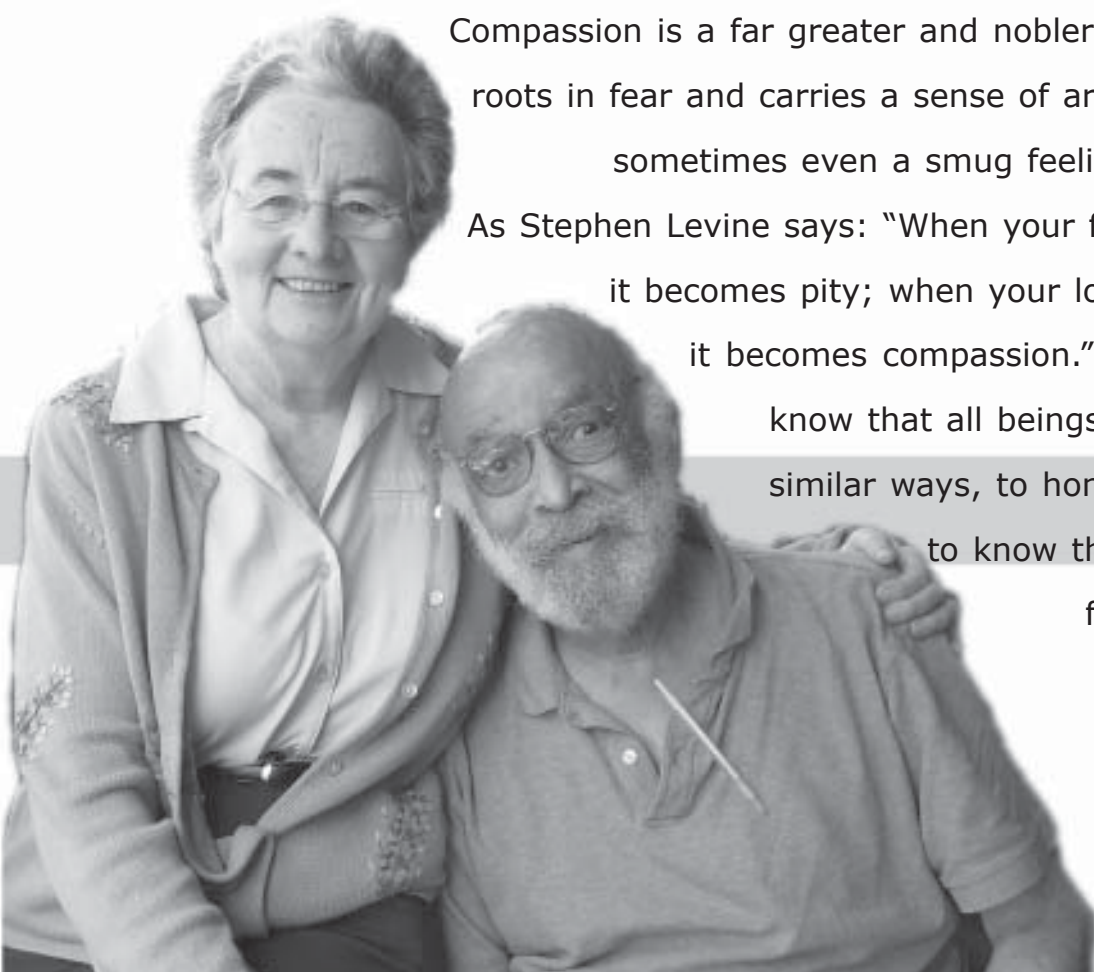


Compassion & Justice



Compassion is a far greater and nobler thing than pity. Pity has its roots in fear and carries a sense of arrogance and condescension, sometimes even a smug feeling of "I'm glad it's not me." As Stephen Levine says: "When your fear touches someone's pain it becomes pity; when your love touches someone's pain, it becomes compassion." To train in compassion is to know that all beings are the same and suffer in similar ways, to honor all those who suffer, and to know that you are neither separate from nor superior to anyone.

"Glimpses" by Sogyal Rinpoche

Morgan Machledt is in her second year as a full-time volunteer at Joseph's House. Maggie worked at Joseph's House on Christmas afternoon and evening. This is her poem about that night.

December 25th, Hospice Porch

By Morgan Machledt

Remember, Walter, it was Christmas
night; damp and dark and the tiny lights

shone back at us in the puddled concrete.

There were earthworms working their slick

way to grass. All day you'd been in bed watching
Westerns, and now, on the porch, you smoke

from a slouch in your wheelchair.

A wreathed car passed in the wet street

and you said, "Horseback ridin'weather.

Ooh-eee, I'd like to get me on a horse." I look

at you: paralyzed and tired, told you have just weeks
left in your life, but your grin is broad as any horse's back,

as all the prairie sunsets and your eyes twice as bright.

You nod, let out the smoke and tell me,

"Soon I will, Baby. Soon."

Dear Friends,

It's been six months since I first wrote about the tension we feel at Joseph's House as we learn to consciously uphold the twin values of compassion and justice. In so many words I posed the question – 'How long can we rescue drowning babies floating down the river without some of us going upstream to stop whoever or whatever is throwing the babies in the water?'

Many of you responded to my question with thoughtful, passionate, encouraging phone calls, e-mails, notes and letters. I responded to some of you, but not yet to all.

I am profoundly grateful for the way you have engaged this question with us.

We read aloud your letters and thought and talked over your responses. The way you have engaged this question - one by one and collectively - has helped and changed us.

One of the first responses came from a long-time friend and supporter who enclosed Mother Theresa's words, "We can do no great things – only small things, with great love", and expressed his hope that we could find a suitable forum to dialogue with our readers and supporters about issues that really matter – including social critique. One friend included a cautionary word about "the danger that can happen when those who are some version of 'radical' view themselves as 'good' and others as 'bad';...a poisonous state of mind in which we write others off - without hesitation or remorse". The perception of a tone of self-righteousness implicit in the demand to know who is throwing the babies in the water, why they are doing it and how they can be stopped was clearly expressed.

One friend described his sense of our predicament this way: "Once long ago I read Mother Theresa's answer to the question of how she would help all the poor children out in the streets? Her reply? "One, by one, by one." "I have never forgotten that answer", he wrote, "...it offered me a way to be in the world, to do what I could see to do...I am not able, with precision, to find the river with the babies, to know which way is upstream, or be sure I'll be able to do the right thing *if* I can find the source of the trouble upstream, or even recognize it. I know there are structures – rivers and bridges and policies and laws and courts and

jails...But mostly I see people, one by one. I can support the 'one by one' work of Joseph's House and answer your appeal to do so".

One wonderful new friend wrote, "Dear One, your letter, filled with social justice and right action, troubles me. Earlier letters have seemed drawn from you heart and this latest writing seems more to come from mental, moral struggling of mind....We are asked to "wait in God". You have written most movingly of waiting with an utterly sick resident, of being silent, of this eternal wordless waiting, for hours, for days. Love manifest... Surely that is a gift God is giving through you. It is not "charity" nor is it "saving a baby". It is bringing the Presence and waiting in that Love, in the Mystery of transition to Spirit. One cannot be wholly present if one feels pulled to right injustices in those same hours... Your greatest gift may be to move in unhurried love. (Your letter sounds hurried.) With love, I carry you in my heart."

A friend who is a priest, sent this, "For myself, it is not a question of rescuing the drowning children OR finding the source, but of meeting the present need AND working to a societal solution. To paraphrase St. James: "If you see your brother or sister hungry or starving, it does little good to say 'Have a nice day, I'll be voting for reform in November.'" Our charity is sometimes needed in the moment, but that is not the end of it... It's not either/or but both/and."

Sister Audrey, a source of inspiration and conscience for me for many years, wrote from California about a small child she began to tutor when the girl was fearful and shy, unable to speak English. Sister Audrey writes, "The 'baby who came down the river' this summer came to visit me today. Her mom brought in a Jack-in-the-Box supper to celebrate. Today Karla is a confident, related fourth grader. Her class had an overnight camp-out; thirty students: first time away from home for some. Karla tells me they are working on the 6 and 7 times tables and she already knows them!"

Mark Bishop, whose essay appears elsewhere in this newsletter, wrote from Minnesota, "A vision of justice – the longing for things to be put right. In many ways this is the deep voice within every human's life and the preeminent

Friends Across the Miles

Mark Bishop visits Joseph's House every few months when he adds a weekend onto a regular Washington business trip. In his reflections Mark writes about what Joseph's House means to him and how its reach extends to his life in Minnesota.

If folks are honest, many times relationships or activities are approached for how they can fill a void or yearning. Meeting people or engaging with others can be ruled by a subtle agenda that feeds our natural desires for security, belonging and significance. What if folks intentionally approached life and others with humility, stillness and selflessness? What if folks just showed up, opened their senses and let a person or situation speak? And what if all the striving stops, the cultural and economic differences melt away, and the still small loving voice of the Holy is heard?

In the fall of 2005, after a fairly long story of interconnected conversations and relationships that introduced me to the churches, people and mission of the Church of the Savior and to Joseph's House, I started taking small, intentional steps to see and hear – to just show up. Through my job, I have the opportunity to visit the Washington area every few months. These trips usually fall on Thursdays and Fridays and instead of flying home right away like usual, I arranged to stay around for the weekend.

On the first trip to Joseph's House, with no other plans except to be present and to not get in the way, I was graciously welcomed to the weekly Friday "family" dinner. By the end of that weekend, I had spent some relaxed moments with many beautiful people. This wasn't about fixing folks or analyzing deep societal ills, it was about dignity – meeting someone for the first time, finding out what someone likes to eat or what they like to watch on television or sharing photos of family. Together, we were doing the stuff that friends do.

On subsequent visits, new friendships got stronger and my roots at the house grew deeper. I learned some Joseph's House trivia (like the origin of the big dining room table – built from the bleachers of a college I often drive by that is near where I live in Minnesota). I was trusted by Patty with her truck as Josh and I drove to a play at the Kennedy Center (and then got lost on the way home). I've had some long and helpful conversations with David and others. And if you've never had a Blossom breakfast, you're missing a culinary delight that is unmatched in Adams Morgan.

The times spent with those living in the house have been special. Some of these include the familiar walks to the Safeway for groceries and picking out ice cream – or sitting on the back deck, the front porch, around the table or in the living room talking – or a "one of a kind" moment like watching Josh make faces at the gorillas at the zoo and entertaining the entire room full of tourists. Time moves slow at the house during these visits. I find that embracing each little moment has helped me to relax and is leading me toward disciplines of simplicity.

My latest trip just a couple of weeks ago was especially significant. Early in the evening as I was helping to move some things around in one of the rooms upstairs, I noticed a sign that said "Welcome Home Bernard". Was this Bernard – the same man I had met on my first trip to the house over a year ago? As I kept working, I overheard parts of the conversation that was going on with a visitor. At one point I heard "hey, maybe we can watch wrestling on the TV." It was Bernard! During my first

visit to the house, Bernard and I had talked about his love of wrestling. So after a little while, I came back to the room and spent some time visiting with Bernard. While he was the same man I knew, he was also different. These brief moments reinforced to me the power of AIDS – it just doesn't quit. It also demonstrated the power of love and hospitality expressed at Joseph's House – Bernard was back, yet he was also home.

Shortly afterward, Patty asked if I'd be up for sitting with Walter for a while. It took me a little while to understand what was happening, but without saying much, I understood. For the first time, I had the privilege of participating in the end of life "being with" calling of the house. I hadn't met Walter before that night, but in the couple of hours of sitting with him, praying and softly rubbing his forehead, I was becoming bound to his life. Somehow in that moment the vastly different life journeys of Walter and me had collided and melted together. For that short time we were the same. We were broken and in need of love, grace and mercy.

For this latest trip to Washington, I was able to stay in a basement bedroom in

Cornerstone. The guys at the house welcomed me as a friend and roommate for the weekend. The dynamic of a group of men living together and sharing a house is amazing – not for the faint of heart. Great conversation was peppered into card games, eating a meal or watching a movie. John, Leon and Robert are each unique, precious men moving their lives forward. They are also surrounded by caring friends. Many times the guys would talk about "mistakes" or "bad" things from earlier in their lives. Yet as the conversation continued, the guys would recognize the "good" blessing Cornerstone has been to them.

So what's next? Joseph's House and Cornerstone are always changing. So am I. As a result of these visits, back at home in Minnesota, I've found a house very similar to Cornerstone that provides a community living environment for men and women with AIDS. I spend some time there every couple of weeks cooking a meal and hanging out with my new friends here. My family has met and is slowly getting to know these new friends too.

So when will I get back to Joseph's House? Hopefully soon. But the gift that this place has given me takes me back every day.



Community Update



"Community life is not something extraordinary or heroic, reserved only for an elite of spiritual heroes. It is for us all; it is for every family and every group of friends committed to each other. It is the most human way of living; and the way that brings the greatest fulfillment and joy to people."

– Jean Vanier, Community Growth

Here at Joseph's House, we greet 2007 with open and grateful hearts. Our community has had the opportunity to welcome and honor the lives of many friends as we transition into the New Year. We have welcomed most recently three new men, two of whom are returning residents and one new woman. We have said goodbye in body but not in memory to our friends Karen, Tammy, Theresa, Berdette, Walter and Waynman. The house is always gently moving. Our quiet home has been a bit noisier than usual with the construction of the

new elevator that when completed will be of great service to our residents who are too weak to use the stairs. Until then, we make it work and eagerly await the finished product. Two of our community members, Daphne Aberle, RN, and Angie Meyer, long time care-giver and staff member, have begun the end of life care training program with the Alaya Institute in San Francisco. Joining people like Patty Wudel, Pricilla Norris and Rose Mary Dougherty who have both completed the training, they will have the opportunity to deepen in compassion as they continue to care for the dying. In late January, Joseph's House welcomed Anne Catlin of Compassionate Touch for a two day workshop. Staff and volunteers learned basic massage techniques as well as other simple ways to be fully present while accompanying the residents. As for daily life, we are really quite ordinary. We work to support each other as we welcome the challenges and blessings that community brings.

Joseph's House



Late this fall, the PBS newsweekly, Religion & Ethics, filmed a short document on a day in the life of Joseph's House.

It begins with Melvin White, who arrived from a downtown shelter the same day that the film crew was already planning to be here. After he got sick with colon cancer and couldn't work anymore, Melvin couldn't pay the rent and he was evicted from his apartment. He wound up in a shelter and from there, was able to come to Joseph's House. The documentary also lovingly captures the tender relationship between Teresa Batch, whom we loved more than words can express, and Tiffani Boerio, a Mennonite Voluntary Service volunteer.

The documentary captures the tone and feel of Joseph's House quite beautifully. The narrator places more emphasis on Zen Buddhism than we do. We practice regular silent meditation to help us quiet ourselves inwardly and we sound a beautiful bell to begin and end the meditation times that start our staff meetings. But since our very beginning those of us who find our way to serve at Joseph's House have usually been

aware of a deep inner call to say "Yes" to Jesus' invitation to love our neighbor, feed the hungry, find clothes for the naked, take exquisite care of the sick and the dying - to follow Him.

The practice of meditation and our passion for compassionate and just service to the sickest of the poorest in Washington DC are two aspects of the culture of love that deepens every day in the community that you support at Joseph's House.

You can see the PBS video online by going to our website: www.josephshouse.org and clicking on the PBS image. If you double click on the video image itself, it enlarges and is a clearer picture. We'd love to hear from you about the video. You can reach me online at:

pattywudel@josephshouse.org.

Or by regular mail at:

Joseph's House
2482 Ontario Road NW
Washington DC 20009.



Joseph's House to host

A Special Workshop with Frank Ostaseski

9:00 am to 5:00 pm

September 15, 2007 and Sunday, September 16, 2007

**COMING
SOON**

For further information: Please visit the workshop website at: www.compassionatedc.org
or call (202) 328-9161 ext. 14

Metamorphosis

Tiffani Boerio is a full-time Mennonite Voluntary Service volunteer this year. Tiffani has the gift of great tenderness and sensitivity – the gift of unhurried love – as she accompanies the men and women at Joseph’s House. Below, she writes about the gift of her relationship with Waynman Wise. Waynman died at Joseph’s House on Saturday, January 27th.

I believe in metamorphosis: enveloping one’s decaying body and soul in a protective covering while awaiting transformation into a new life. I recently witnessed this sacred upheaval at the bedside of a dying man at Joseph’s House; a 58-year old, African-American gentleman with a long body and a deep, tender soul. I discovered in him a kindred spirit. The hours I spent in his presence filled my heart and the pages of my journal as I reflected on each day’s work. What moved me? What inspired me? What surprised me? I wrote his name again and again: Waynman.

Joseph’s House provides a safe, loving community where many terminally ill, homeless men and women escape the harshness and injustice of the street and the system. My colleague, Peter, said it is hard to put into words reasons why we are drawn to volunteer at Joseph’s House; sometimes it is simpler to think of a person, and Waynman, he said, is that person for you.

As cancer and AIDS devoured his flesh, Waynman would vacillate between exposing his gaunt, bare limbs to the chill of the room and withdrawing completely under his covers. I gently dubbed this latter gesture his ‘cocoon mode’ and accompanied him in both postures, drawn to my friend in the hope of offering love, comfort and companionship. Amazingly, these were the gifts Waynman also was offering to me, and as his death drew near, I recognized his cocoon as a living metaphor.

When I began my work at Joseph’s House a part of *me* was slowly dying; the loss encompassed connection, knowing, and being known. I existed in a frail state of being, the life I once consumed with gusto now consuming me. Though I had withdrawn from nearly everything and everyone around me, I felt wrapped in a cocoon of God’s grace, woven with the prayers and concerns of my family and friends.

Early in the cold darkness of a January morning, I woke suddenly, called to Waynman’s bedside by my own heaving sobs. The vision had felt so vivid: the green lawn and airy sky upon which the beds rested; Waynman’s suit fluid with intense, deep green hues; the way he popped up from his bed, pulled me into his arms and began the dance. We danced and danced and danced. My friend was whole. He tucked himself into a chair with a smoke and a slight French accent while we reminisced about our days together at Joseph’s House. “Something has shifted,” I wrote upon waking. The next day Waynman was dead, no longer bound in his earthly cocoon, but a beautiful green butterfly soaring in God’s love.

The dream was a gift that helped me understand how Waynman’s presence in my life awakened something deep within me; I felt known and loved by my friend.

Is it possible to feel like a part of you has died while another part of you feels like it is coming to life? Yes, it is metamorphosis.

We are blessed to have extraordinary volunteers who regularly help us out at Joseph's House, and they make a wonderful difference. Our deepest gratitude to...

Tom Brown, Jessica McGrory, David Allaire, Dawn Ivener, Monica Winters, Val Finnell, David Novello, Anthony Martinez, Scott Sanders, Steve Prieto, Connie and Addie Ridgway, Claire Johnson, Kathy Yeung, Annie Roberts Kike Arnal and Christine McGowan.

For information about future volunteer trainings and support and for opportunities to be of compassionate service, please contact Patty at pattywudel@josephshouse.org.

Volunteer with us!



A Spiritual Journey

By Wendell Berry

And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles,
no matter how long,
but only by a spiritual journey,
a journey of one inch,
very arduous and humbling and joyful,
by which we arrive at the ground at our feet,
and learn to be at home.

vision for the world...I see it in Jesus, as that voice was made human, he sorrowed with the world, made this problem his own and initiated a rescue operation that we're living in right now...We can work really hard to bring justice to people and try to beat back systems that are deadly – I try not to do this apart from trusting in God being present in these situations and with these efforts...The individual practices, the communal practices, the practices toward justice...are pursued together. I think it is hugely important to practice these within the context of individuals being present with one another...So is Joseph's House and its calling misguided? I don't think so... It's a fertile place for diverse people to learn how to be present with each other. It is also a place to see compassion, love and charity freely given. Maybe it's time to add a vision of justice into the mix in some way. Probably. More conversations will draw this out."

Another good friend sent books addressing the issues of compassion and justice.

I want to draw this letter of gratitude for so many thoughtful, deeply helpful responses to questions about issues that really matter to a close, but not before referring to two other letters. First, these words from friends in Seattle:

"We think there are two struggles that we see our peers dealing with, and on which you could provide intellectual, moral, actionable leadership in future letters: First, what do people do when they can't do both "charity" and the longer term work of changing the larger system? How do they deal with the moral tension? And what do people do when they're just giving money and don't have the capacity to do more? How do they deal with that moral tension? We would welcome and read a monthly e-mail on these issues".

In conclusion (for now), thanks to Nancy, a new friend who drew our attention to Pastor David Ensign's essay at <http://faithfulagitation.blogspot.com>, more questions raised by the same parable. David Ensign writes:

"I am pretty certain that if I were one of the bodies floating downstream I would be incredibly

grateful that there were lifeguards and emergency health care workers available to fish me out and tend my wounds. In fact, if I were pulled from such a stream, when I returned to strength, I might become the one to go upstream and speak my truth to power.."

"When I hear that parable these days, rather than being dragged into an argument about which call is the greatest – justice or mercy - I am stopped in my tracks by this question: why is it that so few people in contemporary American culture give their lives to either of these crucial callings? What is missing in our culture that so few feel called to such desperately needed work?...For those who have an inchoate longing to build communities of compassion and a politics of justice, the institutional faith community too often has too little to offer in the way of clarification, inspiration or preparation. What if the capacity for clarification of call, inspiration to respond and preparation to lead could be restored? What would it look like? How would such a capacity be developed, maintained and presented to those who may desperately need it but who are often unaware of the need or unable to name it clearly? If these needs were to be addressed by an organization, what would that organization look like?...."

Last fall when the tension between serving with compassion and doing justice moved me to write to you about it, I pictured that tension as though it was a person straining to pull two ends of a thick cable together, a wire through which, when held together this way, the current of justice and compassion would flow, connecting power and light. There was an element of urgency and impossibility in that metaphor – which some of you perceived intuitively through the tone in the letter.

Today, thanks to the thoughtful, loving conversations that have taken place with all of you, friends of Joseph's House and friends of peace – my image for holding compassion and justice together has changed. The quality of tension is gone. Loving attention has replaced it. Today in my mind's eye I see two worn hands tenderly cupping fledglings, twin birds nestled securely in caring hands.

With gratitude and love,

Patty Wudel

Spring Open House at Joseph's House



5:00-7:30
Tuesday, March 20th
1730 Lanier Place, NW

Joseph's House invites our friends in DC, Virginia and Maryland to drop by and meet the community of Joseph's House and see and feel this welcoming home you have supported with your prayers and financial gifts for so long. There will be food and music and most of all, the chance to meet one another.

Please RSVP:
tommy@josephshouse.org or
call Tommy at (202) 328-9161

We look forward to seeing you!



Celebrating World AIDS Day

This past December, coinciding with World AIDS Day, under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program, a group of nine African health professionals and activists in the struggle against AIDS, gathered at Joseph's House to share stories with our residents and to share a good meal at our table.

Within the group were pharmacists and physicians, HIV/AIDS counselors, program

managers, a director of a hospital and a reporter. Seven of our nine guests were women. They were Muslim and Christian and they had come to the US for information to take back to Tanzania, Swaziland, Nigeria, Madagascar, Malawi, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cote d'Ivoire.

After talking with Joseph's House residents and sharing a hearty meal with us – the evening ended with formal speeches of encouragement to one another to stay strong and to stay committed to halting the spread

of AIDS and to befriending and supporting those who are affected by the disease. In a beautiful and humbling gesture of solidarity, our guests from Africa took up a collection from amongst themselves and made a generous cash gift to Joseph's House as a show of their support for us.

Joseph's House is grateful to Shawn Davis, Program Officer at the Academy for Educational Development and a former nursing assistant at Joseph's House, for bringing the world to our door.

Joseph's House to Introduce Annual Compassion and Justice Award

2:00 pm
Saturday, June 2, 2007
The Festival Center
1640 Columbia Road, NW Washington, DC 20009

This coming June Joseph's House will celebrate its 17th anniversary with a reception and ceremony to honor the recipients of the first Joseph's House Compassion and Justice Award. The award will honor a local institution that is a model for living out its mission with vision and passion for the values and practice of compassion and justice. As well as honoring an institution, the Joseph's House Compassion and Justice Award will honor an individual who embodies the practice of compassion and justice in his or her life and work.

We have several wonderful suggestions for candidates to receive the first annual Joseph's House Compassion and Justice Award. We'd be happy to hear from you if you have a suggestion for an institution or an individual demonstrating imagination and passion for living the creative tension of doing justice with compassion. Please email: pattywudel@josephshouse.org with your suggestions. Please also include your reason for nominating this particular institution or individual.

The reception will be held at The Festival Center in northwest Washington DC.

Invitations will be sent in March 2007 or you can visit our website at: www.josephshouse.org for more information.

Joseph's House
2482 Ontario Road, NW
Washington, DC 20009

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