

Volume 6

THE PINK PALM

The LGBTQ+ Travel Insider for Greater Miami & Miami Beach



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WELCOME...

Greater Miami & Miami Beach is a welcoming destination for LGBTQ+ visitors. We are happy to bring you Volume 6 of The Pink Palm. In this issue we speak with dancer/choreographer extraordinaire, Randolph Ward, as he shares the vision behind the world premiere of "Boys Will Be Boys," which happened right here in Miami this summer. Then, we hear about some of the plans for Wigwood – an annual fest of all things queer coming back February 2022 – from co-founder Antonio Mendez (Miami drag star Queef Latina). Next, we welcome Ivan Quintanilla of EDGE Media Network as he gets reacquainted with Miami's Little Havana, his childhood stomping grounds, and explores the LGBTQ+ flavors of this historic neighborhood. And have you ever wondered about those iconic lifeguard towers that everyone loves to photograph on Miami Beach? We'll talk with architect William Lane and find out what inspired him to create these beauties.

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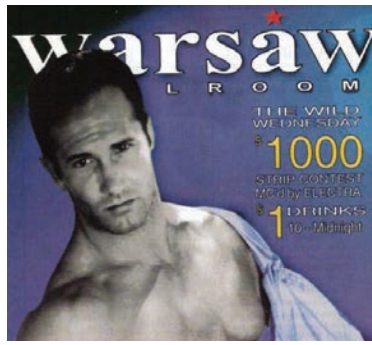
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PUTTING MIAMI DANCE ON THE MAP!

Randolph Ward opens up about the emotionally charged world premiere of “Boys Will Be Boys.”

by Ian Maloney

Internationally renowned dancer, choreographer and teacher, Randolph Ward, delivered the world premiere of “Boys Will Be Boys” in July at the Sandrell Rivers Theater in Miami’s Liberty City neighborhood.

Born and raised right here in Liberty City, Ward is as Miami as it gets. “I started dancing and studying dance when I was 10 years old at Charles R. Drew K-8 Center after one of my elementary school guidance counselors noticed me dancing in the school’s production of *The Nutcracker*. She asked me if I wanted to apply to Charles Drew’s dance program,” Ward says. (Charles R. Drew K-8 Center is a visual and performing arts magnet program, part of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.)

Ward attended New World School of the Arts for three years of high school and then left to study with the San Francisco Ballet. While there, he had an experience with one of the instructors who saw him in the dance studio in a tutu pretending to be a female ballerina. Ward recalls, “She pulled me to the side and said — we don’t care what you do on the outside, but don’t bring that in here.” Ward describes this attitude as “toxic,” and “Boys Will Be Boys” represents his healing from a lifetime of that toxicity he has faced as a Black, gay man in America.

I caught up with Ward during rehearsals for “Boys Will Be Boys,” in what has proven to be one of the craziest years most of us can remember.

How has Covid-19 changed you?

While my husband and I were on lockdown, I had an epiphany — I don’t

need all this [expletive] that I have. All I need is food, water, my phone and shelter. We have been able to save so much money because we slashed all the crap we were spending on.

Tell me about “Boys Will Be Boys.”

It deals with toxic masculinity, but it’s also about healing from that. The show actually started in 2020. The first premiere was supposed to be May 2020 — but we all know how that went. Luckily, some of the original cast are still with me. I am so grateful to have been awarded a Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Choreography grant, which helped make the show happen. Once I got a new date for the show — with all the new Covid-related rules — I had to re-work the concept, but what emerged was more personal. I think this show, the one we ended up with, will be more impactful.

How did the theme of toxic masculinity come about?

It’s kind of interesting. I expected the outside world to be all about masculinity cause that’s what you learn from society. But I didn’t know that the same ideas were just as present in the whole ballet world. It’s exactly the same. You’re asked to be a man, be strong. Most of the roles for men in classical ballet are about strength, courage, taking care of the family. The woman is always frail, weak, and needs to be saved. That’s why I only spent four years out of my 15-year career in a classical ballet company. I felt like I had so many other sides of my sexuality to express because I am both masculine and feminine. And I think every human being

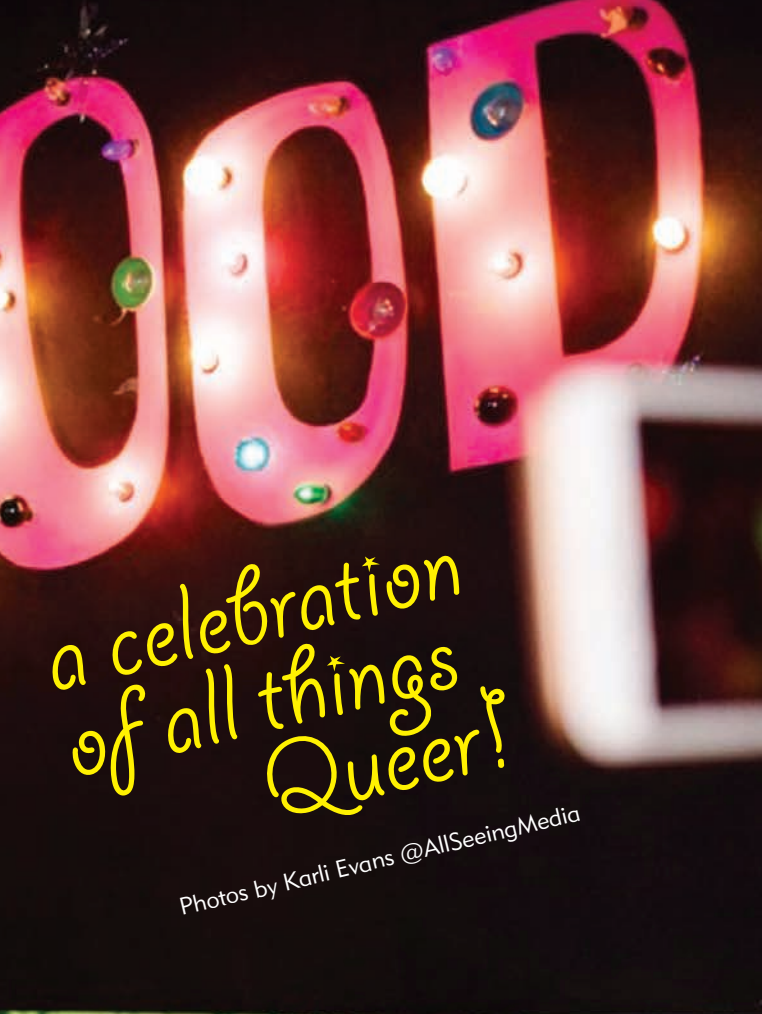
on the planet shares both of those traits, but we’re just not allowed to express both of them and use both of them — it’s only one or the other. Another reason for the show is because of the “mass exposure” that trans women, particularly Black trans women, have been getting recently — in positive and negative ways. It impacts their lives on a daily basis. A lot of Black and brown trans women and men have been murdered all over the U.S., so that’s kind of what inspired my ideas.”

What has it been like working at the Sandrell Rivers Theater?

I got involved with them because I applied for the Capital Arts Partnership. They were looking for show ideas and I presented the idea for “Boys Will Be Boys.” The theater is AMAZING! It’s a brand new theater, with a sprung dance floor and LED lights. I am really proud that the county put in this REAL theater. It’s so beautiful, and I’m just excited to work with those LIGHTS! I’m going to have a real show now!

“Boys Will Be Boys” was an emotionally charged evening dissecting toxic masculinity and American ideologies surrounding manhood. It featured a diverse and multicultural cast of five dancers: Natanael Leal, Karl Stephan St. Louis, Ryan Nicholas DeAlexandro, CC Glitzer and Ariel Mugler. The show was made possible with support from the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Fantasy Theatre Factory, Miami-Dade County Capital Arts Partnership Program, Sandrell Rivers Theater and the Miami Urban Contemporary Experience (MUCE). 🌸





One of the most fabulous events to strut into Miami is Wigwood, an annual fest of all things queer.



The Miami of today is known for its nonstop partying and melting pot of people — a combo that makes the destination a perfect fit for some of the world’s largest LGBTQ+ gatherings, honoring the 305’s flourishing queer community. One of the most fabulous events to strut into Miami is Wigwood, an annual fest of all things queer.

Founded by Antonio Mendez (Miami drag star Queef Latina) and Adam Gersten (proprietor of the Wynwood bar Gramps and all-around dope dude), Wigwood has rapidly emerged as one of Miami’s most highly anticipated annual events. February 2022 will celebrate the festival’s fifth edition, with local drag performers Andro Gin, Karla Croqueta, Kat Wilderness, Kunst and many more. We sat down with Antonio Mendez to learn more about Wigwood’s past, present, and very exciting future.



ONE OF MIAMI’S BIGGEST QUEER COMMUNITY EVENTS

Before the inaugural Wigwood in 2017, parties like Double Stubble and Counter Corner were helping to propel Miami’s queer community and drag scene, but Mendez thought there was still something more to be done. He wanted to up the ante and give Miami more than just a few hours of celebrating queerness.



“Wigwood was conceived as a way to fill the need for a larger, grander event where everyone could celebrate their queerness in a daylong setting,” he says.

At first, Wigwood was just a single day of awesome festivities, but it quickly grew into “three days of nonstop queerness,” Mendez says proudly. From the beginning, internationally known performers such as Thorgy Thor, Sateen, Milk and Abhora participated in the event. Still, Wigwood has always maintained a commitment to the Miami queer community by seeking local performers.

After just a few years, Wigwood has expanded to take over several Miami venues, welcoming a diverse mix of drag performers, DJs, live musical acts, queer visual artists, and a variety of queer local vendors to contribute their talents. Headliners for Wigwood 2022 have yet to be announced, but one thing is certain: This year’s edition will make the local queer community proud.

“Wigwood is an event by the community, for the community,” Mendez says, “and we hope to always keep it that way.”

AN EVENT INSPIRED BY A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE ON THE EAST COAST

As one of the founders of Wigwood, Mendez is quick to credit his inspiration for the festival. Before he moved back to his hometown of Miami, Mendez was living in New York City, home to Bushwig, a world-famous annual drag festival hosted by the Brooklyn community. During his six years as a New Yorker, Mendez had the chance to attend Bushwig in its early days and fell in love with it.

It motivated him to craft a celebration that was modeled after Bushwig but still represented the uniqueness of Greater Miami & Miami Beach. He understood Miami didn’t need a carbon copy of the New York event, but rather something that celebrated its distinctive cultures and characteristics in a fresh, new way. With business partner Adam Gersten, Mendez harnessed Bushwig’s creative and carefree energy, and Wigwood was born.

DREAMING BIG FOR THE FUTURE

The community has always been at the heart of Wigwood’s mission, and every decision the founders make keeps the needs, wants, dreams and hopes of queer Miami in mind. They hope to continue to do their part to ensure the destination is a place where the queer community is welcomed with open arms.

Asked about plans for Wigwood in the years to come, Mendez describes his larger vision for a community changed for the better.

“Since Wigwood is very much about the local community, my hopes for the future are to bring in more Latinx queer and trans artists that reflect our interests. I also want to continue finding new venues throughout Miami that we can transform into safe spaces for us to celebrate in. By making ourselves more visible, we can continue to evolve Miami and its venues into a more accepting, progressive city.”

He’s also optimistic about the future of the local queer scene and drag performers as a whole. “I see a very bright future for the drag and queer performers of Miami,” he says. “Since Wigwood attracts people from all over the country, it has become a networking event that has helped our talented locals get recognized by people in other cities. There are many rising stars here, and it’s only a matter of time until one of them makes it big!”

When you consider Wigwood’s exponential growth in just four years and its indelible impact on Miami, it’s easy to imagine all of Mendez’s dreams coming to fruition.

Be sure to follow @wigwoodmiami on Instagram or find @wigwood on Facebook to stay updated on the latest news, headline performer announcements and much more! 🌸



"GRAMPS"



TWO HOMELANDS CONVERGE FOR LGBTQ CUBAN AMERICANS IN MIAMI'S LITTLE HAVANA!

by Ivan Quintanilla, EDGE Media Network



@TravelingIQ

“There is no one more American than a Miami Cuban, and there is no one more Cuban than a Miami Cuban,” says Rodrigo, who I meet at the rum bar in Little Havana’s Cubaocho Museum & Performing Arts Center while waiting for my late friends (a very Miami trait!). “You’ll never find a people more patriotic to two homelands.”

The Miami Cuban community is not monolithic. We are Republicans, Democrats, Catholics and Santeros. We are the conservative, mostly white business owners who fled Cuba in the early ‘60s, and the queer Afro-Cuban artists who were among the 125,000 Cuban immigrants who arrived during the 1980 Mariel boatlift. And we are everything in between and beyond.

But if there’s one thing that has become crystal clear as thousands march in Miami in solidarity with Cuban protestors, it’s that Rodrigo was right: “You’ll never find a people more patriotic to two homelands.”

Nowhere do these co-existing allegiances converge more than in today’s Little Havana, the Miami neighborhood where Cubans started settling after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Little Havana is a funky mix of cultures. It is a place where old-world traditions blend with progressive thinking — where machismo and queerness cohabitate.

Calle Ocho (Southwest 8th Street) is the center of all things Little Havana. The popular tourist strip between

12th and 17th avenues emerged in the new millennium, as the revitalization of the area’s art scene attracted new visitors. Here, Spanish is the default language, salsa music blares from storefronts, and the smell of Cuban coffee permeates the air. This is the Little Havana you’ll see on tourism websites, dotted with colorful murals and rooster sculptures, a cultural symbol for Cubans.

However, an authentic culture thrives alongside the steady tourist traffic. Businesses like the family-run fruit market Los Pinareños Fruteria have been making fresh *guarapo* (sugar cane juice) since the 1960s. Down the street, the Asis-Lopez family’s Havana Collection retail store



has been dressing the neighborhood in the quintessential Cuban look, the Guayabera shirt, since 1972.

In 1980, Miami Cuban culture got a lot queerer. For Fidel Castro, the opening of Cuba's Mariel Harbor and six-month boatlift for those wanting to leave the island was a way to purge the "undesirables." For LGBTQ Cubans, it was an opportunity to escape persecution and imprisonment.

"There was a creative takeover after the Mariel," says "A History of Little Havana" co-author Corinna J. Moebius. "Artists, theater folks, and *transformistas* (drag queens) that had been in the underground of Havana were liberated... Yet, this is all happening in a district where these strait-laced guys have been trying to portray this hyper-masculinity."

Thousands of queer men and women immigrated to the United States during the Mariel boatlift, many of them eventually settling in Little Havana. One of them was Luis Molina, the gay artist and owner of Molina Fine Art Gallery & Studio. His vibrant art focuses on Cuban and Afro-Cuban themes, including religious imagery, Santeria, farming landscapes and — yes — roosters. Today, his gallery space is among the oldest on Calle Ocho.

"There is an erasure of the contributions of the Afro-Cuban and LGBTQ communities in Little Havana," says Moebius. "The dominant story is that it all goes back to the guys who arrived in the 1960s, whereas if you really look at what made Little Havana truly thriving and a popular tourist destination, it was that creative stimulus."

Luckily for today's LGBTQ visitors, creativity has continued building bridges in the community. Little Havana now hosts the Gay8 ("Gay Ocho") Festival every year, billed as the largest Latino LGBTQ festival in America.

"Miami can be very segregated. We are diverse, but we are more like a salad and we wanted to be the salad bowl. We wanted to encompass all these different groups and create



convergence. It's not just existing on a corner where you intersect. It's actually making an effort to learn about other people's experiences," says Damian Pardo, co-founder of Gay8 and Chair of 4Ward Miami, an organization with programs that advance community engagement, social justice and cultural arts. "We decided to use a festival because through music, food and art, you're going to get a crowd that is representative of the diversity you want to create."

Next scheduled for February 13, 2022, and promoting the theme of "Freedom," Gay8 will connect dots between marginalized communities in the U.S. and those speaking out against the oppressive Cuban regime on the island, all while featuring live music, DJs, and screenings of LGBTQ foreign films in Little Havana's Tower Theater.

And, apparently, it's working. "The festival has really helped to make the area more open because everyone is invited, from shirtless guys to *abuelitas*," says Molina.

To further explore the local art scene, head to Futurama 1637, a shared space where multiple artists create, exhibit and sell their work.

Cubacho, where I first met Rodrigo, has become the neighborhood's cultural hub, and includes an art museum, live music venue, café, restaurant and bar (boasting an extensive rum collection). The space is exceptional, and the owners are vocal allies of the LGBTQ community. During June, Cubacho hosted a special Pride party, and they work intimately with Gay8.

For the full-throttle LGBTQ Latin nightlife experience, you'll have to drive a short distance out of Little Havana to Azucar Nightclub. Currently the only LGBTQ Latin club in the area, Azucar is co-owned by Alexis Fernández, the Cuban drag artist best known as Marytrini. The club has stood the test of time and gentrification for over 20 years. Every Thursday through Sunday, the evening starts with drag shows and ends with dancing for Miami's extensive Spanish-dominant-speaking queer community.

Back in Little Havana, you'll want to stroll through the Calle Ocho Walk of Fame, honoring famous Latin artists like Celia Cruz and Gloria Estefan, and make your way toward one of the area's most iconic spots, Domino Park.

Here, you'll see the neighborhood elders playing the popular game all day long.

And you are going to want to eat — a lot. On every corner, you'll find a delicious Cuban restaurant that serves big meals at affordable prices.

Favorite Cuban restaurants in Little Havana and Miami include Old's Havana, El Pub and (though a short drive away) the Miami Cuban staples of Versailles and La Carreta. But save room for dessert: A scoop of "Abuela Maria" with a guava swirl from Azucar Ice Cream Company is mandatory.

As a Cuban kid growing up in Miami, Cuban culture wasn't anything I sought out. I didn't have to. It was all around me. Now, 25 years after leaving the city — and as the world watches the largest protests on the island in decades — I realize that Miami will always be home. And I'm especially proud of the contributions of my people — Cuban and LGBTQ — and how those intersecting groups continue to expand the American Dream in Little Havana to be a little more inclusive. 🌺



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TRANSFORMING THE BEACHSCAPES OF MIAMI

Thanks to architect William Lane, Miami Beach's lifeguard towers are beach staples that hold a special place in the hearts of all who come and visit them.

When you visit the sandy, sun-soaked beaches of Miami, it's impossible to miss the vibrant, artfully designed lifeguard towers that are some of the destination's most beloved icons. With their eye-catching color schemes, unique shapes, and unmistakably Art Deco-inspired aesthetic, the lifeguard towers of Miami Beach and South Beach represent the melding of art and architecture — the signature stylings of architect William Lane.

William Lane is an award-winning architect who has been making his mark on Miami since the early 1990s, capturing the destination's one-of-a-kind culture, history and personality in the dozens of beach lifeguard towers, city parks, and numerous structures. And while he is credited with many of the area's design highlights, including South Pointe Park, Sunny Isles Beach Front Park and the Freehand Hotel, many locals hold a special spot in their heart for the Miami Beach lifeguard stands.

TRANSFORMING THE BEACHSCAPES OF MIAMI

After Hurricane Andrew destroyed several of the lifeguard stands dotting Miami Beach, the city called upon William Lane and his design team to create replacements. Almost immediately, the five lifeguard stands became an illustration of the community's revitalization and cultural renaissance.

One of the most impressive aspects of the towers is that they were, and still are, quintessentially Miami in every way. And as Lane tells it, virtually every element of their design was inspired by the city itself. He says, "The lifeguard towers were influenced not only by Miami's

mid-century and art deco architecture but also by its Caribbean culture and the use of vibrant colors derived from the natural beauty of the tropics."

Two decades later, the City of Miami Beach again reached out to Lane. This time, he was asked to revisit his original vision for the lifeguard tower project, building upon it to design several prototypes to replace three dozen towers from South Pointe Park to 86th Street. Dramatic shapes and vivid colors guarantee that each tower immediately stands out on the white sand beaches, drawing the eye and making an attention-grabbing statement. William Lane's project page for the towers likens them to "the Moai figures on Easter Island," in that "they are an expression for identity and culture on Miami Beach."

ARCHITECTURE INSPIRED BY THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE CITY

Snapping a photo of one of Lane's lifeguard stands is somewhat a rite of passage for locals and visitors alike. But for Lane himself, the more than 40 towers represent much of what he's come to love about Miami Beach, including his friendships with fellow local creators who served as a source of inspiration. He explains:

"When I first moved to Miami, I had the pleasure of becoming friends with Morris Lapidus, the architect of the Fontainebleau Hotel, Eden Roc Hotel and the Lincoln Road follies. His use of contemporary forms mixed with bold geometries and even baroque elements inspired me to push boundaries that other designers may not have."

In addition to the towers, Lane is particularly proud of South Pointe Park and Sunny Isles Beach Front Park, which he describes as an “homage to the expressive and thematic mid-century motels that have all but disappeared to make room for the skyscrapers that now occupy A1A in Sunny Isles.”

LIVING A BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED LIFE AS A TRUE LOCAL

As any local will tell you, living in this lush, culturally rich and diverse place presents you with the opportunity to seize life in a way that no other locale can. For William Lane, that means making the most of everything that this incredible community has to offer — and soaking up every second as a Miami resident.

When asked about his favorite things to do in Miami, Lane has no shortage of highlights to share:

“On the weekends, I enjoy biking up and down Miami Beach’s paved beach walk or kayaking to different islands in Biscayne Bay. There are numerous small islands that were famously wrapped in pink by artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude in 1983. All of these uninhabited islands offer a unique natural experience in the middle of a bustling metropolis and can be easily reached by kayaks or paddleboards.”

He adds that art museums are among his favorite places to visit in Miami, especially the Rubell Museum in Allapattah. Right across the street, he nearly always makes a stop at Hometown Barbecue, which Lane passionately declares to be “the best barbeque in Miami.”

That being said, don’t ask him to choose just one Miami restaurant as his all-time favorite. With a diverse palate and a marked appreciation for international cuisine, Lane can easily list several restaurants that he would recommend any day of the week. For Peruvian, he heads to Merkado 31, Sazon is his spot of choice for traditional Cuban cuisine, and his go-to burger spot is Burgers and Shakes. When out-of-towners ask where to go in Miami for the best food, Lane names North Beach as his all-time favorite foodie-friendly neighborhood.

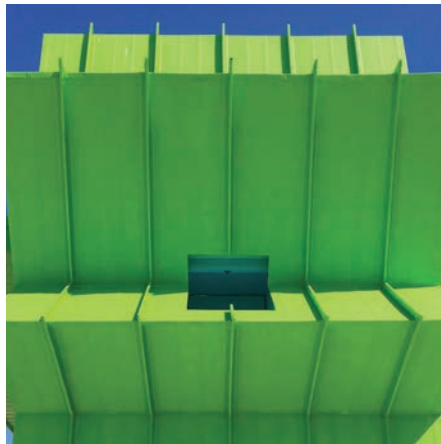


Of course, when you spend your days working as hard as this acclaimed Miami architect, it’s important that you dedicate the same passion to relaxing. Lane can often be found enjoying the calm atmosphere and crystal-clear waters at North Beach or spending time with friends at the Freehand Hotel (which he had a hand in designing). Between the property’s tropical gardens, handcrafted cocktails and seasonal, farm-to-table menu, Lane believes there are few better places in Miami to spend an afternoon.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ONE OF MIAMI’S MOST BELOVED ARCHITECTS

If you’ve never experienced William Lane’s famous Miami Beach lifeguard towers in person, now is the time — especially now that we’ve hopefully piqued your interest. Some locals make it their goal to see every one of the dozens of these structures across Miami Beach. Colorful, eclectic, and as unique as the city they call home, the Miami Beach lifeguard towers are a stunning embodiment of the destination’s signature spirit.

Visit WilliamLane.com for more details about William Lane and his design firm’s projects. 🌸





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Apr

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Apr

Sizzle Miami

May

SweetHeat Miami

May

Out in the Tropics

Apr/May

Wynwood Pride

Jun

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