

# SONALI (ALYY) PATEL

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## PROFILE

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Sonali (Alyy) Patel is a trailblazing LGBTQ+ scholar, activist, and creative, who has made monumental strides for Queer South Asian Women in North America. Alyy pioneered Canadian research on Queer South Asian Women's issues and founded the Queer South Asian Women's Network—a thriving national non-profit. Alyy is an empathic and solution-oriented leader with extensive experience in diversity & inclusion consulting, project management, program evaluation, and research. Alyy's top strengths include knowledge mobilization, public speaking, communication, social media, and teamwork. Alyy is the author of *Don't Tell My Parents: Queer Diasporic Truths*.

## EDUCATION

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA** 2021—Present  
*Sociology*

- Recipient of the SSHRC doctoral fellowship
- **Supervisor:** Dr. Amin Ghaziani

**MASTER OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA (Full Scholarship)** 2018—2021  
*Sociology (GPA: 3.95/4.0)*

- **Thesis:** Understanding the Invisibilization of Queer South Asian Women in Pride Toronto™ (nominated for the Best Graduate Thesis Prize)
- **Supervisor:** Dr. Kathleen Rodgers

**HONOURS BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH DISTINCTION, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO** 2014—2018  
*Double Major: Sociology & Sexual Diversity Studies | Minor: Women Studies (GPA: 3.41/4.0)*

- **Thesis:** "Brown Girls Can't Be Gay": Racism Experienced by Queer South Asian Women in the Toronto LGBTQ Community
- **Supervisor:** Dr. Tori Smith

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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**FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, QUEER SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S (QSAW) NETWORK** 2019 – Present

- **Project Management:** Solely developed the first organization for queer South Asian women in North America. Direct the organizational strategy, external partnerships, and all programming. Responsible for all decision-making. Successfully surpassed two-year goals for growth and outreach within one year.
- **Operations and Finance:** Developed the organization's policies and bylaws, direct HR and internal operations, hire and lead an executive team, manage the budget, and coordinate bank-related matters.
- **Event Coordination:** Organize monthly programs, recruit facilitators, and manage online registration.
- **Performance Metrics:** Developed metrics to track organizational performance, measure success, and identify areas for improvement. Report performance statistics to our funder at the end of each fiscal year.
- **Public Relations:** Design the branding, logo, website, and all marketing products. Manage all social media platforms and develop social media content. Successfully grew Instagram following by 2179% in two years.

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION CONSULTANT, INDEPENDENT

2015—Present

- **Educate:** Developed a novel empathy and mindfulness-based approach to EDI training, which has succeeded in eliminating barriers to allyship. Facilitate workshops on topics such as (i) Intersectionality, (ii) Cultural Sensitivity, (iii) Inclusive Workplace Culture, (iv) Power & Privilege, and (v) Unconscious Bias.
- **Consult:** Conduct consultations, policy reviews, program evaluations, and provide compelling evidence-based recommendations to C-Suite executives.
- **Public Speaking:** Utilize a story-telling approach to deliver captivating keynote and motivational speeches to schools and corporations on topics such as authenticity, empathy, allyship, and more.
- **Major Clients:** Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, Marvell Technology Inc., LOFT Community Services, International Film Festival of South Asia, Halton District School Board, View Eye Care, Evolve Wellness Clinic.

## RESEARCH ASSISTANT & CO-FACILITATOR, PHYSICAL & HEALTH EDUCATION CANADA

2020—2021

- **Data Collection:** Facilitated focus groups with LGBTQ+ students and educators across Canada. Developed and facilitated interactive DesignLab workshops to identify barriers to participation for queer and trans youth in school sports. Guided students to design school-specific inclusive physical activity programs.
- **Knowledge Synthesis:** Developed a digestible resource guide for educators using the research findings on LGBTQ+ inclusion in sports and physical activities.

## MASTER'S THESIS, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

2019—2021

- **Research Design:** Independently designed a critical ethnographic study that mirrored program evaluation research to investigate the invisibility of queer South Asian women in Pride Toronto.
- **Data Collection:** Developed performance tracking metrics to measure the effectiveness of DEI initiatives for multiply marginalized groups in Pride Toronto.
- **Findings:** Made novel research discoveries about the discrimination against LGBTQ+ South Asian women.
- **Research Mobilization:** Analyzed the data to make compelling evidence-based recommendations for inclusive programs and practices in LGBTQ+ organizations.

## TEACHING ASSISTANT, SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

2018—2020

- **Evaluation:** Evaluated exams and assignments. Input grades (data) into Excel.
- **Facilitation:** Designed and led an interactive exam review game for students.

## RESEARCHER, DEPARTMENT OF WORDS AND DEEDS

2019

- **Research:** Conducted an extensive literature review to make compelling recommendations for the National LGBT Purge Historic Monument Project.

## POLICY & PROGRAMS ASSISTANT, MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, SOCIAL & COMMUNITY SERVICES

2018, 2019

*Effective Programming and Evaluation Unit, Youth Justice Division, Government of Ontario*

- **Gap Analysis:** Identified a gap in youth justice programming in 2018. I was rehired in 2019 to bridge this gap by developing an evidence-based model for family engagement in the Ontario Youth Justice System.
- **Program Design:** Conducted extensive research (i.e. jurisdictional scan, literature reviews) to design effective programming models (e.g. public health-informed model for youth gun violence reduction).
- **Evidence-Based Programming:** Developed evidence-based guiding definitions of effective programming strategies in the Youth Justice System. Gathered data to make a compelling business case for stakeholders to adapt a novel 'desistance' approach to youth delinquency.
- **Public Speaking:** Presented a summary of my findings to policymakers and stakeholders in the broader Youth Justice division at the end of both summer work terms.

## HALTON REGION LGBTQ PRIDE COORDINATOR, POSITIVE SPACE NETWORK

2015—2018

- **Project Management:** Developed a strategic plan to successfully execute the first LGBTQ+ Pride event in Halton Region, and annually thereafter. Developed a logistics manual detailing exact tasks, locations, and other relevant information specific to each volunteer.

- **Volunteer Coordination:** Recruited 80 volunteers. Designed and facilitated anti-oppression training for volunteers. Coordinated volunteer shift scheduling.
- **Graphic Design:** Designed all event posters for Halton Pride.

**PROJECT COORDINATOR, TRI-CAMPUS ORIENTATION WEEK, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO** 2017

- **Event Coordination:** Developed a week of programming for over 16,000 students. Liaised with University administration, vendors, Toronto Police Services, and City of Toronto to successfully execute four large-scale events. Acquired permits, developed a detailed logistics manual with contingency and risk-mitigation plans.
- **Human Resources:** Hired and led a team of 11 paid staff and 50 volunteers. Drafted employee and corporate sponsorship contracts. Designed job-specific training. Coordinated shift scheduling.
- **Finance:** Operated a \$200,000 budget, maintained an accurate record of finances, developed a new Orientation Bursary initiative for low-income students, and successfully maintained a large profit margin.
- **Sponsorship:** Managed a client base of 50+ corporate sponsors and earned over \$140,000.

**ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT INTERNAL & SERVICES, UNIV OF TORONTO STUDENTS' UNION** 2016—2017

- **Administrative:** Utilized MailChimp to send newsletters, transcribed minutes of Board meetings, coordinated volunteer and outreach schedules, and synthesized information into monthly reports for public release.
- **Bursary and Grant Coordination:** Trusted with confidential information, reviewed bursary and grant applications, determined the dollar amount per applicant, and allocated funds to applicants.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Gathered research to make compelling policy recommendations to increase efficiency of the union and engagement of its Board of Directors.

**PROJECT COORDINATOR, WOODSWORTH COLLEGE ORIENTATION WEEK, UNIV OF TORONTO** 2016

- **Event Coordination:** Developed a week of intensive programming for 750+ first-year students, liaised with various vendors, obtained city permits, and planned large-scale events. Developed a facilitation manual with detailed logistics, setup floor plans, contingency, and risk-mitigation plans.
- **Human Resources:** Hired and trained a team of 12 executives and 178 leaders, designed portfolio-specific training documents, drafted employment contracts, and coordinated complex scheduling.
- **Finance:** Operated a \$100,000 budget. Successfully increased the profit margin from previous years with a higher quality of events (measured by participant feedback).
- **Stakeholder Liaison:** Provided monthly reports to stakeholders.

**ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT EQUITY, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO STUDENTS' UNION** 2016

- **Campaign Development:** Designed UofT's #U4Consent anti-sexual violence campaign and eXpression Against Oppression (XAO) week with a manual detailing programming and outreach plans for each.

## LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

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2022—Present	<b>Co-President, Graduate Student Council for Sociology, University of British Columbia</b>
2022—Present	<b>Co-Chair, Vag2Vag Campaign for Queer Women's Sexual Health Awareness, Canada</b>
2021—Present	<b>Co-Founder &amp; Co-Chair, Queer Gujarati Parivaar, North America &amp; United Kingdom</b>
2021	<b>Federal Delegate for Oakville Riding, Daughters of the Vote, Equal Voice Canada</b>
2019	<b>Event Coordinator, Sociology &amp; Anthropology Grad Student Orientation, uOttawa</b>
2018—2019	<b>Vice President Social Affairs, Sociology &amp; Anthropology Grad Student Association, uO</b>
2017—2018	<b>Vice President Finance, Undergraduate Sociology Students' Union, U of Toronto</b>
2017—2018	<b>Team Lead, YouDecide Campaign, University of Toronto Students' Union</b>
2017—2018	<b>Chair, Social Sciences Semi-Formal, University of Toronto</b>
2017—2018	<b>Chair, Consent is BAE: LGBTQ+ Anti-Sexual Violence Campaign, University of Toronto</b>
2017—2018	<b>Founder, Woodsworth Racialized Students' Collective, University of Toronto</b>
2016	<b>Event Coordinator, Woodsworth College Orientation Week, University of Toronto</b>

2016—2018	<b>Co-Chair, End the Blood Ban Campaign</b> , University of Toronto
2014—2018	<b>Chair, Gender Neutral Washroom Campaign</b> , Woodsworth College at U of Toronto
2017	<b>Chair, DiverCITY: Mental Health Conference</b> , University of Toronto
2015—2017	<b>President, Woodsworth Inclusive (LGBTQ+ Organization)</b> , University of Toronto
2015—2017	<b>Event Co-Organizer, LGBTQ+ Pride Picnic Committee</b> , University of Toronto
2015—2017	<b>Event Co-Organizer, Queer Orientation Planning Committee</b> , University of Toronto
2016	<b>Chair, Woodsworth's Got PRIDE</b> , University of Toronto

## PUBLICATIONS

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### PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Patel, S. (2019). "Brown Girls Can't Be Gay": Racism Experienced by Queer South Asian Women in the Toronto LGBTQ Community. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 23(3), 410-423.

↳ Ranked 7<sup>th</sup> most cited article in the *Journal of Lesbian Studies* in 2019

### SCHOLARLY REPORTS

Patel, S. & Travers, A. (2021). (rep.). 2LGBTQ+ Inclusion in School-Based Physical Activity Programs. Ottawa, Ontario: Physical Health Education Canada.

### BOOKS

Patel, S. (2022). Don't Tell My Parents: Queer Diasporic Truths. Friesen Press: Toronto, Canada.

### NON-PEER REVIEWED

Patel, S. (2022). Not All Lesbians Are White: The Suffering and Survival of a Queer South Asian Woman. In Mann, S. (Ed). *I Feel Love: An Anthology of Queer Joy*. In Press.

## GIVEN TALKS

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Patel, S. (2022). *Queer South Asian Perspectives on Pride*. Speaker at the **Ontario Government's Pride Flag Raising Ceremony**, Queens Park, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2022). *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*. Speaker at **View Eye Care**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2022). *Supporting LGBTQ+ South Asians*. Speaker at **Everymind**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2022). *Being A Trailblazer*. Speaker at **Wattpad**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2022). *LGBTQ+ Allyship and Inclusion*. Speaker at **Vena Solutions**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2022). *Intersectional Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*. Speaker at **LOFT Community Services**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2022). Being Queer and South Asian. Keynote Speaker at **Sandalwood Heights Secondary School**, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2021). *Queering Sexual Health Education*. Keynote Speaker at the **University of Toronto's Women of South Asian Heritage Collective**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2021). *Empathic and Authentic LGBTQ+ Allyship in the Workplace: Global Pride Summit*. Keynote Speaker at **Marvell Technology Inc.**, North America; Europe, Middle East, and Africa; Asia-Pacific.

Patel, S. (2021). *LGBTQ+ Allyship: Performative versus Authentic*. Keynote Speaker at **LOFT Community Services**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2021). *LGBTQ+ Desi Pride*. Keynote Speaker at the **University of Toronto's First Desi Pride**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Patel, S. (2021). *Authenticity, Empathy, and Hope*. Keynote Speaker at **Westmount High School**, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

- Patel, S. (2020). *Love is Love is Love*. Keynote Speaker at the **International Film Festival of South Asia**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2020). *Queer South Asian Women in the LGBTQ+ Community*. Speaker at the **Pride Toronto™ Dyke March**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2020). *Sexuality and Womanhood in South Asian Culture*. Keynote Speaker at the **ISS' Conference for International Women's Day**, University of Toronto, Ontario.
- Patel, S. (2019). *Level Up with Social Media*. Keynote Speaker at the **Girls' Empowerment Movement Conference on Levelling Up with Tech**, Brampton, Ontario.
- Patel, S. (2018). *Becoming Boundless: An Intersectional Approach to Student Leadership*. Keynote Speaker at the **Canadian Conference on Student Leadership**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2018). *Anti-Oppression and Fostering Safer Spaces*. Speaker at the **Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity's High School LGBTQ+ Conference**, Milton, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2017). *Navigating Societal Institutions as a LGBTQ+ Youth Transitioning into Adulthood*. Speaker at the **Halton District School Board LGBTQ+ Conference**, Burlington, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2017). *Engaging in Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy*. Speaker at the **Burlington Public Library**, Burlington, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2016). *Equity 102: Intersectionality*. Speaker at the **Halton District School Board LGBTQ+ Conference**, Milton, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2016). *Life as a LGBTQ+ Person*. Speaker at **Falgarwood Public School**, Oakville, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2016). *Equity, Diversity, and Intersectionality*. Keynote Speaker at **St. Mildred's Lightbourn School**, Oakville, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2015). *LGBTQ+ Inclusion*. Keynote Speaker at **St. Mildred's Lightbourn School**, Oakville, Ontario, Canada.

## PANEL PARTICIPATION

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2022/02	<b>The Intersectional Nature of Systemic Inequity</b> , International Development Week uO
2021/08	<b>Love is Love is Love</b> , International Film Festival of South Asia
2021/02	<b>LGBTQ Intersectionality</b> , Los Angeles County Psychologists' Association
2020/08	<b>LGBTQQIAP2S+ Racialized Identities</b> , Ontario Mosaic Institute
2020/08	<b>South Asian LGBTQ+ Family Acceptance and Mental Health</b> , Desi Rainbow Parents
2018/04	<b>Student Leadership Experiences on Campus</b> , Woodsworth College UofT
2018/03	<b>Racialized Student Experiences</b> , Woodsworth Racialized Students' Collective UofT
2017/03	<b>Queer Mental Health and Addictions</b> , Woodsworth Inclusive UofT
2016/03	<b>One Girl   Five Queers</b> , Woodsworth Inclusive UofT
2015/10	<b>Equity and Intersectionality on Campus</b> , Equity Studies Students' Union UofT

## GUEST LECTURES

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- Patel, S. (2019, November 4). *Sexuality*. Lecture presented at SOC1101: Principles of Sociology at the University of Ottawa, Canada.

## RESEARCH CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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- Patel, S. (2021). "Cut Your Turban Off to Look Like A Canadian": A Case study of South Asian Participation in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Federal Election of Canada. Paper presented at the **Canadian Sociology Conference**, Edmonton, Alberta.
- Patel, S. (2021). The Politics of (Not) Giving A Sh\*t: Understanding the Invisibilization of Queer South Asian Women in Pride Toronto™. Paper presented at the **Canadian Sociology Conference**, Edmonton, Alberta.
- Patel, S. (2020). Brown Girls Can't Be Gay: Racism Experienced by Queer South Asian Women in Toronto's LGBTQ Community. Paper presented at **Intersections | Cross-sections Conference**, Toronto, Ontario.
- Patel, S. (2019). Brown Girls Can't Be Gay: Racism Experienced by Queer South Asian Women in Toronto's LGBTQ Community. Paper presented at the **Canadian Sociology Conference**, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Patel, S. (2019). Understanding the Invisibilization of Queer South Asian Women in the LGBT Community. Paper presented at the **Sociology and Anthropology Graduate Conference on Political Activism**, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario.
- Patel, S. (2018). *Racism Towards South Asian Lesbians in the Lesbian Community*. Paper presented at the **Arts and Science Undergraduate Research Conference**, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Patel, S. (2016). *It's More than Putting Up the Positive Space Poster: LGBTQ+ Youth and Mental Health*. Presentation on the Closing Plenary Panel of the **Rainbow Health Ontario's National LGBTQ+ Health Conference**, London, Ontario, Canada.

## BROADCAST INTERVIEWS & PODCASTS

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| 2022/11 | <b>LGBTQ+ South Asian Women's Reproductive Health</b> , Brown Women Health Podcast |
| 2022/09 | <b>Don't Tell My Parents: Queer Diasporic Truths</b> , OMNI Television             |
| 2022/06 | <b>Queer Icon Panel</b> , Girl on Girl Podcast (Live)                              |
| 2022/06 | <b>Queer South Asian Women's struggles</b> , OMNI Television                       |
| 2022/03 | <b>Meet Alyy Patel: A Queer South Asian Trailblazer</b> , Girl on Girl Podcast     |
| 2021/01 | <b>Being Queer is Okay</b> , Spreading Smiles Podcast                              |
| 2021/01 | <b>Queer and South Asian</b> , Manifest Equity Podcast                             |
| 2020/04 | <b>Desi Diasporic Perspectives on Womxnhood</b> , Devi Podcast                     |
| 2020/02 | <b>Queer and South Asian</b> , The Lady Pista Show                                 |
| 2019/08 | <b>Being Queer and South Asian</b> , The Nth Dimension Podcast                     |
| 2016/06 | <b>Youth Friendly Burlington</b> , Burlington Matters, Cogeco TV                   |
| 2016    | <b>Bridging LGBTQ+ Gaps: Families Love Each Other</b> (Documentary)                |

## PRESS COVERAGE

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| 2021/06 | <b>Feature Friday with Founder of the QSAW Network, Alyy Patel</b> , Queers for a Cause |
| 2020/08 | <b>Meet Alyy Patel, Founder of QSAW Network: BUST Interview</b> , BUST Magazine         |
| 2020/06 | <b>Queer, Desi and Killing It – Introducing Alyy Patel</b> , 50 Shades of Gay           |
| 2020/02 | <b>Valentine's Pride: Praanee and Alyy – "We're Desi, Gender-fluid,"</b> Urban Asian    |
| 2017/02 | <b>Alyy Patel: Equity Heroine</b> , HER Campus  |
| 2016/11 | <b>Extraordinary Student of the Month: Alyy Patel</b> , The Varsity UofT                |
| 2015/08 | <b>Halton Pride event in Burlington Day of Celebration</b> , Halton Insider             |

## AWARDS AND HONORS

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### ACADEMIC:

2021	<b>Best Graduate Thesis:</b> Nomination (Results to be determined) University of Ottawa
2020	<b>SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship</b> Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
2019	<b>Inclusive Research Scholarship</b> University of Ottawa, Graduate Students' Association
2018—2019	<b>Entrance Scholarship</b> University of Ottawa
2016—2018	<b>Brookfield Peter F. Bronfman Scholarship</b> University of Toronto

### EQUITY:

2021	<b>January Marie Lapuz LGBTQ+ Youth Leadership Award:</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Runner Up SHER Vancouver
2021	<b>Top Ten Queer South Asian Advocates</b> SHER Vancouver
2020	<b>Twenty Noteworthy Queers</b> SHER Vancouver
2020	<b>January Marie Lapuz LGBTQ+ Youth Leadership Award:</b> Honorable Mention SHER Vancouver
2014	<b>June Callwood Harmony Scholarship for Promoting Diversity Across Canada</b> Harmony Movement Canada

### LEADERSHIP:

2018	<b>Gordon Cressy UofT Student Leadership Award</b> University of Toronto
2018	<b>Woodsworth Cup: Outstanding Student Leadership Contributions</b> University of Toronto
2016	<b>J.S. Woodsworth Service Award</b> University of Toronto

### SUSTAINABILITY:

2018	<b>Green Ribbon Award: Outstanding Achievement in Campus Sustainability</b> University of Toronto
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## MEMBERSHIPS

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2019—Present	<b>Member, Gender &amp; Sexuality Research Cluster,</b> Canadian Sociology Association
2019—Present	<b>Member,</b> Canadian Sociology Association
2017	<b>Hiring Committee Member,</b> Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK, Halton Region)
2015—2017	<b>Mentor, Dean's Office Mentorship Program,</b> Woodsworth College at UofT

## CERTIFICATIONS

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2017	<b>SafeTALK (Suicide Alertness),</b> LivingWorks
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*Updated December 21, 2022*