# My Name is Rachel Corrie

Dramaturgical packet

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for Purple Bench Productions' Chicago premiere

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# Timeline of Rachel's life (approximately):

- 1979, April 10. Rachel Corrie born in Olympia, Washington
- 1989. Begins writing poetry regularly. (10 years old)
- 1991. Begins keeping a journal. (11 years old)
- 1995. Travels to Russia for 6 weeks. (16 years old)
- 1997. Graduates from high school early.
- 1997. Starts school at Evergreen State College.
- 1998-1999. Spends a year working for the Washington Conservation Corps, much of it at Mount Rainier, in Olympic National Park.
- 1999. Meets Colin.
- 1999. Writes about nightmare of her own death.
- 2001. Works as a mental health care provider for Behavioral Health Resources, a mental health and chemical dependency service agency.
- 2001-2002. Becomes involved in activism in college—including the
- 2002, Summer. Invited to go to Gaza by a friend
- 2002, September. Rachel and Colin split up after living together. Rachel moves back home with her parents and her sister.
- 2002, 17 Sept. Rachel attends a meeting/discussion with ISM volunteers returning from Palestine. She contemplates going to Gaza as a volunteer.
- 2002 Fall. Rachel attends ISM training meetings.
- 2002, December. Rachel organizes trip to Palestine to work with the ISM
- 2003, January 25. Arrives in Jerusalem, travels to Beit Sahour for training.
- January 26. Travels from Beit Sahour to Jerusalem, in preparation to go to Rafa.
- January 27. Gaza and West Bank under strict curfew; people not allowed to leave their homes. Rachel arrives in Rafa, in the Gaza Strip.
- January 28. Israeli General Legislative Elections held, Ariel Sharon's Likud party wins the vast majority of votes, nearly double that of the next most popular party.
- January-March: Rachel involved in a number of activities with the International Solidarity Movement. She protests in front of homes and wells threatened to be demolished, visits schools, women's groups, and medical facilities. She interviews and stays with Palestinian families, writes up reports of what she witnesses, maintains regular contact with friends and family via email, and organizes Olympia as a sister city to Rafa.
- 2003, March 16. Rachel is killed by Israeli Defense Forces, in Rafa, Gaza.

# Glossary for terms and other references in My Name is Rachel Corrie:

**animus**: 1. The basic impulses and instincts which govern one's actions. 2. A feeling of enmity, animosity or ill will. 3. The masculine aspect of the female psyche or personality. (Jungian psychology).

**Block J, Block O, Brazil:** terms given to specific blocks of refugee homes in Rafa, existing along the Israeli-controlled border with the Gaza Strip and Egypt.

### **IDF**: Israeli Defense Forces

neo-liberalism: a political movement that espouses economic liberalism as a means of promoting economic development and securing political liberty.

## **ISM**: International Solidary Movement

A movement which resists the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land through direct, non-violent action, of which Rachel was a part. Their use of "human shields" to protect Palestinian homes from demolition was a contributing factor to her controversial death.

**Neoliberalism** is used to denote a group of economic theories and libertarian political philosophies which believe that government control over the economy is inefficient, corrupt or otherwise undesirable. Neoliberalism is not a unified economic theory or political philosophy—it is a label denoting an apparent shift in social-scientific and political sentiments that manifested themselves in theories and political platforms supporting a reform of largely centralized postwar economic institutions in favor of decentralized ones. Few supporters of neoliberal policies use the word itself. Neoliberalism also refers to a political movement in which prominent members of the American left embraced some conservative positions such as anti-unionism, free market economics, and welfare reform. Broadly speaking, neoliberalism seeks to transfer control of the economy from state to the private sector, in terms of tax reform, redirection of public spending, trade liberalization, privatizion of state enterprises, deregulation of restrictions to trade

Neoliberal movements ultimately changed the world's economies in many ways, such as: growth in international trade and cross-border capital flows, elimination of trade barriers, cutbacks in defense spending, cutbacks in public sector employment, privatization of previously public-owned enterprises, and the transfer of the share of countries' economic wealth to the top economic percentiles of the population, reduction in the size of governments, and decrease in social welfare spending.

Major criticisms leveled at neoliberal policies include objections of: anti-sovereignty -- globalization and liberalization is argued by leftist and nationalist critics to have subverted nation's ability for self-determination; exploitation -- critics of neoliberal policies consider capitalistic economics to be exploitive; environmental costs - More transportation, more industrial production occurs in unregulated markets; and an increase in corporate power -- some anti-corporate organizations believe neoliberalism, in difference to liberalism, changes economic and government policies to increase the power of corporations and large business and a shift to benefit the upper classes over the lower classes.

**Pollyanna:** the protagonist in a book by Elleanor Porter, for which the book is named; (*by extension*) A person who is persistently cheerful and optimistic, even when given cause not to be so. *You call her an optimist, but I call her an obnoxious Pollyanna*.

whelk: A species of large marine mollusks, much used as food in Europe.

# <u>Information on places mentioned:</u>

**Beit Sahour** is a Palestinian town administered by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, situated to the east of Bethlehem. The population of 15,400 is 80% Christian and 20% Muslim. The town is reputed to be close to the place where, according to the Bible, the angel announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds.

Gaza is the largest city in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian territories. The city, which has a population of approximately 410,000 in the inner city and 1.4 million people in the metropolitan area, has been inhabited since 3500BC. The word "Gaza" is often used to refer to the entire Gaza Strip, so the city is frequently termed "Gaza City" for clarity. The population of Gaza today is overwhelmingly Muslim, with a small minority of about 3,500 Christians, mostly adhering to the Greek Orthodox Church. According to a 1997 census by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Gaza has an overwhelmingly young population with over half of which being between the age of infancy to 14 years (50.3%)A massive influx of Palestinian refugees swelled Gaza's population after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. By 1967, the population had grown to about six times its 1948 size. In 1997, 51.8% of Gaza's inhabitants were refugees or their descendants. The city's population has continued to increase since that time to 409,680 in 2006, making it the largest city in the Palestinian territories. The birth rate is extremely high and the vast majority of Gazans live in poverty and rely on United Nations food aid to survive.

Khan Yunis is a city and adjacent refugee camp in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics the city, its refugee camp, and its immediate surroundings had a total population of 180,000 in 2006. Although Khan Yunis lies only 4 kilometers from the Mediterranean sea the climate of Khan Yunis is that of semi-arid region with an annual rainfall of approximately 260mm. Khan Yunis was the site of Israeli helicopter attacks in August 2001 and October 2002. The result of many of the helicopter attacks has left tens of civilians killed, hundreds wounded and civilian buildings within the vicinity destroyed. It is known as a stronghold of the militant Islamist group Hamas. The northern part of Khan Yunis overlooks the Kissufim junction — formerly one of the main roads for Israeli traffic to Gush Katif settlement. Buildings there had often been used by militants as sniping posts and mortar bases to shoot at the illegal settlements and occupation soldiers.

Rafa: is in the Gaza Strip, on the Egyptian border, and a nearby town on the Egyptian side of the border, on the Sinai Peninsula. It is the largest town on the Gaza Strip - Egypt border, with a population of approximately 130,000, of which some 84,000 live in the two refugee camps about it, Canada Camp (Tell as-Sultan Camp) to the north, and Rafah camp to the south. It serves as the district capital of the Rafah Governorate. Yasser Arafat International Airport, Gaza's only airport, is located just south of the city; the airport operated from 1998 to 2001. Rafah is the site of the Rafah Border Crossing, the only crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Formerly operated by Israeli military forces, control of the crossing was transferred to the Palestinian Authority in September 2005 as part of the larger Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. In the 1997 census, Rafah's (together with Rafah camp) gender distribution was 50.5% male and 49.5% female. Refugees made up 80.3% of the entire population.

# Selections from Rachel's journals:

(untitled) 1989-1991

Sleeping in the balmy atmosphere of early summer
The sun melts across the sky
With the gentle ease of an earthworm
Waking suddenly, the sky is closing its gaping mouth
I am half sensitive
To what is around me
I don't know where I have come from
A world of half awareness and imagination

1995-1997 If I die today

Silence the birds if I die today
Let them only stare from the brass bars of their cages
and watch as my mother weeps.
Cover the flat faces of clocks with black cloth
and silence the alarms.
Hush the dirt-water of the creek
by whispering to it,
"She is dead, she is dead."

If I die today, you must burn the papers under my bed to charred leaves of ash. You must silence my dead voice, so it will not embarrass my memory.

If I die today, you must drink milk from the carton, wantonly! You must shriek and scream in the shopping mall in front of all those blind dead ghosts and the placid, contemptuous mannequins, and the mall gods who watch over everything in their great bawdy underworld. You must make a great loud racket. Such a loud fuss to silence the birds and the sky and the rain. You must be so crazy and free if I die today! You must go to those cold-faced mannequins and take off their tiny shoes and find out if mannequins have toes. And if they do (and I imagine they have blunt tawny nails on them) You must find out what plastic manneguin flesh takes like. You must kiss their shoes Suck on them with your clumsy tongue. And you must do this right there in front of the undead shoppers and the ladies behind the perfume counter.

You must cry out and tell everyone,
"She is dead. She is dead."
And do what I imagined.
You must walk through the grocery store
and take juicy bites out of apples
and then put them back.
You must kiss people you hardly know with passion
so that they stumble dizzily for a moment.

## December 20, 2000

#### Values:

Don't judge other people. Have compassion. Understand that I have limited experience and limited perspective and be grateful for people who challenge that perspective.

Try to act out of love, not anger or ego—especially with political stuff.

Respect the earth and always work to improve my relationship to the earth.

Try to be honest.

Try to act in solidarity with people who are marginalized.

Try not to profit from injustices. Do not accept personal victory in a competition with people in which I am given unfair advantages.

Depend on myself as much as possible.

Talk openly with my parents about who I am, realistically.

## February 2001

Oualities I find attractive in others:

Bravery: ability to risk failure. Not afraid to look stupid.

Honesty: ability to admit to deficiencies. Ability to tell people when they're uncomfortable, pissed, confused.

Talent: persistence and skill at some specialty—especially something unusual. People who always have guitars/sketchbooks with them. Metalworkers.

Energy: people who run around a lot/take initiative, keep busy. People who always have something interesting to do.

Independence: people who value alone time and take it. People who have their own agenda. People who are their own best friends.

Wildness without self-destructiveness

Being in control—understanding what is going on in any given situation—being savvy.

# Articles on Rachel by her family:

*A Call to Action:* Rachel's Words Live By Cindy and Craig Corrie, October 10, 2005 From www.counterpunch.org

When our daughter Rachel Corrie was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in the Gaza strip on March 16 2003, an immediate impulse was to get her words out to the world. She had been working in Rafah with a nonviolent resistance organisation, the International Solidarity Movement, trying to stop the demolition of Palestinian homes and wells. Her emails home had had a powerful impact on our family, making us think about the situation in the Middle East in ways we had never done before. Without a direct connection to Israel and Palestine, we had not understood the devastating nature of the Palestinians' situation. Coming from the US, our allegiance and empathy had always been with the people of Israel.

After Rachel died we realised that her words were having a similar effect on others whose lives were being changed, as ours have been--not just by Rachel's death, but by the window her writing provided on the Palestinian experience and by her call to action.

Earlier this year, when a play created entirely from Rachel's emails and journals first opened in London, we saw in a very immediate way the impact that Rachel's words can have on others. Theatre can reach people in a different and deeper place than reading a news article or listening to a speech: there is an emotional aspect that for some people can be more long-lasting and motivating.

Theatre humanises; all art humanises. It takes us away from the merely logical and rational. In the Israel-Palestine conflict there is often a very logical calculus of death and war--and you must step out of the constructs of that logic in order to construct a logic for peace.

The play, *My Name Is Rachel Corrie*, is not just about how Rachel died, even if that is why she is known and remembered. It also illuminates her humanity, tracing her evolution from typical teenage self-exploration through to her search for a political voice. The play includes some of her writing that might be considered uncomplimentary to us, and even to her. Far better that, though, than being a symbol of one dimension.

It is disconcerting, but also comforting, to watch an actor who looks much like Rachel--Megan Dodds--play our daughter on stage. In the opening scene, when Rachel awakens in her messy bedroom, the resemblance is almost too much. But Megan lives Rachel's words in ways that are sometimes familiar but also sometimes surprising, so that we learn from her what Rachel may have been thinking. At several points in the play, Megan enacts receiving emails from us--real emails that we actually sent to Rachel. We had never before imagined our daughter's reactions to receiving our messages until we saw them on stage.

Rachel was a real human being. Sometimes, when people idealise her, we feel vulnerable for her. Knowing the complete human being, would they feel the same? Through My Name is Rachel Corrie, people can know a more complete Rachel.

Clearly, our daughter has become a positive symbol for people. Her story and her words seem to motivate others to do something, not just sit and talk about the world's situation in their living rooms and feel unhappy. The weekend after Rachel was killed, we discussed with old friends what we should do. We needed to find a response. In some ways we may have been more fortunate than other parents who have lost children, for the response in our situation was apparent. With her efforts to educate and to build permanent connections with Palestinians in Rafah, Rachel provided us with a path.

In an email from Rachel to her friend Todd, she tells him 10 times over that he must come to Gaza. "Come here!", she repeats over and over. That is what Rachel would have wanted us to do, too: to try to carry on what she started. We recently spent time in the US with members of the family who were behind the wall of the home Rachel stood to protect. For a month we ate, played and travelled with 15-month-old Sama. What future does she have, living in what now amounts to a mass prison in Gaza?

The recent disengagement may provide some relief for Gazans at the most obvious level. But it is hard not to contrast the media coverage afforded to the Israeli settlers' leaving, with that given to the many Palestinian families who have lost their homes to demolition in Gaza. What has been happening in the West Bank under cover of the disengagement—the building of the wall and the expansion of settlements—is also very worrying. And when the Israeli prime minister's close aide Dov Weisglass said that the real intent of the Gaza disengagement was to place the peace process in formaldehyde, we have to take him at his word. We must keep insisting on a peace process and work towards a viable Palestinian state that will benefit Palestinians, Israelis and the rest of the world.

Meanwhile, we are still asking our government for a US-led investigation into Rachel's killing. The US state department is on record saying that the report of the Israeli military police does not reflect an investigation that was "thorough, credible and transparent", despite that being promised to President Bush by Ariel Sharon. In March we initiated a lawsuit against the Israel Defence Force and the government of Israel, to seek justice for Rachel and also information. We still would like to know what happened on March 16 2003, and why the international eyewitness reports differ so radically from the statements of the soldiers involved.

Unfortunately, the Israeli parliament, counter to international law, has passed retroactive legislation making it impossible for most Palestinians and others to file suit against the IDF for injury that occurred in the occupied territories after September 2000. In the US we have taken legal action against Caterpillar Inc, which manufactured the D-9R bulldozer which killed Rachel. Under existing US law, corporations can be, and are being, held responsible when they knowingly continue to provide goods and services that are used in a pattern of human-rights violations.

The month before she was killed, Rachel wrote the following in an email to us: "I look forward to seeing more and more people willing to resist the direction the world is moving in, a direction where our personal experiences are irrelevant, that we are defective, that our communities are not important, that we are powerless, that our future is determined, and that the highest level of humanity is expressed through what we choose to buy at the mall." Action has already flowed.

## Craig Corrie on the Silencing of his Daughter's Words

By Craig Corrie March 10, 2006 From www.ifamericansknew.org

Please forgive an old actuary, so new to the world of theater and activism, for weighing in where I have so little knowledge or experience, but I would like to express my feelings on two related subjects.

First, I thank you all for the wisdom of focusing on the larger questions surrounding the fiasco of the New York Theater Workshop's cancellation of the New York debut of My Name is Rachel Corrie. The silencing of this play is alarmingly similar to the silencing of almost any voice that speaks out for equal rights for Palestinians, and the silence we have all faced so often when demanding justice from Washington or Jerusalem. The question is not simply why did the NYTW cancel the play, but what pressure would cause Mr. Nicola to abandon a play about which he said " ... when I first read this play, it affected me deeply, I thought it presented an opportunity to share with our community a powerful message that the good fortune to be born into comfortable circumstances comes with the responsibility of conscience. One must always be aware of the misery of others and take compassionate action" (as quoted by John Heilpern in The New York Observer). I also think all this work and media attention has been incredibly effective at bringing forth a discussion of the lack of discussion around Palestinian issues.

When we were first contacted by the Royal Court Theatre and told of the theater's and Alan Rickman's dream of creating a workshop or play from Rachel's emails, I was amazed that people of such talent, experience, and reputation would take that sort of interest in our daughter's writing. While I always knew Rachel was a good writer, I wasn't certain I was completely objective on the subject. So when we met at the Royal Court in the fall of 2003 it all seemed surreal. There Cindy and I explained that Rachel wrote throughout her life, and if we searched we could find a great deal of work they might be interested in. Since most of her writing was in her personal journals, we had not read what was there, but we would try to gather it together and send it to them.

That gathering proved to require far more emotional effort than what Cindy and I were then capable of, and nearly eight months went by without our getting the writing to the Royal Court. We then met Alan again at a dinner for the Tom Hurndall Foundation in June of 2004 and there Rachel's sister, Sarah, promised that she would gather and type the material and email it to the Royal Court Theater. Unlike her parents, Sarah lived up to her promise.

When Alan Rickman, Katharine Viner and others at the Royal Court read the material Sarah sent, their dream took the shape of producing a play based solely on Rachel's words (with a couple of other emails from Cindy, Todd, and me). They created the story line and text by selecting which writing was to be included. The dream gathered momentum as they found the right actress; the right set, lighting, sound and video designers. And the dream came to fruition with that first run last spring in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs. In the fall the play ran again, this time in the larger theater downstairs, and now it is to be performed this spring at the Playhouse Theatre in London's West End. The Royal Court production has won over critics, audiences, and perhaps most difficult of all, Rachel's family. Megan Dodds was spot-on that first day we met her when she said "You will love it!"

It took a great deal of trust and courage to turn over Rachel's words to those strangers from London. The strangers have now become friends, the trust has been repaid many times over, and the courage is now with the theater. The audience sees the skill the Royal Court Theatre brought to producing My Name is Rachel Corrie, but our family sees the way they have cherished Rachel and her words. They have given us a gift we can never repay.

But the dream was always for the Royal Court to bring the play to New York. Not just the text, but the production. Surely a play, like any piece of art, is both created and experienced as a unity. It takes all the production pieces to create that unity. And in meeting art, as in meeting people, first impressions can be lasting. For the people of New York to experience My Name is Rachel Corrie the way I did in London, their introduction to it should be through the Royal Court production. The Royal Court will set the standard for future productions of the play sure to follow in the U.S., and it is the public reception of this initial production that will demand that Rachel's voice continues to be heard.

When I lobby in Washington, or when Cindy and I give a talk somewhere, I don't do that for Rachel. I know I can no longer do anything for Rachel, so I do that for the children still living in Gaza. But somehow this play feels different. To me, it is not only by and about Rachel, but also for Rachel. This play, given to us and to the world by these strangers-become-friends from London, is a beautiful expression of both love and respect for Rachel. The people at the Royal Court Theatre have kept our trust, not just by producing an award winning play, but also by consistently treating Rachel, her words, and her image with dignity. Now I see it as our turn to keep their trust as well.

# Information on the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice:

The foundation is a grassroots, 501(c)3 non-profit organization that conducts and supports programs that foster connections between people, that build understanding, respect, and appreciation for differences, and that promote cooperation within and between local and global communities. The foundation encourages and supports grassroots efforts in pursuit of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice, which we view as pre-requisites for world peace. Continuing the work begun and envisioned by our daughter, Rachel Corrie, our initial emphasis has been on Israel/Palestine.

We conduct and support projects that educate for peace and justice, that foster connections and understanding between peoples on global and local levels, that promote the use of art and the written word in fostering justice and peace, and that encourage individual grassroots participation in bringing to fruition a positive world vision.

We hope people will take from our work the same, simple understanding that Rachel expressed as a young child: that we are interconnected. The future of us all depends on our ability to truly want for other children those basic things that we want for our own–shelter, health, education, safety, opportunity, and joy—and to work for that. Our leaders seem very parochial now, emphasizing the differences between people and pointing to "the other" with fear and disrespect. Through our work, we hope to illustrate how much we have in common with one another and that our differences should be points of celebration rather than fear.

The creation of the foundation was one response to Rachel's killing. Shortly after her death, we had the opportunity to meet Linda Biehl whose daughter Amy was brutally killed as she registered voters for the first election in which all South Africans could participate. We learned how the Biehl family, guided by their daughter's spirit and values, had established a foundation in South Africa. At the same time in the spring of 2003, people were asking us what they could do to remember Rachel. The conjunction of those two things encouraged us to believe that through a foundation inspired by Rachel's values and spirit, we might make some difference. We slowly took the steps to organize the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice. The structure and work evolve as we continue to learn and to think about sustainability. We have drawn on the expertise of those in the Olympia community and elsewhere who have been eager to help us.

It requires tremendous effort and resources to establish the infrastructure for such an organization, and sometimes there is frustration at not being able to accomplish actual projects as quickly as we would like. We are primarily an all volunteer organization at this point. Certainly one of our frustrations is the struggle to keep up with communications that we have with wonderful people and supporters from throughout the U.S. and the world.

With the devastation and loss of life in Palestine, Lebanon, and Israel, Iraq and elsewhere it is challenging to hang on to hope. Still, it is always there for us, prompted by the many extraordinary people we meet throughout this country and in the world who work for justice on this issue and on many others. We are personally blessed each day with seeing the very best in humanity. A moment that stands out was at the West Bank village of Bi'lin in December where we joined Israelis, internationals, and an entire village of Palestinians who for over a year have been nonviolently protesting the Israeli military confiscation of sixty percent of their West Bank farmland. An apartheid wall and illegal settlements now stand where olive groves did before. Whenever we experience this convergence of Israelis, Palestinians, and many others—all recognizing the injustice, opposing it, and supporting human rights and international law—it is very heartening; and it happens for us frequently.

It can happen for others as well. The first thing Americans can do is to reject the idea, the myth really, that the Israeli/Palestinian situation cannot be solved. That kind of thinking makes it far too easy to avoid responsibility and action. Then, citizens can become better informed by seeking information from a variety of sources, including alternative media and from those with direct experience in the Middle East. They can join or lend support to one or more of the growing number of secular and religious groups that oppose the Israeli occupation and seek a just peace in the Middle East. They can educate their communities by monitoring local media coverage of this issue and writing informed letters to the editor. They can educate their representatives in Congress, challenge them to act and vote responsibly on this issue, and insist that U.S. laws regarding weapons exports are adhered to. The U.S. Government maintains a very biased stance in support of Israel that is not in the long-term interest of either Americans or Israelis, let-alone Palestinians. We must insist on more balanced policy that assures justice, freedom, security, and economic viability for both Israelis and Palestinians. Then there may be a chance for peace. Avoidance of this issue only makes the situation increasingly perilous for all involved, including — Craig & Cindy Corrie the U.S.

# Books and websites suggested by Rachel in her journals:

## Suggested Reading:

Hass, Amira. *Drinking the Sea at Gaza*Roy, Sara. *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development.*Usher, Graham. *Palestine in Crisis.*\*Pappe, Ilan. *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples.*and various books by Noam Chomsky

## Websites suggested by Rachel:

www.palsolidarity.org
 The website of the International Solidarity Movement
 www.ahram.org
 Al-Ahram Daily is a English-language newspaper produced in Egypt.
 www.haaretz.com
 Ha'aretz, a mainstream Israeli daily newspaper.
 www.merip.org
 Middle East Report
 www.electronicanifada.org
 This Palestinian-produced website provides a thorough accounting of impact of occupation on the people of Palestine.

## Documentaries about Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

Palestine 1948 Nakba
The Edge of Hope (Am Rand der Hoffnung)
Jerusalem: The East Side Story
At the Green Line
Death In Gaza
Occupation 101
Promises
Relentless: The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East

The Land of the Settlers

<sup>\*</sup>Rachel notes this was one of the best books she read on the conflict.