OMNI NEWSLETTER #6 ON VIOLENCE USA, June 8, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett, OMNI BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE.
 (#1 Feb. 25, 2008; #2 August 20, 2011; #3 April 8, 2012; #4 July 26, 2012; #5 Aug. 22, 2012)

See OMNI Newsletters on International DAY to End Violence Against Women, part of OMNI’s National/International DAYS Project.

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/ Here is the link to the Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/ Many of OMNI’s topical newsletters confront different kinds of violence: battering, bullying, causes of wars, consequences of wars, death penalty, empire, hatred, individual wars, International DAY to End Violence Against Women, militarism, torture, women, etc. Also see the newsletters on resistance to violence: Dept. of Peace (proposed), nonviolence, conflict resolution, diplomacy, negotiation, peacemakers, UN, etc.

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Since 9/11, the war on terror and the campaign for homeland security have increasingly mimicked the tactics of the enemies they sought to crush. Violence and punishment as both
a media spectacle and a bone-crushing reality have become prominent and influential forces shaping U.S. society. As the boundaries between “the realms of war and civil life have collapsed,” social relations and the public services needed to make them viable have been increasingly privatized and militarized. The logic of profitability works its magic in channeling the public funding of warfare and organized violence into universities, market-based service providers, Hollywood cinema, cable television, and deregulated contractors. The metaphysics of war and associated forms of violence now creep into every aspect of U.S. society.

As the preferred “instrument of statecraft,” war and its intensifying production of violence crosses borders, time, space, and places. The result is that the United States “has become a ‘culture of war’...engulfed in fear and violence [and trapped by a military metaphysics in which] homeland security matters far more than social security.” Seemingly without any measure of self-restraint, state-sponsored violence now flows and regroups effortlessly, contaminating both foreign and domestic policies. The criticism of the military-industrial complex, along with its lobbyists and merchants of death, that was raised by President Eisenhower seems to have been relegated to the trash can of history. Instead of being disparaged as a death machine engaged in the organized production of violence, the military-industrial complex is defended as a valuable jobs program and a measure of national pride and provides a powerful fulcrum for the permanent warfare state.

It gets worse. One consequence of the permanent warfare state is evident in the recent public revelations concerning war crimes committed by U.S. government forces. These include the indiscriminate killings of Afghan civilians by U.S. drone aircraft; the barbaric murder of Afghan children and peasant farmers by U.S. infantrymen infamously labeled as “the Kill Team”; disclosures concerning four U.S. marines urinating on dead Taliban fighters; and the uncovering of photographs showing “more than a dozen soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division’s Fourth Brigade Combat Team, along with some Afghan security forces, posing with the severed hands and legs of Taliban attackers in Zabul Province in 2010.” And, shocking even for those acquainted with standard military combat, there is the case of Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales, who “walked off a small combat outpost in Kandahar province and slaughtered 17 villagers, most of them women and children, and later walked back to his base and turned himself in.” Mind-numbing violence, war crimes, and indiscriminate military attacks on civilians on the part of the U.S. government are far from new and date back to infamous acts such as the air attacks on civilians in Dresden along with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War.
For those of you who volunteered to help out Ladd Everitt with the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence—thanks very much. I forwarded names, and he's taking over from here.

A new posting on Gunsense, which you'll find here.

(http://readwrite.typepad.com/gunsense/2013/06/gunsense-india-nonviolence.html)

The long and short of it: I'm heading to India with students for The TEXT Program, and so will be out for the month of June, but I'll be taking notes on nonviolence! And maybe get online a little while I'm there.

Sidney Burris, Gunsense: A Declaration of Dependence, May 28, 2013

Dear Folks:
As Arkansas colleges & universities have voted unanimously, so far, to opt out of concealed carry, I've gathered together a few thoughts here about the future. (http://readwrite.typepad.com/gunsense/2013/05/gunsense-guncontrol-nonviolence.html)

Thanks for your support over the past 6 months! Sidney
For those of you who volunteered to help out Ladd Everitt with the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence—thanks very much. I forwarded names, and he's taking over from here.

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month of June, but I'll be taking notes on nonviolence! And maybe get online a little while I'm there.

Gunsense  May 4, 2013

Sidney Burris

Dear Folks:

A new post about the road ahead after Manchin-Toomey, up now on Gunsense. It's already appeared on the Preventing Newtown website, but for those who missed it there, you can find it here.

GUNSENSE—WAYNE'S WORLD & THE NEW NRA: A VIOLENT FANTASY  3-13-13

Dear Folks:

I've put together a mailing list based on the gun petition I started a while ago, and if you're receiving this email, you've indicated that you wanted to be on that list. The blog, Gunsense, that I've started will be dedicated to keeping us all informed about the gun culture in Arkansas and beyond, as it evolves. Or devolves, as the case may be. I will from to time address related issues, as well.

I'll notify you when a new posting goes up. Here's the latest one: http://bit.ly/YYjfsD.

Thanks very much for your support.

Sidney Burris
Director, Fulbright College Honors Program
Professor, Department of English
517 Old Main
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville AR 72701
Work: (479) 575-2509
Two posts up on **Gunsense 3-15-13**: one dealing with the fear and paranoia recently surfacing in Oregon ([here](#)), and the other with the explosive exchange yesterday between Senators Feinstein and Cruz ([here](#)).

Both reveal the poisonous climate of fear and paranoia that we're currently negotiating.

Feel free to share these postings as you wish.

Thanks,

Sidney

4-3-13  New posting up at **Gunsense**. You can access it [here](#). Sort of clearing the air in the interest of establishing credibility.  Sidney

Dear Folks: 4-11-'3

**Senator Mark Pryor** voted today to block discussion on the gun-control bill that received bi-partisan support. Only one other Democratic Senator joined him, so discussion will continue, and we will continue to hope for the best.

In the meantime, I was wondering to myself why America seems to be such a violent country, and I've posted my thoughts on **Gunsense**. You can read them [here](#).

A friend of mine, who's a journalist, thinker, and all-around interrogator of received wisdom, got a [letter from the NRA](#) that went out to our elected officials. I've linked to a PDF of it, and you can find that posting [here](#). It provides a real insight into the NRA and its machinations.

You'll also notice a **new logo** on our blog's right-hand sidebar: thanks to one of my talented students in the nonviolence class for doing this in, like, an evening. We're very happy with it, and we hope it becomes widely identified with common gunsense.

Cheers (I guess), Sidney
Having been a one-time marathoner, a fan of the Boston marathon, and finish line spectator, I was in shock by reports of the two bombs going off at the 2:50 mark at this same finish-line. My disbelief gradually evolved into angry thoughts at
those who made and ignited the bombs. I have never felt such intense outrage at any mass murder. I was additionally upset because Boston is a “home” for me. I know Boston’s streets well, especially Boylston Street, since I arrived in the fall of 1965 as a college freshman and lived around the corner. When I tried to grasp that the Marathon had been bombed, my mind froze and began to seethe in disbelief.

We know now a lot more about who bombed the finish line and, sordidly, why. But what is of eternal concern for me, is how state officials and police, respond to dangerous homicidal people once the murderous deed is done and how different their response usually is from treating murder with nonviolent means. Sadly, state officials and police are not trained to practice methods that de-escalate violence, especially in crises that are life-threatening.

So, I wonder how the gospel of nonviolence would teach us to deal with perpetrators of mass murder when they are still at large. The state’s police force, kicks into immediate high gear not with understanding “why” something happens, so much as “that it happened” and to protect the public by finding, arresting or killing the dangerous criminal. This may seem fair and sensible while the suspects are on the run. Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev bombed the Marathon that killed three, maimed hundreds, later, murdering an MIT policeman. They ended their killing spree with an action thriller-like fight-to -the death shoot-out with police in which Tamerlan, the older brother, was killed. Dzhokhar, a nineteen year old, drove off, ditched the car-jacked vehicle in Watertown and ran. It was axiomatic that these men should be considered “armed and extremely dangerous.”

However, if all we see is “armed and extremely dangerous,” then we are very likely to perpetuate the fatal flaw that we humans have been committing since the dawn of human conflict—fighting violence and viciousness with more violence and viciousness. A “my life or theirs” fear of murderers too often makes the murderer more desperate and dangerous; further, it convinces the police that killing the killer is the only “safe option.” In a nonviolent intervention, on the other hand, a mediator is more likely to consider weighing all of the factors in the case, focused on listening, and not just pursuing monstrous killers on the run.

These factors include an important question: Why did this happen? Krystle Campbell was one of the three victims who were killed. Her mother, who spoke at a press conference, was so grief-stricken that she could barely be heard. Her most memorable phrase was “I just don’t understand.” She was saying, in essence: “This was senseless violence and now my innocent daughter is dead. Why do I have to suffer losing the daughter I love so much?” Every sane,
sensitive human, especially a parent, can relate deeply to her anguished feelings.

**Men and Homicide**

Nevertheless, if I ponder this mother’s question: “**how could this happen?**”—answers start to surface. The first clue of primary importance is that these brothers are male. Homicide is a male statistic: 90% of all homicides are committed by males. 62 mass murders have been committed throughout the US in the last 30 years; 61 have been perpetrated by men.

Why do males commit 90% of all murders? What are we teaching our boys? From Columbine on forward, these male shooters of all ages have been violent video game addicts. What is that steady drip of sadistic murder doing to their souls? Minds are bathed in the euphoria of killing other humans, even if the story line seems reasonable; good guys always kill bad guys. First reports of the personalities of the brothers depict them as full of machismo, both pumped with muscles and aggression. Older brother, Tamerlan boxed and the younger wrestled. Although wrestling seems benign next to boxing, both brothers seemed advanced at “dominate and defeat your opponent with violence” sports. Tragically, there is no particular alarm here because the ethos of the popular culture around them condones the shooting violence-fantasy world of video games and awards men lavishly for their athletic prowess, however violent.

What kind of male role models influenced these brothers in the culture they were nurtured in as boys? Their father was very connected to his Chechen identity. He could easily have instilled rage in his boys at the Russian oppression of Chechnya and Vladimir Putin’s murderous crushing of the people’s revolution for independence, an oppression that goes back to the 1940s. These political revolutions and counter revolutions are primarily male perpetrated violence and revenge with each side assuring itself that it is on the right side of history.

Psychologists who have been analyzing the brothers’ behavior have said that they both had indications of a confused ethnic and cultural identity. Am I Chechen, Islamic, or American? Psychologists in the field of adolescent male development, surmise that if young men are painfully confused about their “true identity,” many find a strong attraction to identify themselves as the oppressed victim, with the deluded feeling that their life has been ruined by “someone else”. The brothers’ mother strongly encouraged Tamerlan to practice Islamic faith,
to keep him “out of trouble.” New reports suggest that the mother had recent, growing sympathies with radical Islam, began wearing a hijab and cited conspiracy theories that 9/11 was a US plot to make Americans hate Moslems. These impressionable immigrant boys are now relating to an identity of oppressed Muslims of ethnic Chechen origin, with simmering dislike of America. According to Dzhokhar, both brothers were outraged with our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This could be a volatile identity mix, with outlets of extreme violence by males as holy justice for the powerless Muslim.

President Obama is another male player in the equation was center stage in Boston two days after the marathon bombings. He came to offer presidential support and sympathy to a city in trauma and family members paralyzed with grief. As usual, his speechmaking is so easily delivered–tough and tender. He rallies Boston to stand tall. He reassures us that we will find these cowards and bring them to justice. They will be sorry that they picked a tough town like Boston. He appears to be the Great Statesman at the crucible hour, delivering his words with a Black Baptist cadence and a convincing passion, an amazing moment of political oratory. Amazing too, how well most Presidential “Men” can compartmentalize the moment. In his job back in Washington DC, under the cover of “classified,” he signs off on drone bombings designed to kill “surgically” terrorists and jihadist enemy combatants throughout the Middle East. Although there are zero casualties on our side, drones often miss their mark and kill women, children and innocent men at weddings or in their own homes in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. These acts of aggressive killing and injuring don’t rebound back from the Arab and Islamic world to us in any way? To see the whole picture of “why this happened” we had better think again.

In the practice of nonviolence, we begin with an echo of Jesus’ warning by saying that “all violence we send out, ricochets back. Send out hate and murder with our bullets and bombs and those bullets and bombs will someday reign down on us.” Obama travels to Colorado, Arizona, Newtown and now Boston, to comfort trauma victims of mass murder. His flaws as a comforter, while at the same time, the one who is responsible for killing innocents, are fatal. He is another American President who models the reliance on violence and killing. The brothers from Cambridge could easily have been taking “my violence is good violence” cues from the many of these male authorities around them.

**Peaceful Negotiation in Great Danger?**

The capture of Dzhokhar in Watertown was another telling moment. Unlike the shootout that
killed Tamerlan, capturing Dzhokhar was an entirely different circumstance. Those in charge of the case, from Mayor Menino to Governor Patrick, to the Police Chief of operations, were in favor of capturing him alive. The national security questions of “why he did it and who were his accomplices” would be definitively answered only if this were so. These motives were not pure enough because they ignored crucial psychological and spiritual realities. They include the fact that, one more “killing the killer” strategy would succeed only in adding one more family in trauma, one more strategy of killing, in a city already overwhelmed with traumatic suffering and death.

If this nineteen year old in a panic took his own life, this real life drama ends in his nihilistic sorrow of self destruction. An important nonviolent verity applies here: “Nothing ultimately good and hopeful can come from an act of violence. ...ever.” Violence is a hopeless aggression that can only bring human beings suffering; in this case, turning SWAT teams into swift and efficient killers and intimidating the hunted perpetrator into suicide.

Having witnessed the efficacy of nonviolent conflict resolution, I continually puzzled over how the police could best direct the safe capture of Dzhokhar. The evidence shows that he was unarmed while hiding in a boat. Why then did the police close in with a show of force with what must have seemed to Dzhokhar like a 1,000 rounds of ammunition of police fire power? The only “words” of negotiation here came in the form of a deafening din of gunfire. The logic of the gun blasts? “Your only chance of survival is immediate and absolute surrender.” But, if you want to preserve the possibility of a more reliably, peaceful outcome with this armed perpetrator who doesn't appear suicidal, it is most effectively carried out by someone experienced in mediation with nonviolent methods.

In listening to “police officials” live on the radio, as they moved in for the kill or capture, it was clear from interviews with police spokespersons that they would not put themselves at any risk to capture him. “It is much safer to just kill him if he appears at all dangerous” was the drift of what the police officials were saying as they got closer to Dzhokhar.

But what might a nonviolent negotiator bring to the moment? First would be compassion for the hellish prison of this fugitive, even if it was of his own making. And yes, he could be hair-trigger dangerous. In a life threatening crisis like this I think of a powerful question that unlocks the death trap of enemy hatred and fear: “Why is the enemy suffering?” Dzhokhar and his brother, Tamerlan, had just spent several days in the dark hell of inflicting suffering and death. As this kill or be killed drama came down to its final hours, their behavior became
more desperate and murderous, ending in a bizarre shoot-out with police in Watertown, killing Tamerlan. This left Dzhokar all alone, wounded and surrounded by thousands of police.

**Mother as Nonviolent Negotiator**

How might a nonviolent negotiator prepare for this moment? He or she might approach Dzhokhar as would a parent of a teenager gone very wrong. A mother’s unconditional love for her son might make the best negotiator here. A woman with a mother’s touch can communicate with a compassionate tone. Were Dzhokhar armed and ready to defend himself, she could speak in a disarming way, using words of calm, reassuring concern. “Are you all right? Are you bleeding?” Disarming a teenage boy with the reassurance of a mother could immediately de-escalate the volatile tension of the crime scene and maximize the potential for the male not to take his own life or fight to the death. With compassion, all words and tone of voice of the negotiators must be enlisted to persuade the surrounded perpetrator that to surrender peacefully is in his best interest.

Non-threatening proposals are methodically patient and respectful. Intimidating through threat has the swift kick of impatient fear. Males trapped as victimizing villains have to know their safety is assured by surrender. If all they will ultimately face is the Federal Death Penalty and certain exacting of a pound of their flesh, then murder/suicide will always be preferred. Underlying the entire nonviolent method of negotiation is the rejection of one-sided blame, using fear-driven ultimatums and threats. We nonviolent practitioners reject this airtight case of blame which keeps us trapped in self-righteousness (I am not to blame); hooked on bitterness at what they have done and the conditioned use of revenge that will stop them and teach them (everyone?) a lesson. These are all life-threatening directions and won’t easily convince the violent person to cease being a threat or to surrender.

I have witnessed a team of police subdue and capture and individual who had crashed his car near our community driveway in the middle of the night. Dave, who was an intern with us, woke us at 2 am, to tell us of a man who was moaning and walking behind the main house. We could not locate him after an extensive search of the woods. I called 911 to see if the police would help find him. My concern was that he was injured or unconscious. Five police arrived with dogs. They found him instantly, but that wasn’t enough. Guns had to be drawn; police screamed profanities and threats to immediately subdue the intruder. I learned an important lesson in relying on police tactics. Because the nonviolent mediator is not fixed on the guilt of the wrongdoer, he/she is freed up emotionally to concentrate skillfully on their
state of mind. Minus the fear that leads to counter-productive aggression, the dialogue with the fugitive is more concerned with quieting aggression and panic, than in threatening with violent consequences and tough talk.

Disarming ourselves is the key to the method here, using words and that persuade: “We do not want to hurt you.” Resolutions from respectful dialogue with the fugitive take more time than screaming, shooting, subduing and killing. But, agreements made in assurance of well being are more reliable and lasting than twisting arms until fugitives give up and much safer for all parties concerned as well.

Another maxim of unconditional compassion is in effect: “When someone makes me suffer unjustly, I don’t demonize or retaliate. I look within.” Now, what would I find if I looked within? Probably, an intense fear and resentment of the “enemy” who has hurt me. Behind that fear is another one—a morbid fear of my own suffering and death. Paradoxically, my own well-being is best protected, not with revenge, but with concern for the life of this “dangerous fugitive.” If my own fear is under manageable control, a compassion for both me and the perpetrator can now operate effectively.

The person in charge of the negotiation might wonder what is driving his madness and his desire to maim or kill. We are learning that Dzhokhar was apparently under the violent spell of his older brother. Psychologists speculate that because his father left him to return to Russia at 16 that Tamerlan could likely have become the “not to be questioned father.” Good crisis negotiation sympathetically honors that humans can frequently behave violently out of deep emotional scarring.

In the wellspring of compassionate listening and speaking, a resolution also comes from faith in a forgiving God. Were I more susceptible to the violence of my culture, more swayed by ethnic hatreds, were I more brainwashed by an older brother’s religious delusions and hatreds, I too might be driven to the same unthinkable acts. “I am my brother’s keeper, even when he is murdering,” I must confess. Yes, I am to love this “enemy” and to help him heal his murderous delusions and hatreds. Yes, nonviolent healing love is God’s love and yes, it may risk my life, but it is the same risk those first responders made by running toward the danger to themselves to rescue the injured and to save, not their own lives but the lives of others.

The most important conclusion? It is possible to disarm and heal lethal passions with nonviolent compassion. Three weeks after Tamerlan was killed, no funeral parlor came forward to prepare the body for burial. Peter Stephan at a Worcester funeral parlor, agreed without
recompense, to take the body. In the face of heated opposition, Stephan stood up to this opposition, saying “we must respectfully bury the dead regardless of what they did in life.” Then no cemetery would bury him. Martha Mullen of Virginia responded immediately to this crisis. She located a Muslim cemetery in Virginia, where Tamerlan is now buried. Her rationale? “I am a Christian, I must live my faith even when it is not popular. I acted because Jesus said love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”

Here is a new **Progressive Secretary letter**. You will be able to edit your name, address, etc. in the next step.

This letter supports a campaign by various organizations to **reinstate the Assault Weapons Ban which expired in 2004**. It will be sent to the President and to Congress. Assault weapons are not designed for hunting, nor for individual protection.

These weapons are designed with high-capacity ammunition magazines capable of firing up to 30 rounds of ammunition without reloading, and are meant specifically for military use in combat. The destruction caused by these weapons is far greater than with ordinary guns.

Senator Dianne Feinstein will introduce a bill to reinstate the federal assault weapons ban which was allowed to “sunset” in 2004 after having been in effect for ten years. She believes that weapons of war do not belong on our streets, in our classrooms, in our schools or in our movie theaters.

Senator Feinstein is correct. Please permanently reinstate the federal assault weapons ban.

Click here to send this letter or to learn more (you can edit the subject or the letter itself in the next step, if you wish). [http://action.progressivesecretary.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6774&First_Name=David&Last_Name=Druding&Email=druding@juno.com&Street=1410%20Cato%20Springs%20Rd.&Street_2=1410%20Cato%20Springs%20Rd.&City=Fayetteville&State=AR&Zip=72701&Country=US&Prefix=mr](http://action.progressivesecretary.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6774&First_Name=David&Last_Name=Druding&Email=druding@juno.com&Street=1410%20Cato%20Springs%20Rd.&Street_2=1410%20Cato%20Springs%20Rd.&City=Fayetteville&State=AR&Zip=72701&Country=US&Prefix=mr).

Sincerely,
Kathie Turner, Director
ELAINE MCARDLE, “NEWTOWN GIVES GUN-CONTROL ADVOCATE’S WORK NEW URGENCY.” *UU WORLD* (Summer 2013). Smith, a member of UU in Devon, PA, and a leader in Heeding God’s Call, heedinggodscall.org, organizes against assault rifles and for laws appropriate to a “civil society.”

DONALD SKINNER, “MASSACHUSETTS CONGREGATION FUNDS TOWN GUN BUYBACKS.” *UU WORLD* (Summer 2013). The UU in Bedford, Mass., started the first fund for the town’s buyback program.

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**The NRA and you**

*Forwarded by Samuel Totten*

From: Michelle Ringuette, Amnesty International USA <alerts@takeaction.amnestyusa.org>  
Date: Thu, Jan 17, 2013 at 3:42 PM  
Subject: FW: The NRA and you  
To: Samuel Totten <samstertotten@gmail.com>

Dear Samuel,

We need you to stand with us. A campaign of misinformation and lies - orchestrated by the National Rifle Association's leadership - is one of the biggest obstacles to adopting the Arms Trade Treaty, which would regulate the sale of arms to the likes of war criminals, dictators and other human rights abusers. **Thousands of people have already taken a stand against the NRA. Now we need you.**
“Gun Control and Arms Control” by Lawrence Wittner, December 30, 2012.

Gun control issues are remarkably similar to arms control issues, for both deal with the problem posed by the availability of weapons.

How to Make Your Own AR-15

Download PdfMicroFicheGun owners have long been the hypochondriacs of American politics. Over the past twenty years, the gun-rights movement has won just about every battle it has fought; states have passed at least a hundred laws loosening gun restrictions since President Obama took office. Yet the National Rifle Association has continued to insist that government confiscation of privately owned firearms is nigh. After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in District of Columbia v. Heller, in 2008, that comprehensive gun bans were “off the table,” the NRA insisted that because gun owners were becoming complacent, “our firearms freedoms may be in greater danger.” The NRA’s alarmism helped maintain an active membership, but the strategy was risky: sooner or later, gun guys might have realized that they’d been had. Then came the shootings at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, and at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, followed swiftly by the nightmare the NRA had been promising for decades: a dedicated push at every level of government for new gun laws. The gun-rights movement was now that most insufferable of species: a hypochondriac taken suddenly, seriously ill. [At the time I was unable to acquire the full essay from Harper’s even though I am a subscriber and have a password for their archive. This essay suggests how the AR-15 both complicates and simplifies the struggle against guns. –Dick]

END VIOLENCE NEWSLETTER #6

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Dick Bennett
My blog: War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

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