
Youth Truth



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Mosaic 2000: A Tyrant's Tool

Eric Anderson

Recently, the California-based Gavin de Becker Inc. announced the development of a computer program called Mosaic 2000 in conjunction with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF). Testing of the software was expected to begin at over 20 schools in December. The software rates whether a student will be potentially violent on a scale of 1 to 20, based on the answers to questions asked of administrators.

The company claims that this software will not be used for labeling in any way. In their words, the software is designed "for use only in situations in which students make threats or otherwise come to the attention of the school as possible security risks". One must question how the students "come to the attention of the school." One well-known way is that students who are different are bound to be labeled as potential threats and then evaluated with this software. Even James Perrotti, chief of police at Yale University, who himself helped create the questions used by the system, said, "It's easy to pick out the gang members with tattoos. It's these other people that kind of surprise administrators, and these are the ones they really need to identify." The implication is that the presence of a tattoo is a factor already being used by administrators to label students. Who is to say that this software will not be used on someone who wears clothing that is not part of the norm?

Another concern is that it cannot be guaranteed that this software will be properly used by administrators. Students throughout the country who have been suspended and even expelled for making uncomplimentary comments about their schools and school administrators on their personal web sites created from home will tell you that this cannot be counted upon. A student who is different but is not causing any problems should not be treated as a problem.

Another problem with the reasoning behind this software is that its method is considered to be objective. The fact remains that the criteria used for evaluation are subjective. While it is true that more than 150 indicators are used, the fact remains that every one of the indicators is subjective, and indicate different things for different students. One must suspect that the intent of the software is to make it more difficult to question the judgments made by school officials, which are now supposedly objective because a computer program is involved.

Gavin de Becker Inc. claims that Mosaic 2000 cannot brand students as dangerous and that it only evaluates a situation. Unfortunately, in an ideal world this might be the case, but in the real world, where administrators and officials are human beings, it is unrealistic to expect the software to be used fairly, assuming that it even can be used fairly. The company claims that in order "to sway Mosaic 2000, a dishonest evaluator would have to lie on forty specific and fully documented questions". Would you trust the future of your son or daughter to your confidence that an administrator, who has probably labeled your child in order to use the program in the first place, will be completely objective and truthful in answering the forty questions, or even have the knowledge to do so? It is very telling that the company does not provide a list of the questions to the public.

Profiling of young people is no different than racial and ethnic profiling, and it is morally wrong. Profiling someone to predict whether they will commit a

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— IN THE REAL WORLD, WHERE ADMINISTRATORS
AND OFFICIALS ARE HUMAN BEINGS,
IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT
THE SOFTWARE TO BE
USED FAIRLY —

Letters

Opinions expressed may not reflect the views of ASFAR.

21, That Not-So-Magic Age

Well, it's been a week since I turned 21 and I don't feel much different. There's no magical tingling feeling in my body. My inner voice sounds the same and is no wiser or dumber. There just seems to be nothing different about me that would distinguish me from a 20 year old ... I'm so disappointed!

I mean, I figured that there must be some **reason** that I could drink that beer the other night legally ... I figured there must be some **reason** I can now make plans to drive to Wendover and play cards with my friends ...

Hmm. If I bought car insurance that would be cheaper for me now than it would have been before too ... Hey, some places will actually rent me a car now! (most still won't till I'm 25) ...

Hmm... I don't drive much differently. I still have to check my blindspot to make sure I don't run into anyone while changing lanes. There is no magical knowledge or anything that I've suddenly acquired ...

Hey, there are plenty of new jobs I can apply for and get now that I'm 21! Now I can drive a bus or a big truck if I so desire and get the training. Now I can be a bartender if I want. Geez, I think there are even a lot more jobs that I can now get, all just because of my 21st birthday last week!

Wow. Age sure is an **accomplishment**, isn't it? I mean it must be if all these privileges are suddenly available, huh? I mean there must be **some reason** I've gained all these rights, right?

Well, for the life of me ...

Well, for the life of me, I just can't figure out what that reason is.

-Daniel McGuire

Irony

Today my copy of *Youth Truth* came in the mail (great zine, btw--a lot of content for the size). I was, of course, excited, because I had been looking forward to it but also because it was the first piece of mail I'd received at my new address (proof of residence) and now I could get a library card.

Alas, when I presented the librarian with it, I was informed I had to be 18 or have my parent's signature.

sigh

-Eli Naehar

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Questions regarding the electronic version may be directed to [<editor@asfar.org>](mailto:editor@asfar.org). Questions about or requests for subscriptions to the print version may be directed to [<swishnets@aol.com>](mailto:swishnets@aol.com) or to *Youth Truth*, P.O. Box 11358, Chicago, Illinois 60611-0358.

Editorial and Publishing Staff

Editor in Chief: Justin Mallone [<editor@asfar.org>](mailto:editor@asfar.org)
Research Coordinator: Jason Gerber [<agerber@erols.com>](mailto:agerber@erols.com)
Electronic Edition Production: Justin Mallone [<editor@asfar.org>](mailto:editor@asfar.org)
Print Edition Production: Susan Wishnetsky [<swishnets@aol.com>](mailto:swishnets@aol.com)
Print Edition Design: Synimo Designs [<synimo@aol.com>](mailto:synimo@aol.com)

ASFAR
P.O. Box 11358
Chicago, IL 60611-0358
e-mail: info@asfar.org
web site: www.asfar.org

Editorial correspondence may be addressed to [<editor@asfar.org>](mailto:editor@asfar.org) or Justin Mallone, Editor, *Youth Truth*, P.O. Box 11358, Chicago, Illinois 60611-0358.

The President's Pen

Eric Anderson
President, ASFAR
<andersep@slu.edu>

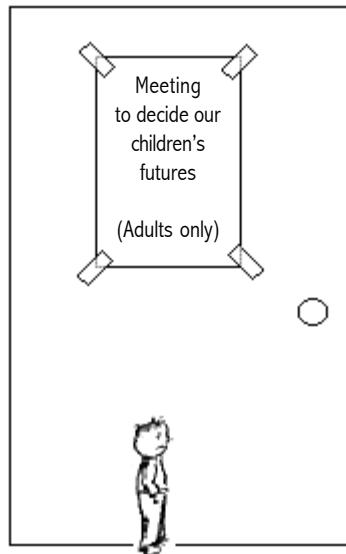
“For the Children”

Lately, we have heard from many politicians who say that they want to do things “for the children”. Since they want to make such claims, it is only fair to consider what they have actually done “for the children”.

First, let us consider education. The solution offered by our officials is to continue pumping more and more money into the public schools. A quick glance at statistics from the federal government's own 1999 Condition of Education report by the National Center for Education Statistics would seem to indicate that performance has not improved over the past few decades. At the same time, education spending has increased drastically. Perhaps the most disturbing part of this report is that in 1996 only 20 percent of high school students were able to answer four out of five political knowledge questions correctly. Perhaps students are learning something, but it seems that they may not be learning the correct things. If our officials really wanted to do things “for the children”, then they would work on bringing the curriculum into the 20th century before it ends. Everyone has different interests, abilities, and levels of motivation. It simply doesn't make sense to have the same curriculum laid out for everyone. Students should be able to make choices about what they want to learn.

Another crucial change that needs to be made “for the children” is the elimination of compulsory schooling laws. Young people who don't want to be in school only slow down the learning of, and in some cases even endanger, the students that do want to be there. Half of the battle is won once young people are given choices about the direction that their education will take. At the same time, young people should have the right to pursue an education

even if their parents would rather they stay home and work the fields. The best way to accomplish this is to eliminate compulsory education and eliminate the legal distinctions between adults and young people. Finally, the attempts of public schools to control or



punish nonconformity through means such as school uniforms and profiling simply must stop. It is obvious that many are talking out of both sides of their mouths when they speak of America as a “melting pot”, and at the same time want to punish students simply for being different.

Secondly, politicians think they are “for the children” when they legislate the behavior of young people with standards that would never be required of adults. For example, it is politically beneficial to take attention away from the massive health problems of cigarette smoking and alcoholism among older people by focusing on status offenses by young people. Recently, MADD has even equated drinking by young people with cocaine usage. Any attempt to make this correlation for older people, say in the 30-40 range, would be met with outrage and disgust. It is not difficult to see that young people learn behaviors from their elders, and that as long as older people want to smoke, drink, and whatever else, younger people will want to as well. Take the so-called crisis of teenage pregnancy, for example. It is statistically shown that the vast majority of babies born to teenage mothers are fathered by much older men. Yet the stigma is entirely placed on the teen mothers, and young people are then told that such activity among adults is “none of their business”. If adults are not willing to serve as examples for how they want young people to behave, then they should not expect that behavior from young people in the first place.

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— **THEY SPEAK OF AMERICA AS A “MELTING POT”,
AND AT THE SAME TIME WANT TO PUNISH
STUDENTS SIMPLY FOR BEING
DIFFERENT** —

Perspective

Justin Mallone
Vice-President, ASFAR
<editor@asfar.org>

The term “gulag school” is one that may not be well understood outside the youth rights movement, for the term “gulag” has Stalinist connotations and certainly doesn’t fit the image of a place of learning but it is a term that sends shivers down the spines of those informed within the movement. Tales of abuse, electroshock “therapy”, brainwashing, and unsanitary conditions in these “educational facilities” have filtered out from beyond their walls. The growth of gulag schools represents one of the greatest direct threats to youth rights in our nation, and a striking example of the necessity to re-examine America’s concept of the rights of the young.

These prison camps are often passed off as a sort of more aggressive “reformatory school” where parents send their “troubled teens” to get back on the “straight and narrow”. In truth, however, if you substituted the three quoted phrases in the preceding sentence with “brainwashing camp”, “even slightly rebellious”, and “path to an automaton’s existence”, you’d have a *somewhat* more accurate picture of the situation.

— THE LAW’S
CONCEPTS OF PARENTAL
POWERS NEED TO BE CHANGED TO
SOMETHING MORE CONGRUOUS WITH AN
ENLIGHTENED UNDERSTANDING OF YOUTH RIGHTS —

The Gulag Schools

The horror of these places has been covered in detail elsewhere. What I want to approach here is the supposed moral basis that allows parents to feel justified in doing this to their children. The presumed role of parents in society is to take care of and nurture their children until such time as they are able to assume the responsibility themselves. Often the justification used for sending young people off to these prisons is that they are “out of control” and need discipline, and that the kind of discipline these places provide is in the best interest of the child.

But first, let us consider that the kind of “discipline” many of these gulag schools offer would be illegal for the parents themselves to do to their children. So why is it then acceptable for parents to have hired goons do it to their kids for them?

Secondly, why is it acceptable for parents to have teens kidnapped and sent to these places, when doing so to those who have reached 18 *would* be considered kidnapping? I understand the argument that technically the child is still under parental guardianship until they turn 18, but surely so basic a right as to be protected from physical harm is universal? Children are NOT parental property, after all.

The whole problem here is the deeply ingrained concept that parents should be able to do what they deem necessary to “rein in” presumably “wild” children, as long as the children are

under 18. This concept is the main problem here and it is what needs reexamination, considering that a double standard is applied to youth. Once one hits the magic age of 18, one can act as “wild” as one wants without worrying about parental retribution. So the conclusion to be drawn from current law is that a parent can do whatever they want “in the best interest of the child” until, somehow, a magical transformation occurs at one’s 18th birthday. The logical question to ask here is whether the magic age should exist at all.

If the presumed role of parents is to take care of and nurture their children, to guide them on the path to adulthood, why is there such a disparity between that concept and a legal concept which allows parents to intentionally hurt their children (or, increasingly, to hire other people to do so)? Perhaps what society needs to do in the short term is redefine the legal abilities of parents to something befitting a free society with any shred of respect for its young. For instance, parents should not be able to intentionally physically hurt their children, nor should they be able to hire other people to do so. Parents shouldn’t be able to have their teens kidnapped and sent off to these places either; it can’t possibly be in the best interest of any child to be forced into a facility where they are brainwashed and beaten into submission, their most basic rights left by the wayside. It’s worth mentioning that if young people had a legally protected command of their educational destiny, this problem wouldn’t be as big as it is.

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Editor's note: Content of reviewed film is not necessarily the opinion of ASFAR.

South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut

Like Mike Males' book *The Scapegoat Generation* (reviewed in the last issue of *Youth Truth*), the animated film *South Park - Bigger, Longer & Uncut* addresses the issue of scapegoating and placing blame in response to the perceived misbehavior of youth. But in *South Park*, the choice of a scapegoat seems arbitrary and ridiculous, and the consequences of scapegoating are carried to absurd extremes.

In the movie, four elementary school kids contrive to see an R-rated Canadian movie full of four-letter words, after which they proceed to use those words at every available opportunity. Their distraught parents turn to various methods to attack the "source" of the problem, including placing their children in a rehabilitation program, installing a device in one child's brain which administers an electric shock whenever a swear word is uttered, placing the actors in the offending movie under "citizen's arrest", and finally declaring war on Canada. The only remedy the parents never seem to consider is discussing the swearing with their children and asking them to stop.

If you have never seen the *South Park* TV series, you will be struck by the minimalist quality of the animation, mainly consisting of what appear to be cutouts of construction paper and photographs. And even if you have seen the series, you will be struck, if not shocked, by the unending profanity in the film, as well as jabs at religion, women, blacks and gays from characters in the film (although the film as a whole, while thoroughly irreverent, hardly seems bigoted itself).

South Park - Bigger, Longer & Uncut is a movie about itself, as it was surely designed to be. The release of this film in July 1999 was probably largely responsible for new standards of enforcement in preventing underage viewing of NC-17 and R-rated movies. And, to be sure, the language in the movie, as well as its crude "potty" humor and a few sexual situations, may make many viewers uncomfortable. But the offensiveness of the film only serves to strengthen its message: that "indecent" alone does not deprive art of its merit. For *South Park - Bigger, Longer & Uncut* does have merit as a work of art.

First, it is a delightful musical. The music is not entirely original, with styles and melodies borrowed from Broadway standards such as *Oklahoma*, as well as recent musicals such as *Les Miserables*. But the impeccable orchestration and performances of the songs, as well as the cleverness of the lyrics, make their recognizability all the more enjoyable.

Second, it is funny. I am not a fan of four-letter words, and I've often been turned off by many movies and TV shows which resort to toilet humor. But here the subtext of the movie pointing at itself and ridiculing itself is omnipresent, giving the crudest jokes a new meaning. In the beginning, when the children are denied tickets to the forbidden movie, they console themselves that "it probably isn't all that good anyway ... the animation's all crappy" -- the criticism so often aimed

Sue's Review

Susan Wishnetsky
Secretary, ASFAR

at the *South Park* TV series. And once they manage to see the movie, the extent to which the kids imitate it is so exaggerated as to be laughable itself. Since the plot involves swearing and offensiveness in movies, the film's own vulgarity is not gratuitous, but rather a demonstration of its own thesis. But crude and offensive or not, there is scarcely a joke that falls flat. The humor throughout is incisive, sometimes disconcerting, sometimes bizarre, and sometimes simply hilarious.

Third, it is a movie with a message, not only about censorship and freedom of expression, but also about our desire to place blame and punish someone, rather than find ways to solve problems constructively. The parents in the film, although they say that they will "stop at nothing" to protect their children, and that their children are "precious", have little interaction with their children except to yell at them and tell them that they are grounded. They are fearful of their own responsibility as parents, and, when deciding which villain to blame for their children's swearing, sing "We must blame them and make a fuss, before somebody thinks of blaming us."

South Park - Bigger, Longer & Uncut was released on video in December. According to Roger Ebert's review, "thoughtful and concerned people should see it." I concur.

— IT IS A MOVIE WITH A MESSAGE, NOT ONLY
ABOUT CENSORSHIP AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, BUT
ALSO ABOUT OUR DESIRE TO PLACE BLAME AND PUNISH SOMEONE —

Pedophobia:

The Anti-Child Bias of Children’s Advocacy Groups

Kaleb Axon

On September 10, 1997, the Associated Press released a story which stated that two thirds of all violent juvenile crimes are committed between 2 pm and 11 pm on school days, with the larger portion occurring after 3 pm. The report was based on a study released the same day by a “children’s advocacy group” called *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids*.

The study excluded summers and weekends; only school days were counted.

A co-author of the study claimed that the high rate of crime during after-school hours was due to a lack of supervised activities. In his words, “They’re bored, they’re idle. They have too much time on their hands.”

The same co-author also said that since the number of teenagers in America is expected to increase 17 percent by 2005, the problem with after-school crime will only get worse.

I have little doubt that these claims were made with sincerity, but sincerity does not equal truth. To determine the reliability (or even the relevance) of this information, it is important that we not take it at face value.

pedophobia

Irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against childhood or children

In the first place, what exactly is a “children’s advocacy group?” Is it a group of children making their needs known? Not likely; the aforementioned co-author is a dean at a major university.

Assuming for the moment that this advocacy group actually does represent some segment of America’s children, how well are they doing their job? Can they be “advocating” for children when their emphasis seems to be on promoting non-parental control on children’s activities?

If an African Americans’ advocacy group were to say that black people commit crime because they “have too much time on their hands” or that the problem would only get worse as the black population grows, such a group would be crucified (and rightly so) by the news media and by prominent politicians. So why do we tolerate claims of this nature about children?

The dubious nature of the term “advocacy group,” along with the group’s apparent hostility toward the very people they claim to represent should be enough to cast doubt upon their claims, but the research itself is also fundamentally flawed.

Why did the study only include school days? If violent crime rates are high all day long on weekends and during the summer, it would make their case much stronger. If, on the other hand, violent crime rates are lower during those times, we would have to come to a conclusion very different from that promoted by the researchers.

It is almost as if the study were rigged to give the figures that the researchers wanted. I certainly hope that is not the case, but is that not what the evidence suggests? Clearly, violent juvenile crime on school days will occur when there is the least supervision and when the children are awake—we can figure that out without a study. By limiting the study to school days, all uncertainty about the outcome was eliminated.

Excluding weekends and summers from the study makes it impossible to speculate on causes of juvenile crime other than lack of supervision. If this group is truly interested in fighting crime, then they have done their own cause a great disservice.

For more than a century, opponents of classroom-style schooling have held the view that schools contribute to higher crime rates by creating an unhealthy social environment that brings out the worst in people, and statistics compiled during the early days of public schooling tend to support this claim. When today’s studies only count school days, how can we be sure that the schools themselves do not contribute to the surge in violent crime in the late-afternoon hours?

It seems clear to me that so-called “child advocacy groups” such as *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* have an agenda that is anti-child. Their goal is to find and/or promote new and more effective ways to keep children under the thumb of institutional oppression.

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President's Pen: For the Children

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In the area of auto safety, simple enforcement of existing traffic laws which apply to all age groups would succeed where graduated licensing laws have failed. Strict enforcement of drunk-driving laws would greatly increase traffic safety and decrease the alcoholism problem in this country. These solutions are not proposed because adults can vote and would prefer to shift the focus entirely to young people. It is the mark of a hypocrite to suggest that it is all right to ask men from ages 18 to 20 to fight and possibly die for this country, while telling them that they cannot drink or even enter a bar.

Finally, there are some things that politicians can do "for the children". The first is that they should work for the decrease and eventual elimination

of legal barriers placed upon young people. A young person should have legal standing in court. This is true empowerment for the children, and it would help to eliminate many parental abuses. It is doubtful that "gulag schools" which imprison young people against their will on the whims of their parents would proliferate if the legal distinctions between adults and young people were greatly reduced. Some have opposed this saying that it would destroy our society and make it impossible for parents to control their children. I say that the continued beating down of our young people is what will destroy our society, because young people are the future. Those advocating parental control are also missing the point, which is that if parents would treat young people with the dignity, attention, and respect they deserve, and not as objects to be controlled, then the problems currently facing

young people would likely be greatly reduced. Correspondingly, the problems among the next generation of adults will be reduced, and our country, and indeed the entire world, will be the better for it. Next, politicians should stop trying to control youth through status laws. They simply don't work, and they are also un-American. There should be no second-class citizens in the United States.

Finally, politicians need to focus on the real problems in this country and stop scapegoating young people. Violence, alcoholism, drug abuse, and whatever else -- these are problems that affect our entire society, not just young people, and they need to be dealt with accordingly. A politician who works to achieve the ASFAR Declaration of Principles is truly one that is for the children. I hope that politician exists somewhere. Maybe it will be you someday.

Perspective: The Gulag Schools

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While bringing down the age-based legal barriers between adults and young people is the ultimate goal, in the meantime the law's concepts of parental powers need to be changed to something more congruous with an enlightened understanding of youth rights. But while temporary gains may be made in individual battles such as shutting down particular gulag schools or liberating young people from them, the broader philosophical war cannot be neglected. As long as American parents feel they are doing the moral thing in giving these "schools" their children, this monumental disgrace to human rights will continue. It is certainly much harder to change the collective mind of a nation than the particular minds of particular legislators, but until we do, any gains made will be temporary. So when you're done reading this article, talk not only to your local legislators, but your to family, teachers, and friends about

this issue. If we all work together, we can surely turn this tide.

At this time I would like to mention a great organization devoted to this issue, called *TeenLiberty*. They are doing their best to inform people about gulag schools and lobbying on behalf of teens currently in these hellholes. The following are tips from the *TeenLiberty* site at <<http://www.teenaid.org/>> about how to avoid abduction.

1. Just cry rape. If you are taken from home, school, or on the street by "bounty hunters" or so-called "escorts" and find yourself in a public place, such as an airport, just cry rape! The authorities will act first to protect you, and ask questions later.

2. File emancipation papers. If you are of the age of *emancipation* in your state, pay a lawyer to file emancipation papers for you. This may be a very simple procedure. It may require you to show that you're able to support yourself. In some states, the legal age

is 16. One teen who was diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) hired a medical professional to conduct another test. This "second opinion" showed he did not have ADHD. Fearing that he would be "disappeared" by his parents, he paid a lawyer to emancipate him at age 16. He was given a job by friends and moved across the country. "Now," he writes, "I'm living 3,000 miles away from my parents and we're closer than ever!"

3. Notify the police. If you fear that you will be sent away against your will, legal experts advise another option: write a statement saying that if you are sent away ("disappeared"), it will be done against your will and you will fight to protect yourself and to prevent this from happening. This document should be sent or delivered to your local police or county sheriff's department; a copy should also be given to a trusted friend. It should include all contact information (your name, home address, telephone number, and city).

Mosaic 2000

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crime or be dangerous is contrary to the concept of “innocent until proven guilty”, as well as due process. It is wrong for a school to punish a student who has done nothing except be different. Schools should only act when there is a case of imminent danger to students and faculty, or the student has actually committed an offense.

Mr. De Becker has written a book entitled *Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe*. Unfortunately, one must question whether children and teenagers need to be kept safe from MOSAIC 2000. The software is scheduled for final release in March, and may be coming to a school near you. In the meantime, you can contact Robert Martin at Gavin de Becker Inc. to tell him what you think of Mosaic 2000. His e-mail address is rmartin@gdbinc.com.

Pedophobia

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There is a not-so-new brand of bigotry and discrimination--you might call it **pedophobia**. They have an irrational fear of and animosity toward children. By their rhetoric they blame the children for virtually all social ills, and this becomes the justification for keeping all children under tight control.

Two sources of additional information on how school attendance affects the crime rate are an article by Karl Bunday, author of the *School Is Dead; Learn in Freedom!* web site, found at http://learninfreedom.org/school_makes_crime.html, and a book by Zach Montgomery entitled *Poison Drops in the Federal Senate*, found at http://www.axon-family.net/kaleb/poison_drops/.

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c/o ASFAR
P.O. Box 11358
Chicago, IL 60611-0358

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