming a lawyer. He tells of his experience clerking for Chief Justice Roger Traynor of the California

Supreme Court, and then entering as an associate lawyer at Cravath, Swaine and Moore, LLP. He describes the origins of Phoenix House's relationship with Cravath, moving on to the extrication of Phoenix House from New York City's Addiction Services Agency. He discusses his own move to Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz, LLP, in the context of the merger wave in corporate America. He explains the establishment of the Phoenix House Development Corporation, which handled private donations so that they would be separate from budgets submitted to the City. He discusses the nature and stature of the board among New York's elite, and the role of public service in the upper reaches of the law profession.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Lawrence (Larry) Lederman was born in 1935 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. He attended Stuyvesant High School, and went on to Brooklyn College, eventually finishing his education with a law degree from New York University. He clerked for the California Supreme Court, and then joined Cravath, Swaine and Moore, LLP in 1968. While at Cravath, Lederman established himself as an emerging figure in corporate law, and at the same time became legal counsel to Phoenix House during the A. Beame/J. Hornbliss investigation and the protracted separation from the City's Addiction Services Agency (1968-1972). Lederman went on to become a member of Phoenix House, playing a critical role in the organization's expansion in the 1970s. Thereafter, he established the Phoenix House Development Corporation, which he chaired, and in that role was critical in the funding structure of the organization. Meanwhile, Lederman rose to become an eminent attorney in corporate acquisitions, and was at the vanguard of the great merger wave of the 1970s and 1980s. In the decades after 1980, Lederman was a well-known figure in the business community and amongst New York's upper class; he used these connections to encourage donations to and board membership at Phoenix House among many leaders of American business.

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Conrad Levenson, 2015 January 16

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

Levenson narrates his early childhood in Brooklyn and attendance at Columbia College and School of Architecture. He then describes his path into designing and overseeing low-income housing projects during

the 1970s. Moving to Phoenix House, Levenson discusses at length his vision for the relationship between the therapeutic community method and the built environment of the facility, especially with respect to the Riverside Plaza Hotel. In this vein, he describes legal restrictions on this work by the state. He also speaks on his use of sweat equity with the Phoenix House residents.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Born and raised in Brooklyn, Conrad Levenson attended architecture school and eventually opened his own practice. Circumstances and changing realities of New York City in the late 1960s changed the focus of his firm to low-income housing. Levenson was introduced to Phoenix House through the acquisition of the Riverside Plaza Hotel. Levenson helped design the renovation of the space, and then went on to serve Phoenix House in the acquisition and renovation of other properties, most notably the Yorktown facility. He remained in private practice until, in 1991, he joined Phoenix House as the in-house architect and agency-wide buildings manager. He remained at Phoenix House until 2008.

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Barry McCaffrey, 2015 April 2

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

McCaffrey describes his first encounters with substance abusers in the military during the 1960s and the subsequent pathway to his position as the Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. He discusses the politics of White House agencies and controversies over their respective jurisdictions. He speaks extensively on the nexus of mental health issues and substance abuse, and the role of the family in instilling anti-drug values in children. He narrates his own education on the "drug issue," from drug courts to methadone to therapeutic community methods. He gives his impressions of Phoenix House's work amid this discussion. McCaffrey also details the issues surrounding government funding of substance abuse treatment programs. Finally, he discusses the scientific controversies of using medication in treatment for addiction.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Caitlin Bertin-Mahieux.

## **Biographical / Historical**

Barry McCaffrey served in the United States Army for 32 years and retired as a four-star General. At retirement he was the most highly decorated serving General, having been awarded three Purple Heart medals for wounds received in his four combat tours – as well as twice awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest award for valor. He also twice was awarded the Silver Star for valor. For five years after leaving the military, Barry McCaffrey served as the nation's Cabinet Officer in charge of U.S. Drug Policy. After leaving government service, Barry McCaffrey served as the Bradley Distinguished Professor of International Security Studies from January 2001 to May 2005; and then as an Adjunct Professor of International Security Studies from May 2005 to December 2010 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY.

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Kevin McEneaney, 2014 October 1 and October 8

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

In the first session, McEneaney chronicles his childhood and the beginnings of his drug use, resulting in a stay at the Morris J. Bernstein Institute. After moving to Phoenix House's Coney Island facility, McEneaney narrates becoming an increasingly integral part of the public relations team throughout the 1970s. He discusses his impressions of Phoenix House's board and its dynamics and prerogatives. In the second session, McEneaney discusses the therapeutic community model and the changes it underwent as Phoenix House's leadership became more professionalized. He describes his attempts to "codify" or standardize the therapeutic community method. He details the acquisition of the Yorktown facility. In terms of organizational culture, he discusses the distance between the operations and the public relations sides of Phoenix House. Finally, McEneaney speaks on Phoenix House's important relationship with Corrections and the prison system, and subsequently with various consulting firms

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

## **Biographical / Historical**

Raised in a large and close family on Long Island, Kevin McEneaney became a recreational drug user, and then heroin addict. Through arrest and government intervention, McEneaney met Ronald Williams and began a long career at Phoenix House. His early years were in the in the area of public

relations, developing outreach and fundraising campaigns, serving as liaison with neighborhoods, and writing education materials for schools. By the 1980s, McEaney became Clinical Director. Eventually, he became Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Phoenix House Foundation. In 2006, McEaney left Phoenix House to establish his own consulting service.

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Ira Mothner, 2014 August 19 and August 27

box 2

### **Scope and Content Note**

In the first session, Mothner describes his career in magazine journalism, and, subsequently, in speechwriting for the Mayor of New York. He explains his prior connection to therapeutic communities, which led to his involvement with Phoenix House. He describes the process of writing the book *Drugs, Parents and Children* (1972) with Mitchell Rosenthal. He details the early therapeutic community methods, including tactics of humiliation. He speaks to his personal connection to addiction. Mothner describes his role in fundraising and crafting the Phoenix House narrative. He discusses the "academy model of treatment." Finally, Mothner comments on methadone versus therapeutic treatment for addiction, and recent marijuana legalization battles. In the second session, Mothner speaks on substance abuse among adolescents today. He discusses Phoenix House's changing treatment model, especially the role of adolescents in its evolution. He comments on the social aspects of working at Phoenix House, particularly his working relationship with Mitchell Rosenthal. He also comments on the Abraham Beame investigation and the plans for the Nancy Reagan Center in California. Finally, Mothner describes some of the major fundraising galas at Phoenix House.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Caitlin Bertin-Mahieux.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Ira Mothner is an author, journalist and public relations consultant, with extensive experience in magazine journalism. In the 1970s, he collaborated with Mitchell Rosenthal on a book entitled *Drugs, Parents and Children* (1972). He is also the author of *How to Get Off Drugs* (1984).

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Carlos Pagan, 2014 August 11 and 2015 March 3

box 3

### **Scope and Content Note**

In the first session, Pagan discusses his initial involvement with Phoenix House and his role in

founding the program. He explains how he joined Efrén Ramirez's rehabilitation program after years of chronic drug abuse and details how that initial program grew in membership and gradually evolved into Phoenix House. Pagan credits the creation of Phoenix House to the support group of six founding members that he maintained, and a move from Hart Island to Manhattan, which put the group out on their own. In the second session, Pagan discusses the dynamic that existed between the original six members of Phoenix House, as well as his childhood upbringing in Williamsburg as a young Puerto Rican immigrant. Pagan details the beginning of his drug use in the mid-1950s, due to his gang involvement and his subsequent bouts with incarceration. He explains how he joined Efrén Ramirez's program to rehabilitate and how he met the first few members of the Phoenix House program there. He then documents the acquisition of the first house and subsequent expansion.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Kristin Murphy.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Carlos Pagan is the founder of the rehabilitation program El Regreso (Project Return) and a former resident of Phoenix House.

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Peter G. Peterson and Joan Ganz Cooney, 2014 November 19

box 3

### **Scope and Content Note**

Peterson and Ganz Cooney discuss their philanthropic life histories, which include fiscal policy reform, and youth education and digital learning, respectively. They then discuss their friendship with Mitchell Rosenthal. They speak to their role in supporting Phoenix House through fundraising efforts via their own donations, connecting the organization to a number of influential donors, and encouraging innovative fundraising strategies that catapulted Phoenix House into the world of the New York elite.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Cameron Vanderscoff.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Pete Peterson is founder and chairman of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. Peterson's distinguished and far-reaching career spans more than five decades, including contributions and accomplishments in public service, business, and philanthropy. Petereson's public

service began in 1971 when President Richard Nixon named him Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs. One year later, he was named U.S. Secretary of Commerce. From from 2000 to 2004, he chaired the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. In 1985, he co-founded The Blackstone Group, and over the next two decades, he helped to grow the firm into a global leader in alternative investments. In the 1970s and 80s, Peterson served as chairman and CEO of Lehman Brothers and Lehman Brothers, Kuhn, Loeb Inc. Before working in Washington, Peterson was chairman and CEO of audio-visual equipment manufacturer Bell and Howell, and an executive at advertising firm McCann Erickson.

Joan Ganz Cooney co-founded the Children's Television Workshop (since renamed Sesame Workshop) in 1968 and has created children's programming, including *Sesame Street*, *The Electric Company*, *3-2-1 Contact*, and *Dragon Tales*, for more than three decades. She served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Sesame Workshop until 1990 and is currently Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Workshop's board.

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Chris Policano, 2015 March 11

box 3

### **Scope and Content Note**

Chris Policano details his pathway to Phoenix House and shares backstory about the building that was slated to be the Nancy Reagan Center and the process of establishing good relations with the Lake View Terrace community. He discusses the therapeutic community method and Phoenix House's role in explaining the crack epidemic to stakeholders during the 1980s. He narrates the challenges of de-stigmatizing the images of addicts, and of defending long-term residential care to the public, funders and doctors. He then speaks on organizational culture and leadership.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Turner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Chris Policano served as Phoenix House's media liaison and public relations director between 1989 and 2007. Born and raised in the outer boroughs of New York City, he joined Phoenix House after a brief stint in the public relations business. He was closely involved with the public relations elements of Phoenix House's expansion into southern California. He also worked with the media throughout Phoenix House's peak years as addiction experts, at a time when the

nation was increasingly nervous about the crack epidemic in the 1980s. At the time of the interview, he was serving as Public Affairs Director for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO.

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Mitchell Rosenthal, 2014 November 6 and June 26 and July 10 and 2015 February 19 and April 15 box 3

#### **Scope and Content Note**

In the first session, Mitchell Rosenthal discusses his childhood, and formative moments in becoming a doctor and a successful politician. He then speaks to the impacts of organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Synanon on the creation of Phoenix House. Rosenthal also discusses therapeutic methods used in Phoenix House and in drug rehabilitation overall, and his use of these methods as a doctor in the Navy. He highlights challenges in beginning to work with the therapeutic community model, and his eventual move to New York City to work in drug rehabilitation government services after his naval career. Rosenthal concludes with a story about the origins of Phoenix House.

#### **Scope and Content Note**

In the second session, Rosenthal discusses his position as the Deputy Commissioner for Rehabilitation Services in the Office of the Coordinator of Addiction Programs. Following his career in public service, Rosenthal develops an interest in rehabilitation, influenced by organizations such as Daytop Village and Odyssey House. Rosenthal then details the conflict after the Hornblass Report was published, and Phoenix House's resultant relationship with Cravath, Swaine and Moore, LLP. Finally, Rosenthal tells of the move from Hart Island to West 73rd Street, including anecdotes highlighting the organization's relationship with the Abraham Beame administration.

#### **Scope and Content Note**

In the third session, Rosenthal echoes a discussion from the previous session by describing the context surrounding Phoenix House's move from Hart Island to West 73rd Street. He gives attention to individuals involved in the move, and the community's reaction to the move. Rosenthal then discusses the founding of Phoenix Academy of Yorktown. He also details the studies that the organization conducted to analyze the effectiveness of its programs. Rosenthal goes on to narrate the Phoenix House's expansion to California, and the incident with the Nancy Reagan Center. He concludes by recounting the events that led to the eventual formation of Lake View Terrace, the



California chapter of Phoenix House, and the creation of the IMPACT program.

### **Scope and Content Note**

In the fourth session, Rosenthal discusses the employees of Phoenix House, and examines the tension between hiring former patients versus professionals. He moves on to the challenges of finding a successor. Rosenthal also discusses the organization's interactions with drug and imprisonment laws. He then analyzes the development of therapeutic communities and their changing populations. Lastly, Rosenthal examines the challenges of raising money—both private donors and government support—and the importance of both income sources.

### **Scope and Content Note**

In the fifth session, Rosenthal recounts formative experiences in his life, beginning with his family's influence and the effect of working with drug-addicted soldiers while in the Navy on his decision to pursue a career in substance abuse rehabilitation. Rosenthal then moves to the origin story of Phoenix House—it began with a small group from a detox unit. He focuses on the trials in the early Phoenix House, beginning with the Hart Island facility and then moving to the Riverside Plaza Hotel. He also discusses the organization's encounters with various politicians, from New York City Mayors to the Reagans. Rosenthal concludes his interview by focusing on how Phoenix House's practices have changed in response to public policies, healthcare laws, drug epidemics and their own developments in treatment processes.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Sue Kaplan and Caitlin Bertin-Mahieux.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Dr. Mitchell Rosenthal founded Phoenix House in May 1967, while serving as deputy commissioner of New York City's Addiction Services Agency. He resigned his City post in 1970 to lead Phoenix House as a private, nonprofit organization. As a psychiatrist at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Oakland, California, from 1957 to 1965, he established the first service-sponsored therapeutic community for the treatment of alcoholism, drug addiction and character disorders. Dr. Rosenthal received his B.A. from Lafayette College in 1956 and his M.D. in 1960 from the State University of New York's Downstate Medical Center. He has been a White House advisor on drug abuse, a special consultant to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and chaired the New York State

Advisory Council on Drug Abuse from 1985 to 1997.  
In February 2007, as part of his succession plan, Dr.  
Rosenthal stepped down as President and CEO.

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Jean Scott, 2014 November 3

box 3

**Scope and Content Note**

Scott details her pathway to Phoenix House as an addict, and how she quickly rose within the ranks to become assistant clinical director. She gives particular attention to the opening of prison programs in California, New York and Texas. She describes her professional partnership with Kevin McEneaney, especially with respect to prison programs and the development of the occupational training curriculum. She discusses in great detail the evolution and subsequent breakdown of the therapeutic community model during her long career at Phoenix House.

**Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Turner.

**Biographical / Historical**

Jean Scott was born in Brooklyn and was raised by her grandmother. Heroin addiction led to a series of arrests in the late 1960s, and her parole officer referred her to Phoenix House. After completing her treatment, she became a house director on Hart Island and at Phelan Place, after which she headed the purchasing department. Beginning in the early 1980s, she was promoted to be assistant clinical director, working with Kevin McEneaney. In this position, she was instrumental in the opening of prison programs in Texas, New York and California. She retired from Phoenix House in 2008.

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Amy Singer, 2014 December 2 and 2015 February 4 and February 19

box 3

**Scope and Content Note**

In the first session, Singer discusses her career prior to Phoenix House, which included working in a halfway house, the District Attorney's office, victims' services, the Governor's Office on Criminal Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration, and a private foundation that generated materials for judges hearing substance abuse cases. She shares her own philosophy on substance abuse treatment, discussing both therapeutic community methods and methadone. She also describes her impressions of the relationship between union politics, racial politics, and city politics during a brief stint with the New York City Department of Corrections.

### **Scope and Content Note**

In the second session, Singer discusses leaving the New York City Department of Corrections shortly following the election of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, and her introduction to Phoenix House as Director of Criminal Justice Programs. She describes Phoenix House's expansion into Texas in 1994, on prison-related contracts. She discusses the programmatic challenges of setting up programs in new states. She speaks on changes to the composition of the Phoenix House staff during her tenure, reflecting increasing medicalization of treatment, and corresponding changes in the therapeutic community model. She lays out the issues and challenges surrounding recent mergers and acquisitions. Finally, she discusses the rise and fall of a robust research agenda at Phoenix House, and the organization's relationship to federal funding.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Singer begins the third session with an analysis of Phoenix House's lobbying efforts in a shifting political landscape, highlighting the shortcomings and challenges of changing healthcare policies, and how Phoenix House has had to adapt to ensure funds were available for their patients. She then details the internal debate in the organization regarding the legalization and decriminalization of marijuana, and the differences of opinion that have emerged. Singer highlights how Phoenix House increasingly involves itself in more aspects of the policy side of substance regulation, and how government drug laws have in turn impacted policies within the program throughout the years. She gives particular attention to changing healthcare reimbursement policies, and how regional Phoenix House directors have continually been forced to adapt to meet these regulations in order to fulfill the needs of the organization from both an internal standpoint and a patient care standpoint.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Cameron Vanderscoff.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Amy Singer was a long-time staffer at Phoenix House (1994-2015), where she has held a variety of positions, starting as Director of Criminal Justice Programs and leading to her current title of Senior Vice President and Director, Public/Private Partnerships and Business.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Sklar describes formative years serving in the US Army during the Korean War and, subsequently, on the poetry scene in New York City. He describes various stages of drug use and bouts of shock therapy. He narrates the creation of Phoenix House at Morris Bernstein Institute, the move to 85th Street, and eventually his own to Hart Island. He details some of the methods involved in therapeutic communities. Finally, Sklar discusses his writing career in Iowa City and beyond after "graduating" from Phoenix House.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Caitlin Bertin-Mahieux.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Morty Sklar is a poet, Queens native, and former Phoenix House resident. He was inspired by the natural-voice aesthetics of the Iowa City Actualists (of which he was a seminal writer and editor).

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Jerry Taylor, 2014 September 23

box 3

### **Scope and Content Note**

Taylor narrates his early life in the US Navy and subsequently the advertising business in Chicago, which put him in contact with many celebrities and moguls in the music industry, and eventually brought him to New York City. Taylor details his pathway to the Phoenix House board, his role in fundraising, and the board culture at Phoenix House.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Lance Thurner.

### **Biographical / Historical**

At the time of this interview, Jerry Taylor was vice president of Lippe Taylor advertising firm. He served as a board member for Phoenix House and the Phoenix House Development Corporation from 1972 to 2006. He helped in fundraising around special events, using his connections in the magazine publishing and advertising businesses.

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Ronald Williams, 2014 July 17

box 3

### **Scope and Content Note**

Ronald Williams narrates his early life in a West Indian neighborhood in Harlem and his pathway to substance abuse, incarceration, and, eventually the Morris Bernstein Institute. He describes leaving the

Institute with a group of addicts to found Phoenix House. He gives particular attention to the therapeutic community method as it was conceived during Phoenix House's initial stages, and its predecessors. Williams also speaks on Phoenix House's importing of Synanon personnel, and that strategy's effect on the organization.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview by Kristin Murphy.

### **Biographical / Historical**

Ronald Williams is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Stay'n Out. In 1967, he, along with five former addicts, left the detoxification unit of Morris Bernstein Institute (now Beth Israel), moved into 205 West 85th Street and started what would become Phoenix House. He is the author of the Phoenix House philosophy still read today. Williams has continued to develop and work with the therapeutic community approach pioneered at the Phoenix House and is a leader in the field (particularly in prisons).

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