



FISCAL YEAR  
2018 ANNUAL REPORT ***BE NIMBLE***

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# VISION: A SOCIALLY EQUITABLE AND JUST WORLD.

VISION: A SOCIALLY EQUITABLE AND JUST WORLD.

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**VISION:** A SOCIALLY  
EQUITABLE AND JUST WORLD.





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*EBS (Educational Broadband Service)*  
*The Federal Communications Commission (FCC)*  
*showed great foresight about the role technology*  
*would play in education when, in 1963, it reserved*  
*a spectrum band (now called EBS) exclusively to*  
*support educational institutions and nonprofit*  
*entities whose missions are educational.*  
*Spectrum, a finite natural resource, is extremely*  
*valuable – it is what fuels our wireless services*  
*and our increasingly connected lives – and it has*  
*become a crucial part of education.*

## **2018: VOQAL BE NIMBLE**

Voqal is a national collaboration of EBS (Educational Broadband Service) licensees that actively works to advance social equity by creating an educated and engaged public.

As a collective of EBS licensees, Voqal is committed to using the airwaves to benefit the public. With resources afforded by spectrum use agreements, we make grants and impact investments, expand internet access and digital equity, offer fellowships and protect the public airwaves.

Voqal's efforts focus on the education and enrichment of all, not just those who are well off socially, economically and politically. While some of our programs serve traditional educational entities like K-12 schools, Voqal embraces a broader view of education and aims to ensure equal access to knowledge to foster a stronger, healthier democracy.

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**MISSION: ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY  
BY BUILDING AN EDUCATED, EMPOWERED  
AND ENGAGED PUBLIC.**

NIMBLE VOQAL  
QUICK TO PIVOT

VOQAL BE NIMBLE. AGILE. QUICK TO PIVOT.



## ***NIMBLE. AGILE. QUICK TO PIVOT.***

As Education Broadband Service (EBS) license holders, Voqal generally – and our flagship project Mobile Citizen specifically – operates within the telecommunications landscape. EBS is not known to be a particularly fast-moving industry. In fact, it can be a bit of a snooze.

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, however, the ability of Voqal to convert ideas into actions that rapidly addressed social equity issues was more important than ever.

Mobile Citizen was flooded with requests for donations from nonprofit organizations that didn't budget for the impact the administration was going to have on its constituents.

The unexpected U.S. travel ban led to the first request for immediate assistance. Nonprofit legal groups servicing immigrants contacted Mobile Citizen desperate to get mobile hotspots and uncapped internet access into the hands of their lawyers who were on the ground at the airports helping protect the rights of those being targeted.

During this time of crisis, it became clear there is a need for short-term loans of free devices and internet service for groups rallying against attacks on social equity. So Mobile Citizen Street Ready was born. As it evolved, we also realized there is an opportunity for disaster support as well, something we learned first-hand when hurricanes Irma and Harvey hit last year.

Our work in fiscal year 2018 – including the examples in the following pages – illustrate how Voqal and Mobile Citizen are always looking for ways to react more nimbly. While the intricacies of spectrum and the public airwaves may seem academic, social justice is lively work and Voqal strives to respond to opportunities and meet needs, as they arise.



*Cassie*

*-Cassie Bair  
Chief Business Development Officer, Mobile Citizen*

# VOQAL ENVISIONS A MORE SOCIALLY EQUITABLE WORLD.

VOQAL ENVISIONS A MORE SOCIALLY EQUITABLE WORLD.



## **MAKING GRANTS: RESPONDING TO ATTACKS ON EQUAL RIGHTS**

*The past couple of years have been a difficult time for many underrepresented groups. Political forces have conspired to deny their voices and limit their rights. Fortunately, Voqal has been well-equipped to assist the groups on the front lines of the fight to protect those most at risk.*

### **EMPOWERING YOUNG LATINOS IN TEXAS**

Jolt is a Texas-based, multi-issue organization that builds the political power and influence of Latinos in American democracy. With support from Voqal, Jolt quickly built a movement of young Latinos aimed at pushing back against policies like SB4 in Texas, one of the harshest anti-immigration laws in the United States, that reduces the rights of Latinos.

The effective empowerment of Jolt's members is perhaps best exemplified by 16-year-old Viri Sanchez, a DACA recipient who joined Jolt because she was tired of seeing her community attacked by state legislators. Sanchez graduated from the Jolt's Leadership Institute course and helped lead its Quinceañera protest at the Texas Capitol. This protest and performance against SB4 used song, dance and poetry by Jolt members to highlight the problems with the law. Led by individuals like Sanchez, the event went viral reaching an estimated 50 million Americans. While the fight to repeal discriminatory policies like SB4 isn't over, this effort showed the true power of Latino youth to protect the rights of their community.

### **LEVERAGING LATINX POWER TO PROTECT NET NEUTRALITY**

Presente.org advances Latinx power and creates winning campaigns that amplify Latinx voices and foster inspiration for freedom, equity and justice. Over the last year, Presente.org's political arm, Presente Action has been the leading Latinx voice on net neutrality. Its members have taken more than 200,000 actions to defend and protect the open internet, including submitting tens of thousands of comments to the FCC, making thousands of phone calls and showing up to protest FCC Chairman Pai's public appearances. And this work has real consequences.

Presente successfully fought for the release of Juan Gaspar-García, an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala with Down syndrome, from ICE detention. His sister Dolores launched a petition on Presente's SOMOS digital organizing platform asking Sen. Marco Rubio to protect Juan from deportation. This petition led to hundreds of Presente members taking action that led to Juan's eventual release! Without the free and open internet provided by net neutrality, the digital organizing tool (SOMOS) that made this possible could not exist.

### **PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR DREAMERS**

An affiliate of the National Immigration Law Center (NILC), the NILC Immigrant Justice Fund, advocates directly for federal immigration reform policies that provide a road to citizenship for all aspiring citizens and to make it possible for them to fully integrate into the social, economic and political fabric of the United States. With support from Voqal, the NILC Immigrant Justice Fund worked with its coalition partners to provide Dreamers much needed policy support in a political environment that has rapidly put their status at risk.

The success of this work was clear during the federal government shutdown that occurred on January 19. After two continuing resolutions, the government shutdown because the Senate could not agree to a deal. The main point of dissent was the Dream Act. After many months of pressure from organizations like NILC, allies in Congress — Democrats and Republicans — would not vote to continue funding the government unless protections for Dreamers were included in the deal. Immigration policy had finally become a top congressional issue and congressional allies felt initial pressure to get something done. While the shutdown ultimately ended without concrete legislative progress on the Dream Act, the efforts of NILC helped create a moment in history that brought the movement closer to its goal.

*Voqal continues to envision a more socially equitable world. The efforts of grantees like these to empower and engage individuals to fight for their rights gives us hope that such a vision is not only possible, but likely.*

## OFFERING FELLOWSHIPS: EMPOWERING EVERYDAY CITIZENS TO RESPOND TO CHANGING POLITICAL CLIMATE

*Voqal believes taking risks and experimenting with new ideas is necessary to advance social change. Our Fellowship is a talent and technology accelerator for change-makers and thought leaders who want to launch their next “big idea” focused on increasing equity for those who are least well off politically, economically and/or socially. In the fallout from the 2016 election, the ability of Voqal Fellows to advance ideas that can rapidly help advance social equity was more important than ever.*



### PROTECTING THE DACAMENTED

Antonio Garcia comes from the intersection of tech and immigrant advocacy. He is the founder of the Entrepreneurship Initiative and Protection for All. Prior to this work, he co-founded Latina Girls Code and now serves as the director of curriculum. Latina Girls Code focuses on bringing STEM education to Latina girls from 7-17 years old.

Over the course of the Fellowship his project rapidly evolved into two separate projects meant to better address the needs of DACamented individuals.

One of these projects is an accelerator for undocumented immigrants seeking to incorporate into a business called the Entrepreneurship Initiative.

By incorporating as a business, undocumented individuals are able to overcome many of the legal challenges of working in the United States. The other is a group started by undocumented activists who push for inclusive immigration legislation with a secondary objective of building and activating younger undocumented leaders called Protection for All. During his Fellowship, Garcia proved that sometimes the key to creating effective social change is the ability to respond to needs as they arise.



### GIVING WORKERS A VOICE

Catherine Huang (Cat) is a technologist that has over 15 years of experience in building media, membership, narrative and advocacy platforms.

Huang's project, WorkIt, uses technology (assisted AI, cloud computing, messaging and mobile apps), peer networks, legislative information and company policy to provide real-time workplace information and support to people working in low-wage jobs at companies like Walmart. OUR Walmart, an organization that empowers Walmart and other retail industry employees to advocate for themselves (and a Voqal grantee), has been able to effectively leverage WorkIt. This tool has enabled employees to connect with one another around shared experiences and to collectively strategize to create significant change aimed at holding corporations responsible on issues like minimum wage. In a time when employees' rights are second to company profits, WorkIt is a key tool in helping workers quickly respond to policies that have real consequences for their everyday lives.

### CONNECTING ORGANIZERS TO CREATE CHANGE IN LATINX COMMUNITIES

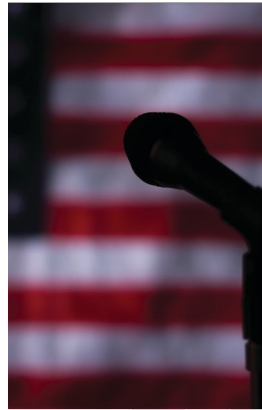
As a campaign manager for Presente.org, the largest Latinx digital organizing platform in the country, Reetu Mody is on the front lines of creating positive social change.



*“The big idea was how do you connect people who want to organize and be part of a movement with the people who are already doing it,”* said Mody. Her project, Movement Alchemy: Melding Digital and Grassroots Organizing, addresses that pressing need through a podcast that allows organizers from all over the country to connect with each other and start their own campaigns on issues affecting the Latinx community. In an environment where the Latinx community is forced to respond to near constant attacks on their rights, Mody's Fellowship project provides organizers across the country the resources needed to build a movement around policies aimed at creating a more Latinx friendly United States.

*One of the few early-stage fellowships, the Voqal Fellowship is designed to increase equity and further progressive, social justice-oriented causes. The Fellows and their projects exemplify the vision of Voqal. Their efforts to provide everyday citizens with the tools needed to respond to the threats and opportunities of an ever-changing social landscape is vital to creating a more socially equitable world for all.*





INCREASE EQUITY AND ADVANCE SOCIAL CAUSES.



INCREASE  
EQUITY AND  
ADVANCE  
SOCIAL CAUSES.

# INTERVIEW PROVIDERS CENTERS HOTSPOTS

PROVIDE INTERNET ACCESS & MOBILE HOTSPOTS.





## INCREASING INTERNET ACCESS: PROVIDING SUPPORT DURING THE STORM

*Many Americans live in coastal areas that are swept by hurricanes every single year. They sock away plywood to cover the windows. They make escape plans and find out where to get sand bags filled. They maintain stores of canned food and bottled water. In other words, they plan for every possibility.*

Unfortunately, even with these preparations, things that are normally taken for granted often fail during major storms like Hurricane Harvey or Irma. The power goes out, and it may stay out for days, making landlines and desktop computers unable to provide the information needed to stay secure. Roads and businesses close, and sometimes people are stuck in a shelter or other location, weathering the storm.

Voqal has formed partnerships with many community and social service organizations nationwide to provide affordable internet access and mobile hotspots. Many of the organizations in the paths of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey found that these devices, as valuable as they are to an organization's day-to-day business, are even more important in an emergency.

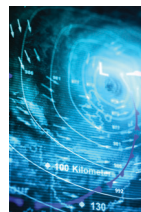
Hurricane Irma set records, knocking out power to millions of Floridians. When outages are this severe, mobile devices can become the only viable means of communication. In Tampa, staff at the Florida Autism Center for Education (FACE) needed Voqal's hotspots both during and after Irma. They were able to access news and community information during power outages. As a result, staff and parents could communicate with each other, and after the storm had passed, they were able to get up and running more quickly. Andrea Lee, Assistant to the Principal at FACE, said, "These hotspots can truly be a lifesaver. You don't realize how much you need one until you have one."

More than 80 children — in addition to staff and teachers — knew communication was key when Hope Children's Home lost power during Irma.

With the mobile hotspots provided by Voqal, they kept track of each other as they evacuated the sprawling 55-acre campus. Since not everyone was able to take shelter in the same location, teachers and staff members needed to plan and contact each other over a period of several days without power. They were also able to access records on the children, their families and others who might be concerned about their safety. The evacuation process is never predictable, but the flexibility and mobility of the hotspots made a real difference.

Although Irma was the bigger storm, the flooding during and after Hurricane Harvey devastated communities in just a couple of hours in and around Houston. Many relocated to shelters for days or even weeks, waiting for the flood waters to subside. During this time, some Houston-area shelters run by the Red Cross had access to the free hotspots and internet service provided by Mobile Citizen's Street Ready program. The hotspots supplemented the internet services the Red Cross already had in place, which allowed more people to access information and let their loved ones know they were safe. This provided better access to client shelters, whose internet services were already overtaxed.

Natural disasters like Harvey and Irma put immense strain on local resources. People living in areas affected by these storms experienced extreme hardship. They were separated from their families, neighbors and homes. They couldn't locate those who had been moved to safer locations in a hurry. They needed information about when power would be restored. Access to the internet provided them with this information and let them know where to get clean water, which roads were still closed and where they could get a hot meal or medical attention. The internet is the best source of up-to-the-moment information.



*Even the most careful planner cannot anticipate every problem. That is why information and communication are so important. Voqal's commitment to providing internet access brought the power of information and communication to many in a time of crisis.*

## INVESTING FOR IMPACT: PEEKAPAK

*Leo the Hedgehog is a tinkerer and loves to learn how things work.*

*Menka loves building and learning about architecture. Cody is an illustrator – comic books are his favorite.*

Who are Leo, Menka and Cody? They are a few of the stars of Peekapak's award winning educational technology platform that teaches kids social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, like gratitude, empathy and respect.

Through the Peekapak platform, Leo and friends currently assist over 15,000 educators in 90 countries engage and empower over 180,000 students to learn a wide range of skills, attitudes and behaviors that can positively affect a student's success in school and life.

Ami Shah is co-founder and CEO of Peekapak. When asked why she quit her day job and poured her life savings into a children's education company, Shah replies that she knew she wanted to make the world a better place.

"It's cheesy, but true," Shah said, "We knew we needed to start and do something immediately and that something was, and is, to help children become the best possible versions of themselves."

With the increased focus on academic success and testing, Shah realized that not enough was being done to help children learn skills that aren't measured by tests, but most certainly impact their success in school, work and life. The focus on academic skills, while very important, had resulted in SEL skills being underemphasized. In addition, teachers are already overwhelmed and SEL topics can be challenging to teach.

"We wanted to turn these topics into child-sized, child-friendly lessons our kids actually want to learn," Shah said.

With that goal in mind, Shah and her co-founder Angie Chan pooled their life savings to create a platform and curriculum that makes SEL so fun, easy and seamless for teachers and parents, and especially children, that kids learn without realizing it.

Peekapak has been designed to maximize early childhood learning by using empathetic characters, engaging original stories, stimulating classroom activities, and at-home activities with parents to reinforce the classroom learning. Peekapak's human and animal characters feature different ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, skills and interests, and temperaments.

"With young children, it starts with creating a world so inviting and magical – yet relatable and accessible – they can't wait to return to it over and over again," Shah said.

As their vision became a reality, the Peekapak team looked for investors to support their efforts. Voqal's Education Opportunity Project, which addresses what Voqal believes is the most pervasive and damaging problem in the U.S. educational system – the opportunity gap – was a natural fit.

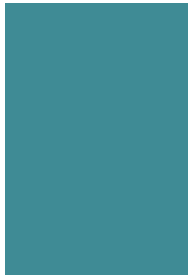
*"There is a deep body of research that points toward the importance of the identification and development of non-cognitive skills for success in school and adult life," said Voqal's Education Director Vinny Badolato.*

*"The need for this work is significant, and Voqal plans to continue leading the call for change."*





DEVELOPMENT OF NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS FOR SUCCESS.



DEVELOPMENT OF NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS FOR SUCCESS.

# BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND AFFORDABILITY

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND AFFORDABILITY.



## PROTECTING THE PUBLIC AIRWAVES: DEFENDING LIFELINE

*The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has a duty to the public – the airwaves belong to the people. The federal government handed most of the airwaves out decades ago for free, with the expectation that they'd be used to inform, educate and enrich the public. That's why Voqal believes FCC policy should be focused on ensuring the country's telecommunications resources and infrastructure contribute to a socially equitable world for all. And why we engage with the FCC and other government agencies on telecommunications and broadcast rules and policies.*

Recent efforts by the FCC to destabilize Lifeline – a program created in 1985 during the Reagan administration to help defray the cost of communications for low-income households – caused our policy team to leap into action once again.

Lifeline was created to make modern telecommunications services more affordable to those who can least afford them. Voqal believes connectivity is vital to participate in the 21st Century economy, as well as our democracy. And Lifeline is critical because it helps low-income households connect to jobs, complete homework assignments and access emergency services.

The rules proposed by the FCC would reduce Lifeline's availability and severely limit choice and economic value for participants, eroding Lifeline's goal of bringing affordable communications services to low-income households.

The FCC gathers and analyzes comments from the public as part of its rulemaking process. When it issued the call for feedback on proposed changes to Lifeline, Voqal didn't hesitate to respond to these ill-considered rules with comments that voiced our strong opposition to the proposed program changes.

"Access to information keeps our citizenry informed, and it provides opportunities for Americans to learn and take part in the digital economy, said Voqal's Director of Telecommunications Policy Mark Colwell. ["People need affordable broadband to compete for better jobs, provide for their families and give their children a shot at success."](#)

Broadband connectivity and affordability makes our entire country stronger, better connected and more competitive.

*This is what is at stake in this rulemaking. And why Voqal actively engages with the FCC and other government agencies to ensure the public interest is at the center of telecommunications policy.*





## OUR IMPACT

*Voqal is a national collaboration of EBS (Educational Broadband Service) licensees that work to advance social equity by creating an educated, empowered and engaged public.*

**440**  
GRANTS

We have contributed more than **(+) 29 million** to under-resourced populations across the country.

We have established several **thousand** free educational internet accounts.

**\$470,000**  
**INVESTED IN EDUCATION  
OPPORTUNITY PROJECT**

**1.3 million** donated for mobile broadband programs that close the homework gap and shrink the digital divide at 870+ nonprofits and 200+ educational entities.

**217**  
ORGANIZATIONS

**\$27**  
**MILLION IN GRANTS**

Voqal makes grants and impact investments, expands internet access and digital equity, offers fellowships and protects the public airwaves.

*Our efforts focus on the education and enrichment of all, not just those who are well-off socially, economically and politically.*



(+) 29 MILLION TO UNDERRESOURCED POPULATIONS.



29 MILLION  
TO UNDERRESOURCED  
POPULATIONS.

# VOQAL ENVISIONS A MORE SOCIALLY EQUITABLE WORLD.

VOQAL ENVISIONS A MORE SOCIALLY EQUITABLE WORLD.





## ***SAMPLING OF GRANTEES IN FY2018:***

9to5  
ACLU  
Arizona WINS  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice  
Chicago Filmmakers  
Chicago Votes  
Common Cause  
Emergent Fund  
Florida Rights Restoration Coalition  
Free Speech TV  
Great Education Colorado  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee and Rights  
Illinois Public Interest Research Group

Kartemquin Films  
Land Stewardship Project  
Mijente  
New Media Ventures  
NILC Immigrant Justice Fund  
One Colorado  
ONE Northside  
Oregon Bus Project  
Oregon Progressive Fund  
Oregon Student Association  
Organization United for Respect (OUR)  
Our Oregon  
TakeAction Minnesota  
The People's Lobby  
Voices for Racial Justice  
WIN Minnesota  
Young Invincibles



<i>Cassandra (Cassie) Allen</i>	EBS Bookkeeper
<i>Vinny Badolato</i>	Education Program Director
<i>Cassie Bair</i>	Chief Business Development Executive, Mobile Citizen
<i>Hazel Bolsover</i>	Controller, Voqal Nonprofits
<i>Kim Bubon</i>	Executive Assistant
<i>Tricia Castillo</i>	Assistant Database Administrator, Mobile Citizen
<i>Michele Christiansen</i>	Program Officer
<i>Mary Coleman</i>	Grants Associate
<i>Mark Colwell</i>	Director of Telecommunications Strategy
<i>Melissa Edmonds</i>	Senior Business Analyst, Mobile Citizen
<i>Kathy Engel</i>	Office Manager
<i>Molly Fohn</i>	Anchor Institutions Program Manager, Mobile Citizen
<i>Barbara Hunter</i>	Chief Financial Officer
<i>Jonette Jager</i>	Technical Support Representative, Mobile Citizen
<i>John Kennedy</i>	Sales Manager, Mobile Citizen
<i>Adam Miller</i>	Chief Operations Officer
<i>Logan Monaco</i>	Assistant Controller, Mobile Citizen
<i>Doug Munson</i>	Technical Support Representative, Mobile Citizen
<i>Kristen Perry</i>	Chief Communications Officer
<i>Amanda Rash</i>	Payroll Specialist
<i>Lisa Reed</i>	Corporate Controller, Mobile Citizen
<i>Julie Reinders</i>	Chief Human Resources Officer
<i>Becky Schott</i>	Director of Accounting and Office Administration
<i>John Schwartz</i>	President
<i>Teri Stark</i>	Accountant, Mobile Citizen
<i>Mardelle Thompson</i>	Shipping and Receiving Manager, Mobile Citizen
<i>Mike Walker</i>	Assistant Controller
<i>Jered Weber</i>	Communications Associate
<i>Brenda Williams-Sears</i>	Director of Grantmaking

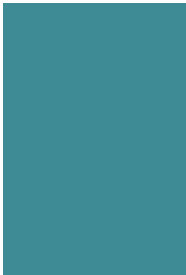


## VOQAL STAFF





TOGETHER WE ARE VOQAL: THE CALL FOR CHANGE.



TOGETHER WE  
CAN  
MAKE A  
CHANGE.

# TOGETHER THE VOYAL

TOGETHER WE ARE VOYAL: THE CALL FOR CHANGE.



## **VOQAL BOARD MEMBERS**

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<i>Alice Ellis Gaut</i>	Tigard, OR
<i>Garlin Gilchrist II</i>	Detroit, MI
<i>Lilly Gleich</i>	Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia
<i>Maria Hadden</i>	Chicago, IL
<i>Ron Harris</i>	Minneapolis, MN
<i>Thom Hartmann</i>	Portland, OR
<i>Barbara K. Iverson</i>	Chicago, IL
<i>Charles Marr</i>	Portland, OR
<i>Denise Mayotte</i>	Minneapolis, MN
<i>David McKay</i>	Minneapolis, MN
<i>Daniel X. O'Neil</i>	Chicago, IL
<i>Cecilia "Cec" Ortiz</i>	Erie, CO
<i>Joe Pezzillo</i>	Boulder, CO
<i>John Schwartz</i>	Boulder, CO
<i>Luchelle Stevens</i>	St. Paul, MN
<i>Chet Tchozewski</i>	Boulder, CO
<i>James Traynor</i>	Memphis, TN
<i>Frances "Pancha" Valdez</i>	Alamosa, CO

## ***STAY CONNECTED WITH VOQAL***

*Voqal:* [voqal.org](http://voqal.org)

*Mobile Citizen:* [mobilecitizen.org](http://mobilecitizen.org)

*Facebook:* <https://www.facebook.com/voqalorg/>

*Twitter:* <https://twitter.com/voqal>

*LinkedIn:* <https://www.linkedin.com/company/voqal>

*Voqal blog:* <https://voqal.org/news/makingairwaves-blog/>

*Voqal Fellowship mailing list:* <https://voqal.org/our-work/offeringfellowships/>

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