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FEATURED

## Activist group Moms for Liberty submits 14 more books for removal in Fauquier County Public Schools

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Aug 25, 2022




Scott District resident and treasurer of parental activist group Moms for Liberty's local chapter told the Fauquier County School Board Aug. 22 that their group submitted 14 more books containing "sexually explicit material" to the school system for removal.

James Jarvis | FauquierNow

An additional 14 books currently available in the Kettle Run High School library have been submitted to the school system for review and reconsideration by the members of the parental activist group Moms for Liberty.

During a School Board meeting Aug. 22, Amie Bowman, a Scott District resident, and the treasurer of the local Moms for Liberty chapter, told board members that their group had submitted an additional 14 books for the school system to consider removing from its libraries because they contain "sexually explicit content." The total list of books submitted by the group now totals 17 (listed below).

- "Deogratias: A tale of Rwanda," by Jean-Philippe Stassen
  - "Out of Darkness," by Ashley Hope Pérez
  - "A court of mist and fury," by Sarah J. Maas
  - "Girls Like Us," by Cristina Alger
  - "Sold," by Patricia McCormick
  - "Milk and Honey," by Rupi Kaur
  - "Seeing Gender: An illustrated guide to identity and expression," by Iris Gottlieb
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- "What Girls Are Made Of," by Elana K. Arnold

- “Almost Perfect,” by Brian Katcher
- “Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic,” by Alison Bechdel
- “Nineteen Minutes,” by Jodi Picoult
- “Last Night at the Telegraph Club,” by Malinda Lo
- “Crank,” by Ellen Hopkins
- “Looking for Alaska,” John Green
- “Fade,” by Robert Cormier
- “Eleanor & Park,” by Rainbow Rowell
- “Flamer,” by Mike Curato

According to Bowman, one of those books, "Deogratias," a historical fiction graphic novel that tells the story of the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, is scheduled to be reviewed by Kettle Run staff on Aug. 29.

Bowman is claiming school administration and the Kettle Run principal, Meaghan Brill, have made the process of reviewing books difficult for parents to participate in. Bowman also says it's a slow-moving process.

Bowman claimed she and other complainants, who submitted "Deogratias" for review, asked Brill to reschedule the meeting date because of scheduling conflicts, but their request was rejected.



She also noted the full list of books could take potentially up to 17 months to review because only one book may be considered at a time.

“Unfortunately, the situation with Kettle Run has not been as pleasant to experience,” Bowman said.

According to the school system’s policy regarding complaints about books, after someone submits a “Request for Reconsideration of Learning Resources” form to the principal, a review committee is established.

The policy says the committee must consist of the principal, the library media specialist, the classroom teacher (if involved), a parent and/or student and the complainant. The committee is then tasked with the following:

- Read, view, or listen to the challenged material.
- Read several reviews, if available.
- Check standard selection aids.
- Talk with persons who may be knowledgeable about the material in question and similar material.
- Discuss the material.
- Make a decision to recommend retaining or withdrawing the material.
- File the recommendation of the committee with the principal and the division superintendent or his/her designee.
- Notify the complainant of its recommendation and the disposition of the challenged material.



Tara Helkowski, director of communications and community engagement at Fauquier County Public Schools, told FauquierNow in an email the school system would “follow the process outlined in School Board Policy for each book, and the school-based review committee is just one step in the process.”


“We anticipate that the school-based review committee ... will need to meet several times for each book; therefore, the process may be lengthy,” she said. “While it will take some flexibility to coordinate meeting schedules for all involved, we are committed to working through the process with fidelity.”

Bowman said as of Thursday the school system has not rescheduled the Aug. 29 book review meeting.

“Given that the entire structure of the book review process pits the people who chose the book versus the people who are contesting the book, not having the other side of the meeting really reinforces the idea that the review committee has a rubber stamp to retain the book,” Bowman said.

Bowman also accused the school system of not having language defined in its policies to help them determine whether a book that contains “sexually explicit” or “pornographic” material reaches the threshold of having “literary merit.”

“There was no rubric for any of the concepts included in the definition nor scoring mechanism nor any discussion of how to evaluate books by the criteria in the definition,” she said. “Essentially, not only has [the school system] not been using a strict test of literary merit to make book purchasing decisions. They don't even have such a test.”

 Bowman told FauquierNow in an email the school system provided her with the following definition of “literary merit” obtained from the site [englishtextualconcepts.nsw.edu.au/](https://www.englishtextualconcepts.nsw.edu.au/): “Literary value does not include the values

expressed or implied in a text but refers specifically to how one can attribute worth to a text in terms of its value to 'civilisation', a culture, a society, or a particular group of people. Each of these groups may attribute a different value to the text and use different criteria to do so."

This definition does not appear in the school system's official policy guidelines. But the school's guidelines do address "sex and profanity", which are subject to "a stern test of literary merit."

The guidelines say that while "pornographic" and/or "sexual incidents or profanity" may not automatically disqualify a book from being accepted into a library's collection, the decision to allow such content is determined based on whether "the book presents life in its true proportions, whether circumstances are realistically dealt with, and ... the book is of literary value. Factual material of an educational nature on the level of the reader shall be included in the literary collections."

Bowman said during the meeting that the list of 17 books her group has submitted for removal is only "the tip of the iceberg" and noted that many more of the school system's libraries also contain books with "sexually explicit material."

Last month, FauquierNow reported a list of 47 books – 29 (61 percent) of which feature LGBTQ characters, themes, or discuss LGBT issues and six more that also explore issues of race, ethnicity, and/or having a disability – Bowman's group was reviewing and considering for submission.

Five of those 47 books, including "Girls Like Us," "What Girls Are Made of," "Fun Home," "Last Night at the Telegraph Club" and "Flamer," have been submitted for reconsideration by the group.

Natalie Erdosy, a Scott District resident and vice chair of the Fauquier Moms for Liberty chapter,” told School Board members during the meeting “requesting sexually explicit content” be removed from school libraries “in no way impacts representation.” Rather, she said it ensures “the school library is a safe space for all children.”

“There are more than three dozen books in the FCPSOne library that we know of that present normalized LGBTQIA plus and minority experiences and do so without containing sexually explicit content,” she said. “Reasonable standards, age appropriateness are time tested and applicable here as they are with any other media available within our schools.”

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James Jarvis



[https://www.fauquiernow.com/news/education/fauquier-county-parents-clash-over-book-censorship/article\\_2da11040-02e5-11ed-9494-fbcff80f22c3.html](https://www.fauquiernow.com/news/education/fauquier-county-parents-clash-over-book-censorship/article_2da11040-02e5-11ed-9494-fbcff80f22c3.html)

FEATURED

# Fauquier County parents clash over book censorship

James Jarvis, [jjarvis@FauquierNow.com](mailto:jjarvis@FauquierNow.com)

Jul 13, 2022



Scott District resident Margreta Grady, who opposes the proposal to remove certain books from Fauquier County Public Schools libraries, speaks at the July 11 School Board hearing.

James Jarvis | FauquierNow



The national debate over whether parents should be allowed to censor certain books from classrooms and libraries has spilled over into Fauquier County, and parents have begun using School Board meetings to not only air their grievances, but also to propose bans of their own.

During Monday's School Board meeting, several parents clashed over a proposal by a local chapter of a national parental rights organization, Moms for Liberty, to remove multiple books the group claims to contain “sexually explicit content” from school libraries.

Several parents belonging to the group, including Scott District resident Amie Bowman, the local Moms for Liberty’s treasurer, said their members have identified several books students are able to access through certain school libraries that they claim traumatize children and teens. The group also claims the books facilitate “long-term sex-related behavioral problems.”

“There's no question that sexually explicit content, including graphic descriptions of rape, molestation and incest, is in our schools,” Bowman said during the meeting on Monday. “[Fauquier] librarians and administrators are not contesting that fact. The point of disagreement is in whether the literary merit of these books outweighs the lewd nature of the content ... ”

Although there has been no formal list of books published on the Moms for Liberty website or social media pages, FauquierNow reviewed screenshots of a list of 47 books (listed below) that several parents belonging to the group volunteered to review using the site [Signupgenius.com](https://www.signupgenius.com). The list was compiled from books in other counties that have gone under review.

An analysis by FauquierNow found that out of the 47 books reviewed by parents, 29 (61 percent) of them feature LGBTQ characters, themes or discuss LGBTQ issues. Six books in the list also explore issues of race, ethnicity and/or having a disability.

When asked for a full list of books Moms for Liberty is attempting to remove, Bowman said there is no complete list and the review is ongoing. Bowman noted in an email to FauquierNow that the process "will be a long-term project."


Kim Ritter, who recently retired as supervisor of Library and Media Services of Fauquier County Public Schools, told the School Board during its June 13 meeting that although certain books in libraries are controversial, that does not always mean they should be prohibited.

"There are books that a parent is not going to want for their child. That is reality," Ritter said. "And we invite you to come and have conversations with the librarian where a book might reside. And then there is a process for you to file a reconsideration."

According to Fauquier County School Board's policy 6-5.1, the procedure for filing a complaint about instructional/learning materials is as follows:

- Any complaint should be filed in writing with the principal on the "Request for Reconsideration of Learning Resources" form, which may be obtained from the principal or the central office.
- A committee consisting of the principal, the library media specialist, the classroom teacher (if involved), a parent and/or student and the complainant will convene and then review the complaint.
- During the process of reconsideration, the learning resource will remain available for use.

If the complaint is rejected, the complainant may appeal to the superintendent and then the School Board. The decision of the School Board is the final judgment, and the challenged material must then be retained or withdrawn for a period of three full school years following the final decision.

 Ritter said school libraries that serve students from pre-K through 12th grade possess a wide range of books that reflect those age ranges. Nonetheless, she noted that younger students are sometimes precluded from checking out

certain books that are reserved for older students.

The school system's policy for allowing certain books that contain “sex and profanity” are “subjected to a stern test of literary merit ... community standards, the laws and accepted public moral standards,” according to the school's policy guidelines for book selection.

And while pornography, profanity and sexual incidents “shall not automatically disqualify a book,” the policy states that the decision to include a book in the library's collection “shall be made on the basis of whether the book presents life in its true proportions, whether circumstances are realistically dealt with, and whether the book is of literary value.”

Several parents opposed removing certain books from school libraries, including Center District resident Margreta Grady, who also spoke during the School Board meeting on Monday.

Grady and others argued removing books that “highlight” the experiences of marginalized and underrepresented populations in society may also do harm to students who belong to those groups.

“I think it's very important that we as a community trust our educators to do what's best for our children,” Grady said. “I understand the previous speakers’ concerns. But I think when there are disagreements in the community, we need to solve those in a neighborly way rather than a blanket ban.”

Marshall District resident Mary Brown Haak echoed Grady’s comments and said that the ability to read books from the perspective of a “Black, transgender, gay, disabled, undocumented, or poverty-stricken person” is “the best way to gain insight into the lives and challenges facing others ...”

“I would maintain learning our full history and learning about the experiences of people outside of our own group brings us closer together,” she said.

## Here’s the full list of books that were being informally reviewed/considered for removal by parents:

- "The Hazards of Love," by Stan Stanley
- "Image and Identity: Becoming the Person You Are," by Kris Gowen
- "The full spectrum: A new generation of writing about gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and other identities," by David Leviathan and Billy Merrell
- "Gender Identity: The ultimate teen guide," by Cynthia Winfield
- "Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in transition," by Katie Rain Hill
- "I am Jazz," by Jessica Herthel
- "Alex as Well," by Alyssa Brugman
- "Wildthorn," by Jane England
- "Lobizona," by Romina Garber
- "Girls Man Up," by M-E Girard
- "The Goldsmith's Daughter," by Tanya Landman
- "Ruin of Stars," by Linsey Miller
- "Ramona Blue," by Julie Murphy
- "Fever Crumb," by Philip Reeve
- "Scavenge the Stars," by Tara Slim
- "Grasshopper Jungle," by Andrew Smith
- "Dress Codes for Small Towns," by Courtney Stevens
- "The Mermaid, the Witch, and the Sea," by Maggie Tokuda-Hall
- "Ironhead, or, Once a Young Lady," by Jean-Claude van Rijckeghem
- "Brown: The Last Discovery of America," by Richard Rodriguez
- "Ana on the Edge," by A.J. Sass
- "The Polar Bear Explorers' Club," by Alex Bell
- "A Song Only I Can Hear," by Barry Jonsberg
- "The Deep & Dark Blue," by Niki Smith
- "One Half from the East," by Nadia Hashimi
- "Crane," by Jeff Stone
- "Rick," by Alex Gino
- "Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic," by Alison Bechdel
- "City of Thieves," by David Benioff
- "Be Gay, Do Comics," by Matt Bors (Editor); et al
- "A Quick and Easy Guide to Queer Identities," by Maddie Gulliani
- "This One Summer," by Mariko Tamaki
- "We Are the Ants," by David Hutchinson
- "The Kite Runner," by Khaled Hosseini
- "More Happy Than Not," by Adam Silvera
- "What Girls Are Made of," by Elana Arnold
- "So You've Been Publicly Shamed," by Jon Ronson
- "Last Night at the Telegraph Club," by Malinda Lo
- "Flamer," by Mike Curato
- "Girls Like Us," by Gail Giles
- "A Bike Like Sergios," by Maribeth Boelts
- "A Boy Called Bat," Elana Arnold
- "A Court of Thorns and Roses," Sarah Maas

- "A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin," by Jennifer Bryant
- "Ace of Spades," by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé
- "An Ocean A Part, a World Away," by Lensey Namioka

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*Correction, clarification: This story has been updated to clarify the list of books included here was based off of books that have gone under review in other counties. Further, this story more accurately reflects Amie Bowman's response when FauquierNow inquired about the books Moms for Liberty is seeking to remove.*

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James Jarvis



[https://www.fauquiernow.com/news/education/veteran-fauquier-county-teachers-thankful-for-pay-raises-but-argue-it-s-not-enough/article\\_941cf95a-09bc-11ed-a477-df3c4888a376.html](https://www.fauquiernow.com/news/education/veteran-fauquier-county-teachers-thankful-for-pay-raises-but-argue-it-s-not-enough/article_941cf95a-09bc-11ed-a477-df3c4888a376.html)

FEATURED

# Veteran Fauquier County teachers thankful for pay raises but argue it's not enough

James Jarvis, [jjarvis@FauquierNow.com](mailto:jjarvis@FauquierNow.com)  
Jul 22, 2022



Chad Patterson, who has worked for Fauquier County Public Schools since 2013 and currently teaches at Mountain Vista Governor's School, told FauquierNow that with his new pay raise he will be able to quit his other part-time jobs, including Door Dashing on weekends.

James Jarvis | FauquierNow

Chad Patterson said he was relieved when he heard Fauquier County Public Schools included a 13 percent average pay raise for teachers in its adopted fiscal 2023 budget. For him, a pay raise means he may be able to stop picking up part-time jobs, and he'll get to spend more time with his two children, at least for now.

“This pay increase is the best that I have received with FCPS1 during my eight years in the county,” he said.

But, he added, “It does not align with my market value as an educator. And with inflation at 8.5 [percent], the 13 [percent] raise means that my overall purchasing power will increase by 4.5.”

Patterson, who has worked as a public school teacher in Fauquier since 2013, currently teaches at Mountain Vista Governor’s School in Warrenton and, beginning this fall, will also be working part-time as an adjunct professor at Laurel Ridge Community College on the Middletown Campus.

Thanks to the recent pay bump, Patterson said he would be able to quit Door Dashing on weekends, grading College Board AP essays each summer, and he plans to work fewer athletic events at Liberty High School during the school year. But Patterson said if Fauquier public school teachers had received regular pay raises over the last decade, he and his colleagues would not have needed to take on other jobs in the first place.

“I am fortunate to have a spouse that has a good salary and benefits package in the Air Force,” Patterson added. “Otherwise, I would have to find a different career, despite enjoying my current career path as an educator.”

 Patterson’s story is not uncommon in Fauquier County.

Several other veteran teachers who spoke to FauquierNow – some of whom asked to be anonymous for fear of their comments causing blowback – said they were also glad about the raises because it would allow them to save for retirement, purchase basic necessities, offset inflation and potentially buy a home. But the long-stagnant wages have made living in the county they teach more and more difficult.

"I was born and raised in Fauquier. Went to elementary, middle and high school in Fauquier. I came back after graduating college to teach in Fauquier," one teacher told FauquierNow. "I have 16 years of experience as a teacher ... all of those years in Fauquier. I have two degrees. The sad thing is I cannot afford to live in Fauquier even though I teach here."

Several local teachers said they are increasingly feeling financially squeezed because the cost of living in Fauquier has risen so dramatically, particularly over the last two years.

Patterson said that with the new pay raise, his yearly income will increase by \$8,240 for a total annual income of \$66,285. According to monthly median home sales prices data collected by the Virginia Realtors Association, in January 2020 the median price of a home sold in Fauquier was approximately \$435,000. Two years later, it has jumped to \$626,000, a 30 percent increase.

And it's not only more expensive to buy a home, but it's also become more costly to rent in Fauquier. As of March 2022, the median rent was \$2,425 per month, according to data provided by Greater Piedmont REALTORS. In 2019, the median rent in Fauquier was \$1,281, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Patterson, who currently lives in Bealeton, said his salary before the pay raises was enough to pay the mortgage on his home (31 percent of Patterson's income), utility bills and home/auto insurance. But without the help of his wife, he wouldn't be able to afford much else.



“Without my wife’s income, our family would not be able to buy groceries or gas, save for retirement and have any form of basic necessities, let alone have any leisure time/activities with the income that I bring home after deductions ...,” he said.


Andrea Martens, formerly an English as a second language teacher at Pearson Elementary who recently left Fauquier to work for Manassas City Public Schools, argued that it’s not worth it to continue working in Fauquier if she can work somewhere else nearby, such as Prince William, where the cost of living is similar and teachers can make more money.

Martens, who worked as a teacher in Fauquier for the last 11 years, told FauquierNow that she tolerated lower wages because she enjoyed being in Fauquier and working in a smaller classroom.

But she noted the last few years have been “incredibly difficult and exhausting.” The constant criticism teachers received from parents, in addition to trying to adapt to virtual learning, Martens said, were the final straw.

“And so I felt this year constantly, no matter how hard I worked, I felt inadequate, and I got tired of that feeling,” she said. “So that inspired me to like, just look into [working in] other counties.”

By Patterson’s calculations, if he decided to work for Prince William County Public Schools, he could potentially be making \$74,630, which is a little over \$8,000 more than he is making now in Fauquier, based on his level of experience. In Loudoun County, he could make some \$84,000, nearly \$18,000 more than he makes in Fauquier.

 Similarly, Martens said she made about \$53,000 in Fauquier before the pay raise. With the pay raises, she would have made approximately \$59,000. However, working in Manassas, Martens said she will be making about \$67,000

and \$86,000 a year at retirement (if she stayed in Fauquier she would make \$67,000 a year at retirement).

“I think that what I have heard from other teachers is that most of them are happy that we got a pay raise,” she said. “But for the teachers that have been here a long time, they didn't get much more of a raise than the teachers who have been here two years.”

“And so it's not really addressing the compression issues at the end of the pay scale,” Martens added. “I think if you're just starting out ... [the pay raise] really helps, but if you've been with the county for 15 or 20 years, then you're still getting paid a lot less than in a neighboring county.”

According to the Virginia Department of Education, compared to teacher pay in Fauquier (\$54,450), the average teacher salaries in Loudoun (\$75,368) and Prince William County (\$73,250) were about \$20,000 higher as of fiscal 2022. And although the Fauquier School Board boosted teacher salaries by about 13 percent (to roughly \$61,000 on average), Loudoun and Prince William also adopted 5 and 7 percent teacher pay raises in their fiscal 2023 budgets.

According to Janelle Downes, Fauquier's director of human resources, there have been 124 “teacher separations” during the 2021-2022 school year. Currently, she said, there are 51 teacher vacancies.

Superintendent Dr. David Jeck told FauquierNow that he and the School Board acknowledge the challenging situations teachers have had to face, especially over the last few years. And rewarding teachers with pay raises, he noted, is not just about compensation but also about respect.

“This argument that I've heard, especially in the last year and a half, is that, well, if they want to make more money, they ought to just go somewhere else,” he said. “Well, no, we don't want them to go somewhere else. We want them to


stay here. We want to make ourselves more competitive.”



David Jeck is the superintendent of Fauquier County Public Schools.

FauquierNow file photo

Several county supervisors who spoke to FauquierNow said they favor teacher pay raises, but cautioned that Fauquier won't be able to compete with teacher pay in surrounding counties unless it raises taxes, which they argue are already too high.

 “You saw how much taxes went up this year, how much more are we gonna have to raise taxes to make the pay happen,” Scott District Supervisor Holder Trumbo said. “Everybody who wants to have more does it at the expense of

someone else who will have less, and that is the most unhappy equilibrium that the Board of Supervisors struggles with every year when we are trying to set a budget.”

Trumbo said he does not want to “make light of” the teacher pay situation in Fauquier. Nevertheless, he noted Fauquier is also not an outlier regarding teacher pay. On average, he said, teachers across Virginia are paid “very low compared to other states.”

According to the Virginia Department of Education 2020–2021 Teacher Salary Survey Results, released in January 2022, the average teacher pay in Virginia (\$59,874) ranks 28 out of 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Compared to other surrounding counties, Fauquier spent 45 percent, \$95.8 million of its fiscal 2023 general fund operating expenditures on school funding. In comparison, according to each of the counties' respective budgets, Prince William spent 48 percent, \$715.1 million, and Loudoun spent 43 percent, \$1.5 billion.

However, Fauquier spends nearly twice as much of its local allocation per student (\$8,537) than Prince William does (\$4,923), which gets more state funding for education, according to the Virginia Department of Education superintendent's 2020–021 Annual Report.

Trumbo said one of the trade-offs of living in a smaller county with lower taxes is that there are not as many resources to fund things like teacher pay raises. And he noted that teachers with larger classes will get paid more than those with smaller classes.

“We are not...and I hope we will never be Northern Virginia,” he said. “And the problem is you can't have all of the benefits with none of the downside. Northern Virginia pays a lot more but comes at a much higher cost.”

Center District Supervisor Chris Granger told FauquierNow that he agrees raising personal property and real estate taxes is not the answer, nor is doing more residential development, which he says would hurt the county's rural character.

But Granger conceded that Fauquier would likely lose quality teachers in the long term due to the pay gap.


“But you can't have the same pay as Culpeper County, because then what incentive is there to work [in Fauquier] where it's more expensive to live...,” he said.

One solution Granger suggested was slowly growing the county's industrial and commercial sectors, which he says would bring in more money to fund public education and preserve Fauquier's rural aesthetic.

“As long as we allow [the commercial and industrial sectors] to continue to grow, so to speak, and encourage growth in those sectors, we're going to be able to keep up with teacher pay scales, school construction, public safety pay scales ... because those are the big areas that cost money even if the county's not growing, which it's really not growing that much,” he said.

Granger noted he doesn't want to “blanket the county with data centers,” but he said there has to be a “balance” with some commercial tax base.

“And people need to understand that is when you stand against good economic development, really at the end of the day, what's taking the biggest brunt of it is public education,” he said.

 Patterson said he is not interested in leaving Fauquier to go to Prince William or Loudoun because he has had bad experiences working for larger school systems that, in the past, “micromanaged” him.

But he noted if, for instance, his wife lost her job, “my hand would be forced. I would have to go to a Fairfax or a Loudoun County ... to make more money just because I would need to provide for my family.”

Although he is grateful to the county and the superintendent, who advocated for higher pay raises, Patterson said that he hopes in the future the Board of Supervisors and School Board can work together to “take care of” the teaching community.

“We are a wealthy community in the end in Fauquier County compared to everyone else in the nation,” he said. “So it shouldn't be a constant battle.”

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***Correction:*** *This story has been updated and corrected to reflect that Andrea Martens works for Manassas City Public Schools, not Prince William County Public Schools.*

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James Jarvis

