Lee Godbout, 78

Fierce advocate for LGBTQ Equality

Lee (Lionel) Godbout, a dedicated fighter for LGBTQ equality and civic engagement, was fatally injured when he was struck by a car in Weymouth on August 31 while campaigning for Secretary of State candidate Josh Zakim. The crash is under investigation by police.

The Godbout family requests that donations in memory of Lee can be made to #YesOn3, the campaign to uphold Massachusetts' nondiscrimination protections on November 6: freedomma.org/donate.

Godbout leaves his wife, activist Kathy Godbout, children Kevin and Keith of the fundamental rights of even a crime said, reading the verdict. "Social morality cannot be martyred at the altar of social morality," Chief Justice Dipak Misra said, reading the verdict. "Social morality cannot be used to violate the fundamental rights of even a nation ruled in a unanimous decision.

Constitutional morality cannot be used to violate the fundamental rights of even a nation ruled in a unanimous decision.

India's Supreme Court strikes down law that punished gay sex

By ASHOK SHARMA
Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India’s Supreme Court on Thursday struck down a colonial-era law that made gay sex punishable by up to 10 years in prison, a landmark victory for gay rights that one judge said would "pave the way for a better future."

The 1861 law, a relic of Victorian England that hung on long after the end of British colonialism, was a weapon used to discriminate against India’s gay community, the judges ruled in a unanimous decision.

"Constitutional morality cannot be used to violate the fundamental rights of even a nation ruled in a unanimous decision," Chief Justice Dipak Misra said, reading the verdict. "Social morality cannot be used to violate the fundamental rights of even a nation ruled in a unanimous decision.

"Constitutional morality cannot be used to violate the fundamental rights of even a nation ruled in a unanimous decision."

I had been thinking about getting another cat for years. After I had to put Santosh, my calico companion of 17 years to sleep in early 2015, my apartment felt strangely empty; of my cat's universe, and I enjoyed Santosh's companionship, her meow, and her personality — she seemed half cat/half dog.

But over the next few years, I noticed that my apartment felt strangely empty; of my cat's universe, and I enjoyed Santosh's companionship, her meow, and her personality — she seemed half cat/half dog. 
BAGLY Wins $100,000 Barr Foundation Grant

Submitted by BAGLY

The Boston Alliance of LGBTQ+ Youth (BAGLY) has been awarded a $100,000 grant by the Barr Foundation’s Civil Rights Fund. BAGLY, a youth led, adult-supported social support organization, will use the funds to help train transgender and gender non-conforming youth across the Commonwealth in leadership and advocacy skills.

"We are grateful for the financial support and vote of confidence from the Barr Foundation," said BAGLY’s executive director Grace Sterling Stowell. "At a time when the very identities of transgender and gender non-conforming youth are under attack, this funding will help us push back against local, regional, and national attempts to curtail civil rights."

In Massachusetts, a question will be on the November 2018 ballot about equal access to public accommodations for transgender and gender non-conforming residents. A popular vote on the rights of transgender people, and the attending public debate, will take a toll on transgender youth in the state.

BAGLY’s work will focus on strong community building, leadership development, and continued public education to reduce the psychological, physical, and social harm perpetrated upon transgender and gender non-conforming youth. Specifically, it will support and expand the organization’s state-wide infrastructure through which BAGLY can train, support, and educate LGBTQ+ youth about their potential to be leaders and advocates for civil rights.

This grant is one of 14 that the Barr Foundation made as part of its special civil rights initiative to “organizations working in support of, and in partnership with, immigrants and refugees, Muslims, communities of color, and LGBTQ communitites to support civil rights protections and strengthen community capacity to respond to new challenges.”

Godbout

Continued from page 1

Quincy, and Wayne and his wife Sharon of Beverly, and many family and friends.

Boston City Councillor Matt O’Malley posted this remembrance on Facebook:

"Among the greatest byproducts of work in politics & government is the friendships that you forge through campaigns and elections. Ten years ago, I was the newly named Political Director at MassEquality when I met Kathy & Lee Godbout. The Godbouts were two of our stellar volunteers who would come in one, two (or more!) a day to help with calls, data entry, canvassing or anything else we’d need (Lee, a retired union carpenter, was particularly adept at fixing things in and around the office). They were tireless advocates for equality and a hugely significant part of ME’s success.

After I left, they were among my best and most committed volunteers (and always the first to show up and the last to leave). Even though they didn’t live in the district (or even Boston), Kathy & Lee seldom missed a standout, door-knock, or “time.” As much as I appreciated their political activism, I was even more lucky to get to know them as friends. Whether it was over game night at their home, or celebrating their golden wedding anniversary, the Godbouts taught Kathryn & me many secrets of a strong and powerful marriage. Kathy and Lee had different personalities and styles, but I think that was part of the success of their love. It is rare to see a couple compliment each other so fully. Yesterday, Lee was struck and killed by a car while campaigning. It’s beyond heartbreaking. Kathy was with him (in fact I cannot think of a time when they were not together), and is, unsurprisingly, incredibly strong as she processes this unimaginable tragedy.

It seems so cruel to lose someone so tragically and so instantly. Lee was so kind, so full of life, and carried himself with such quiet dignity. Through both his military service and political activism, he fought for people whom he will never meet. His legacy is rich and will last forever. I am a far better person and husband because of all that he taught me."

GLSEN

Continued from page 1

GLSEN was founded in 1990 by a small, but dedicated group of teachers in Massachusetts who came together to improve an education system that too frequently allows its lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) students to be bullied, discriminated against, or fall through the cracks.

Over 25 years later, that small group has grown into the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ students.

We offer Let Youth Lead! as a point of consideration for presenters and participants, instigating the quest for deeper understandings of our own identities, the values we hold as LGBTQIA+ people and the goals we have for ourselves, our schools and our world. We will come together as students, educators, artists and social justice seekers to build community and share resources for creating and maintaining safer and more affirming schools for all students.

We have a workshop idea? Work with an organization or school! Want to volunteer? Visit www.glsen.org for more information.

GLSEN Massachusetts seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes in creating more vibrant and diverse communities. We encourage participation from individuals of all sexual orientations, gender identities/expressions and ages, who are committed to seeing this philosophy realized in K-12 schools. The GLSEN Massachusetts mission exemplifies the actions and behaviors we try to model, as well as those that we hope our communities embrace. It is our collective obligation to ensure that every member of our communities feels welcome and upheld.

GLSEN Massachusetts intentionally centers our efforts around identities that are often marginalized within many “mainstream” LGTBQ+ communities. Issues related to supporting LGBTQ students of Color, Transgender Gender Non-Conforming students, and LGTBQ students of varying (Dis)Abilities, are on the forefront of our work. With this conference, we invite you to join us in celebrating the multifaceted and complex identities held by all members of our communities. As such, we strongly encourage and can provide support to young people, trans people, educators, people of Color, femme/feminine people, poor and working class people and (dis)abled people to submit workshop proposals and sign up to volunteer and/or exhibit at the conference.

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Malaysian PM says public caning of lesbians tarnishes Islam

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on Thursday criticized the public caning of two Muslim women for attempting to have sex, saying it tarnished Islam’s reputation as a merciful and compassionate religion.

Mahathir made the comment after the rare caning of the two women in an Islamic court on Monday, which was witnessed by more than 100 people. Lawmakers and rights groups criticized the punishment as a form of torture.

Mahathir said the Cabinet in a meeting Thursday felt the caning “did not reflect the justice or compassion of Islam.” He said the women could have been given a lighter sentence and counseling since it was their first offense.

“It gives a bad image to Islam,” Mahathir said in a video posted on social media. “It is important for us to show that Islam is not a vicious religion that likes to punish and humiliate people.”

Mahathir, who won a stunning election victory in May, said Muslims greet each other “in the name of Allah who is most merciful and compassionate” but the caning gave a message that there was no mercy in Islam.

The women, aged 22 and 32, were arrested in April and pleaded guilty in an Islamic court. They were given six strokes by a light rattan cane on their covered backs by female prison officers in a Shariah court in northeastern Terengganu, a state ruled by a conservative Islamic party.

Human rights groups slammed the punishment as a setback for human rights and said it could worsen discrimination against people in Malaysia’s lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender community.

Homosexual activity is illegal under both Islamic and Malaysian secular laws, which are seldom enforced. Women cannot be whipped under civil laws. Islamic officials defended the caning, saying it wasn’t painful, unlike caning under civil laws, and was meant to educate the women so they would repent, not to hurt them.

Malaysia follows a dual-track justice system. Nearly two-thirds of Malaysia’s 31 million people are Muslims who are governed by Islamic courts in family, marriage and personal issues.

Malaysia is seen as a moderate and stable Muslim-majority country, but Islamic conservatism is on the rise.

The caning occurred amid a climate of fear and discrimination against Malaysia’s LGBT community. A few weeks ago, authorities removed the portraits of two LGBT rights activists from a public exhibition. Malayisa religious minister Mujahid Yusuf later said the government doesn’t support the promotion of LGBT culture.

A transgender woman was also beaten up by a group of people in a southern state this month.

Achec region bans unmarried couples at same table in cafes

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AP)—A district in Indonesia’s deeply conservative Aceh province has banned unmarried couples from sitting at the same table in restaurants, cafes or coffee shops, an official said Wednesday.

The head of Bireuen district’s Islamic affairs office, Jufliwan, said the measure also forbids restaurants, cafes and coffee shops from serving female customers after 9 p.m. if they are not accompanied by their husbands, fathers, brothers, or other close relatives.

Aceh is the only province in Muslim-majority Indonesia that practices Islamic Shariah law, a concession made by the central government in 2001 as part of efforts to end a decades-long war for independence.

“Unmarried males and females who are not close relatives should not eat and drink at the same table, because it is sinful according to Shariah law,” said Jufliwan, who uses a single name.

He said the regulation issued Aug. 30 also prohibits restaurants and coffee shops from hiring lesbians, gays, or bisexual or transgender people as waiters or waitresses.

In 2014 the province’s lawmakers passed a law that punishes gay sex by public caning and subjects non-Muslims to the region’s strict interpretation of Shariah law.

People convicted of adultery, gambling and consuming alcohol already face caning, as do women wearing tight clothes at school or work in a country where pressure for conformity is strong.

Japan does not legally recognize same-sex marriages. As LGBT rights awareness has gradually grown in recent years, some municipalities have begun issuing partnership certificates to ease problems in renting apartments and other areas, but they are not legally binding.

The group also demanded that the ruling party make clear that it does not tolerate views similar to Sugita’s.

Ryoko Kobayashi, the mother of a transgender son, said Sugita’s remark deeply hurt the feelings of LGBT children who are already struggling with their sexual identities. Some of the parents said their children, after hearing Sugita’s remark, asked if they deserved to live, and others said they felt their future was closed.

“What she said was like telling them that they are worthless,” Kobayashi said in a telephone interview after she submitted the petition. “There is nothing wrong about being LGBT. The problem is with people like Sugita and a society that discriminates against them.”

Kobayashi said Sugita discriminated not only against LGBT people, but also against anyone who doesn’t have children by choice or other reasons.

Days after Sugita’s magazine article triggered outrage, another ruling party lawmaker, Tomu Tanigawa, said in a television talk show that same-sex couples don’t need legal protection because being LGBT is “like a hobby.” He said it was heterosexual couples with children who have allowed the country to continue.

New Zealand allows Chelsea Manning entry for speaking tour

By NICK PERRY

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—New Zealand authorities said on Friday that convicted secrets leaker Chelsea Manning can enter the country for a speaking tour, a day after tour organizers
Sanctions, sex abuse and silence: A primer on the pope saga

By NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Two weeks after Pope Francis’ papacy was thrown into crisis by accusations that he covered up sexual misconduct by ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Francis has refused to respond, his accuser has changed his story and a host of new characters have entered the fray.

Cardinals, bishops, priests and ordinary faithful are demanding answers, given that the Vatican knew since at least 2000 about allegations McCarrick had seduced seminarians.

Francis is coming under increasing pressure to respond to claims by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano that he rehabilitated McCarrick from sanctions Pope Benedict XVI had imposed.

Here is a look at the scandal, which has split the U.S. Catholic hierarchy and further tarnished Francis’ record on abuse.

WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL ACCUSATION?

Vigano said in his Aug. 26 expose that Benedict imposed “canonical sanctions” on McCarrick in 2009 or 2010 that were similar to what Francis imposed this summer after McCarrick was accused of groping a minor.

“The cardinal was to leave the seminary where he was living, he was forbidden to celebrate Mass in public, to participate in public meetings, to give lectures, to travel, with the obligation of dedicating himself to a life of prayer and penance,” Vigano wrote.

Vigano told LifeSiteNews, an ultraconservative site, that Benedict had made the sanctions “private” probably because McCarrick was retired and Benedict, seeking to avoid scandal, thought he would obey.

Even the conservative National Catholic Register, which originally published Vigano’s revelation, acknowledged that the severity of the measures reported by Vigano is now an open question.

Citing someone close to Benedict, the Register reported that Benedict couldn’t recall how he handled the matter but that there was no formal decree against McCarrick, “just a private request” to keep a low profile.

If true, that would undercut Vigano’s core accusation that Francis rehabilitated McCarrick from actual canonical sanctions.

HOW HAS THE POPE RESPONDED?

Hours after Vigano’s accusations came to light, Francis told an in-flight news conference: “I will not say a word about this.” He challenged journalists to investigate Vigano’s claims and said, “If time passes and you’ve drawn your conclusions, maybe I’ll speak.”

That said, Francis has referred indirectly to the scandal a few times since. He has said “silence and prayer” are often the best response to people seeking scandal.

He has said it is un-Christian to accuse other people, “are often the best response to people seeking scandal.”

Benedict XVI had imposed.

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A month after the reported encounter over McCarrick’s sexual past, Francis was three months into a new job where he knew he was going to make enemies with the type of conservative culture warriors Vigano championed.

A month after the reported encounter over McCarrick’s sexual past, Francis would go on to win praise from the liberal Catholic world for saying of another purportedly gay priest he had named a close adviser: “Who am I to judge?”

That suggests that Francis, at least in 2013, didn’t consider the past sex lives or homosexual orientation of his counselors to be a firing offense—or recognize that those relationships could constitute an abuse of power.

But Francis did recognize something was amiss when he sent the Vatican’s top sex abuse expert to investigate McCarrick “didn’t obey” them and Vigano was unable to enforce them.

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HOW HAS VIGANO’S STORY CHANGED?

Faced with such evidence, Vigano altered his story to say that while Benedict’s measures were in place, McCarrick “didn’t obey” them and Vigano was unable to enforce them.

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WHAT WAS GOING ON IN 2013?

When Francis and Vigano met in June 2013, Francis was three months into a new job where he knew he was going to make enemies with the type of conservative culture warriors Vigano championed.

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Fashion Week

By JOCELYN NOVECK
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP)—Opening Ceremony, the label that always seems to find quirkier and more unusual ways to display its clothes during Fashion Week, upped the ante on Sunday with a festive drag show, featuring a surprise guest performance by Christina Aguilera and a front-row appearance by Nicki Minaj.

The event, called “The Gift of Showz,” was created by Sasha Velour, the drag performer who last year won Season 9 of “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” and starred Velour and a number of other prominent drag performers.

The performers wore items from Opening Ceremony’s latest collection as they took the stage at a West Village cabaret, Le Poisson Rouge, to model or to lip sync, cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd that included, in the front row, Minaj. The rapper was attending her first show since Friday’s much discussed dustup with fellow rapper Cardi B at a Fashion Week party.

As the performers did their numbers, a running joke emerged that Aguilera was there, but at first, it turned out only to be a cutout figure of a community I didn’t know I had been longing for.”

“What drew me to drag shows as a teenager is the idea that realizing your dreams is only a fabulous outfit away.”

Performers included Hungry, who is based in Berlin and is singer Bjork’s makeup artist, and the American drag artist Lypsinka, along with a number of other artists.

Deputies: Transgender slur painted on home is hate crime

NEWBERRY, Fla. (AP)—Deputies say a slur against transgender people has been spray-painted on a Florida home’s garage door and is being investigated as a hate crime.

Sheriff’s Sgt. Brett Rhodenizer tells The Gainesville Sun that patrolling deputies had discovered on a Florida home’s garage door and is being investigated as a hate crime.

Deputies say the message was painted in large, black letters and its words prompted the hate crime investigation. He says investigators are searching the neighborhood, talking with residents and requesting any possible camera footage.

“The sergeant says the neighborhood is “full of good people,” and he hopes whoever wrote the message can come forward and take responsibility for it.

Information from: The Gainesville (Fla.) Sun, http://www.gainesvillesun.com

Lawyer for Iowa officials in gay discrimination case quits

By DAVID PITT
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP)—A lawyer who has billed Iowa taxpayers nearly $1 million to fight a long-running discrimination lawsuit over former Gov. Terry Branstad’s treatment of a gay former state official has withdrawn from the case, court documents filed Wednesday show.

George LaMarca, 73, has represented Branstad and other state officials for the past seven years as lead counsel for Branstad and other officials named in Godfrey’s lawsuit “at the discounted rate of $820 per hour,” according to a court filing.

Godfrey’s attorney Roxanne Conlin argued that other attorneys from LaMarca’s law firm who are already up to speed on the complicated case should be required to stay. She said in court documents that the move is a tactic to delay the case. She also said LaMarca’s firm should have to repay the words threatening the homeowners to “move or die.” He says the vandalism happened between Thursday night and Friday morning.

Rhodenizer says the message was painted in large, black letters and its words prompted the hate crime investigation. He says investigators are searching the neighborhood, talking with residents and requesting any possible camera footage.

“The sergeant says the neighborhood is “full of good people,” and he hopes whoever wrote the message can come forward and take responsibility for it.

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The state hired LaMarca at the direction of Branstad, who preferred a private attorney to represent him rather than state attorney general’s office. A new lawyer, Frank Harry, will take over as lead counsel for Branstad and other officials named in Godfrey’s lawsuit “at the discounted rate of $820 per hour,” according to a court filing.

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O’Brien was a conservative hard-liner on homosexuality whose sexual peccadilloes were aired publicly, which could explain the disparity in treatment.

**HOW HAS THIS BEEN RECEIVED IN THE US?**

More than a week before Vigano’s disclosure, the head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, announced he wanted an audience with Francis to present his request for a full-fledged Vatican investigation into the McCarrick affair.

At the time, DiNardo’s call was seen as a power play by the U.S. bishops, who were under fire for having covered for McCarrick for decades, to shift the blame to the Vatican. McCarrick was made archbishop of Washington and cardinal in 2001 by Pope John Paul II, despite knowledge in the Vatican that he slept with seminarians.

DiNardo followed up his request for a Vatican investigation with a statement saying Vigano’s accusations deserve answers. More than a dozen U.S. bishops have echoed the call, though others, including a top Francis appointee, Cardinal Blase Cupich, have demurred. Cupich has said Francis shouldn’t go down the “rabbit hole” by responding.

No date for a DiNardo audience has been set. But he is due in Rome on Sep. 27 to preside over a deacon ordination ceremony for seminarians from the North American College, the U.S. seminary just up the hill from the Vatican.

Meanwhile, Francis has met with embattled Washington Cardinal Donald Wuerl, who is facing calls to step down over both the McCarrick scandal and for mishandling some abuse cases when he was bishop in Pittsburgh. Those cases were exposed in a recent Pennsylvania grand jury report.

In another blow to Wuerl’s ability to lead, one of his own deacons said in a letter published Sunday that he could in good conscience no longer assist him at Mass, and called for him to step down.

Wuerl actually offered to resign two years ago when he turned 75, so the decision on when he leaves rests with Francis alone.

**WHO IS NOW SPEAKING OUT?**

Amid the official silence from the Vatican, some new players have emerged to try to discredit Vigano’s version of events and defend Francis.

One of them is a familiar face, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, the Jesuit who served as Vatican spokesman for Benedict and Francis until 2016. Last weekend, amid a communications crisis for the Vatican, it was announced that Lombardi would rejoin the Jesuit magazine La Civilta Cattolica, which serves as an unofficial mouthpiece for the papacy.

Also last weekend, Lombardi and his English-speaking assistant, the Rev. Thomas Rosica, issued a joint statement contesting Vigano’s version of events about the controversial meeting that Vigano orchestrated between the pope and U.S. anti-gay marriage campaigner Kim Davis during Francis’ 2015 visit to the U.S.

The encounter made headlines because it was viewed as a papal endorsement of Davis’ highly politicized campaign—something Francis had been keen to avoid.

Vigano claimed Francis had only praise for his handling of the visit. But Lombardi and Rosica issued a statement, based on Rosica’s handwritten notes from the time, recalling that Vigano himself had reported that Francis scolded him for having “deceived” him about Davis and omitting that she had been married four times.
His attorneys have repeatedly tried to delay the trial, saying it would be difficult for him to leave his duties in Beijing. In addition to Branstad, the lawsuit names his successor, Gov. Kim Reynolds, Branstad chief of staff Jeffrey Boeyink, his legal counsel Brenna Findley, and Iowa Workforce Development Director Teresa Wahlert. It accuses the officials of discrimination, retaliation and of violating Godfrey’s constitutional due process guarantees. He also alleges Branstad and some of his staff tried to extort him by threatening to cut his salary if he didn’t quit.

Godfrey’s case is among the first to seek monetary damages from the state based on allegations that a government official infringed on the rights of an individual. He overcame a legal hurdle last year when state Supreme Court justices allowed him to seek damages for alleged political retaliation. The June 2017 ruling made it easier for Iowa residents to sue government officials who violate their rights.

Godfrey is now the chief judge of the board that decides federal workers’ compensation disputes in Washington.

Cincinnati unveils new LGBTQ-related crosswalk

CINCINNATI (AP) — Cincinnati officials have unveiled a new rainbow-painted crosswalk in honor of the city’s LGBTQ community.

The Cincinnati Enquirer reports the crosswalk unveiled Aug. 30 is located in the city’s Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, near a street honored for two men who led the way to marriage equality in all 50 states.

The crosswalk was designed by the city Department of Transportation, and its $8,000 cost was covered by an anonymous donor.

The city’s first openly gay council member Chris Seelbach joined in praising the new crosswalk, saying it celebrates laws and policies that ensure everyone is welcome in the city.

Cincinnati now joins nearly 100 cities in America with LGBTQ-related crosswalks.


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Manning was convicted and sentenced to 35 years in prison for leaking U.S. government secrets and would not normally qualify for entry into New Zealand under its good-character provisions.

But Immigration New Zealand General Manager Steve Stuart said Manning had been granted a “special direction,” allowing her to apply for a working visa for planned speaking events in Auckland and Wellington next month.

Stuart said the agency noted that Manning’s sentence had been commuted by President Barack Obama in 2017, that she had not re-offended since being released, and that the chances of her offending while in New Zealand were low.

New Zealand’s conservative opposition National Party had urged the government to ban Manning, saying her appearance would not enhance New Zealand’s relationship with the U.S.

Australia has similar good-character rules to New Zealand. Manning’s tour was due to start in Sydney on Sunday, but on Thursday event organizer Think Inc. said it had received a notice of intention from the Australian government to deny Manning entry.

The group was calling on her supporters to lobby new Immigration Minister David Coleman to allow her into Australia. While Manning can appeal, past precedent suggests the decision has already been made.

Think Inc. said it had given the government letters of support from individuals and organizations who support Manning’s entry to Australia.

“My plan has always been to handle this through legal means and not political means,” LaMarca said the assertion he should repay the money is absurd.

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Multitude behind the withdrawal of counsel, and apparently his entire firm, as well as the intentions of the newly appearing counsel as the specter of possible gamesmanship on the part of the defendants looms large given this crucial juncture,” Conlin wrote in a motion filed last week.

LaMarca said the assertion he should repay the money is absurd.

“My plan has always been to handle this through legal means and not political means,” LaMarca said the assertion he should repay the money is absurd.

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Back in 2005, a pair of Judy Garland's ruby slippers used in "The Wizard of Oz" were stolen from the Judy Garland Museum in Grand Rapids, MN—which gives you a pretty good idea of the security at that museum. In a caper analogous to the famed Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum heist of 1990, the friends of Dorothy broke into the museum late at night through a window and parted with the jewels, which are estimated to be worth between $3-5 million! Anonymous tipsters told the feds where to find the fancy footwear in a string that lasted a year and crossed four states. The shoes were eventually recovered in an undercover raid in Minneapolis. Oh, the humanity!

And yet, somehow Kevin Spacey, Steven Seagal, and Anthony Anderson are escaping the long arm of the law. After extensive investigation by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office, the charges against all three men have been dropped. When it came to Spacey, the statute of limitations has passed. In the matter of Anderson, the wronged party refused to cooperate (and we all know what that means). As to Steven Seagal... eh, who cares.

Another victim of sexual assault is crying foul. Terry Crews suggests that agent Adam Venit's ties to the LAPD may be the reason why he is not being charged with a crime. "Adam Venit has been the Event Chairman of the LAPD Foundation, which raises millions for the @LAPD...Anyone wonder why my assault case against him was thrown out by the DA? Yeah, #MeToo," Crews wrote on Twitter. WME, the agency Venit works for, issued a statement: "Terry Crews, Adam Venit, and WME have settled the lawsuit Mr. Crews filed last year. It will be dismissed." The same day, it was announced that Venit is retiring after a career where he "repped Adam Sandler, Sylvester Stallone, and many other big clients." Bigger than Sandler and Stallone? God, I hope so.

With all the drama going on with Harvey Weinstein, it's no surprise that "Project Runway" was lost in limbo. While the show will be returning to its original home, Bravo (after 11 seasons on Lifetime), there will be a major change—no Heidi and no Tim. Quelle horreur! "After 16 incredible seasons, I am saying 'Auf Wiedersehen' to 'Project Runway', a show that I was honored to be part of, to help create," says the ever-modest Klum. She was less said to announce she's starting her own competition fashion show on Amazon and that she's poached Tim Gunn as her sidekick. I guess that means more Milano and Mizrahi. What's getting lost in the shuffle is that Zac Posen simply took himself out of the equation.

Speaking of Bravo drama, have you heard the latest over at "Flipping Out"? Apparently, Jenni Pulos has not been happy and complained to Jeff Lewis that she gave up her acting career to be his assistant. May I ask a question, and I don't mean to be flip—what acting career? Have I missed the Jenni Pulos "Medea"? Jeff said that for the sake of their friendship, he'd let her leave "Jeff Lewis Design" because he didn't want to "hold her back". He felt that solved the problem and everything was fine. The two had lunch, and the friendship was salvaged. Days later, he got a call from a producer saying that Jeff had been "allegedly reported for abuse and victimization" by Jenni. Pulos also said it was "wrongful terminating her off her own show" and said it was a "hostile work environment"—which I suspect the past 11 seasons corroborate. Lewis shared much of this drama on his SiriusXM show, worried that Jenni's accusations could jeopardize his career. Since then, he's been "cleared of all abuse victimization charges".

Next season on "Flipping Out", maybe Jeff will introduce his new assistant—Zac Posen! When I say I think someone is gay, I mean it as the highest compliment I can give someone—well, when that someone is male. Gone are the days when being called gay means a limp-wristed, wimpy wuss. When women want to give a man the ultimate compliment, they say he's "gay porn hot"...which I think says it all. So when I say that I believe Colton (the virgin) on "The Bachelor" will come out sometime during his season in the hot seat, I don't mean that as a slam. I also don't believe he's lying or that there's any duplicity in him. I simply don't think he knows—at least not completely. He got awfully close when he told Kevin how "it wasn't there with Tia". "What kills me the most is I've done that my whole life too. I make other people happy. My whole life, all I want to do is please people. And the only person I'm hurting is myself by staying in things. I feel like even with football, I kept playing because that's what people knew me for. And that's what my family wanted. And now I'm staying in this because it makes somebody else happy. That's not right," Sounds like the door's creaking open.

When he left "Bachelor in Paradise" in inescapable tears, Colton gave a curious exit interview. He never said, "When will I find the right girl? Why wasn't Tia the right woman for me?" He said, "Everybody's got their person out there. I wish I could have been the one to end up with her. It wasn't there, I just wasn't the person for her—I wasn't the one she deserves. I just honestly feel there's something wrong with me, 'cause I've never wanted something as bad as I wanted it to work. I want somebody I'm gonna spend the rest of my life with. I really did give it my all, I really did try. I don't deserve her. I'm broken,"

You're not broken...you're just...well, you know what I think.
discovered the freedom that came with not having a pet. Over the last few years of Santosh’s life, I had to ensure twice a day visits when I went out of town, to make sure she was eating and to provide medication. Now I could travel without worry, save money, and come and go as I pleased, since I was responsible only for myself.

Still, when I’d come across a friendly cat in my neighborhood or when I visited the local cat shelter, I felt a deep desire for the kind of unconditional love an animal can provide. And so, after dragging my feet and postponing the big decision for most of last year, I finally took the plunge last November, when I realized there would never be a “perfect time” to adopt another feline – I needed to, as the folks at Nike say, “just do it.”

Soon after, I found myself with a beautiful rust-colored two-year-old cat named Stanley, who had been displaced by the hurricane in South Florida and was shipped up to a shelter in Boston. Stanley was described as very “chill” by the shelter volunteers, and he got along well with both people and other cats. Plus, his motorized purr reminded me of Santosh, and so I filled out some paperwork and made an appointment to take him home two days later.

On that fateful Saturday, after an initial half hour in which Stanley jumped on top of my eight-foot high wall unit, and wedged himself just under my ceiling, he made a quick adjustment and was soon purring next to me on the couch. That night, he slept at the foot of my bed, as my other cat had done for years. It seemed his adjustment – and mine – would be smooth and easy.

Or not. After about a month, Stanley turned from playful to rowdy, plunking himself in the middle of my paper work as I planned my writing classes, and biting or scratching me when I tried to move him off dead center. His version of playful was a bit too rough, and I had the scars to prove it. And Stanley was fixated on food – living on the streets, he had developed quite an appetite, and though I fed him more than the vet recommended, he always wanted more.

At least he didn’t wake me up – 1809rst first. But after a month or two, Stanley decided he was ready for breakfast at 6 am, which morphed into 4:30 or 5. And while I entertained thoughts of kicking him out of my bedroom, I live in a two-room apartment, and Stanley’s meowing and scratching at the door if and when he is ignored does not promote a good night’s sleep.

I’ve heard it said that owners train their dogs, while cats train their owners. In my case, Stanley and I are learning to compromise; we’re training each other. I’ve mostly weaned him off scratching and biting me by giving him other things to chew, attack and pounce on, like his toy mice, and various pieces of my (cheap) furniture – i.e. my chair, my couch circa 1989, and genuine pine bookcase. I’ve put him on a veterinarian-inspired diet, for which he is not grateful, but he is looking more svelte and stylish. And though he wakes me up every morning between 4:30 and 5:00 am for his morning feeding, I’ve learned to feed him while sleepwalking; I can scoop out half a can of Fancy Feast, convey it to kitty dish, shut the bedroom door and climb back into bed as if I were in a (repetitive) dream.

As I write this, Stanley is calmly watching me from his new perch on my kitchen table – a perch that was until recently off limits. Again, we compromised; he can sit on the table, if I can keep him out of the sink.

There have been a few moments in this past year, a difficult one without much joy for me, when I questioned my decision to take on the care of another pet, another sentient being. But then Stanley jumps up on my lap, or drapes himself next to me on the couch, his purr a running commentary on the state of our relationship and his sense that, despite my various faults, I’m not such a bad roommate.

Judah Leblang is a writer, teacher and storyteller in Boston. He will be performing his new show, “It’s Now or Never: My Life in the Late Middle Ages” at the Piano Craft Gallery in the South End, October 18, 19 and 20. For advance tickets, go to: www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3610801
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 Billy Masters
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It's the end of an era. After 63 years, the "Village Voice" is a thing of the past. Although the weekly print edition stopped last year, it remained an online entity. But last week, Peter Barbe, who bought the paper three years ago, gathered the staff and told them the news. "Today is kind of a sucky day. Due to, basically, business realities, we're going to stop publishing, 'Village Voice' new material." And that's that.

It's easy to point fingers, but certainly online publishing, social media, and hookup apps are contributing to the decline of print media. Interestingly enough, while one publication is shuttering, an app is expanding. According to filings with the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, Grindr is planning an initial public offering—meaning they will be on the stock market.

Do you want the good news or the bad news first? In an uncharacteristically charitable move, I will share the good news first. Wigstock 2.0 is a HUGE success. While I personally believe the show was stolen by the legendary Lypsinka, one must give credit where credit is due—Neil Patrick Harris slipped back into Hedwig's pumps effortlessly and put on a fantastic set, totally earning all plaudits he received for his interpretation. And earlier in the day, he, David and their kids manned the wig cannons and shot wigs out to the capacity crowd—which was super cool. That said (here comes that bad news), during an appearance on SiriusXM a few days before Wigstock, he pissaed off quite a few people with what he felt was the downside of playing Hedwig. "The limping of the wrists, the cocking of the hip, the tits out and the ass out, and sort of walking with a sway and sort of the overt femininity of the characterization that I had, that was hard to get into my whole body without feeling like I was mocking it initially. I didn't want to feel like I was pretending." When asked if the transformation made him feel less masculine, NPH said, "for sure." At that point, Mrs. NPH (David Burkta) felt compelled to chime in, "I like manly guys." Yeah, because when I think of the epitome of masculinity, my mind immediately thinks of Neil Patrick Harris.

Elsewhere on the air, kooky Alex Jones is under fire. It seems that he had his phone in hand while doing his radio show, which also broadcasts live-streaming video. According to an eagle-eyed viewer, while Alex was promoting his line of health and wellness products, his phone was on a page titled, "Naughty tbabe Marissa Mi", a reference to the actress. So, is Alex into tranny prossies? But, wait—Alex can explain this all away as only he can. He did it on live radio, so there's no question what he said. "I saw a couple of news articles about that, it's ridiculous. I was, like, looking for some reporter we're trying to hire today and punched in some number and porn popped up on my phone. Everybody has had porn pop up on. Thank you for your call." All I got out of that is that he sometimes enjoys tranny porn on his phone—but not necessarily while working.

When Jones may be interested in chicks with dicks, it's time to end another column. I must say, you have a very melancholy Billy here this week. I've often talked about the systematic dismantling of Boston's gay nightlife. One of our few (if only) seven-night-a-week gay dance clubs is closing on September 16th. Paradise in Cambridge has a special place in your beloved Billy's heart. That was the first club that hired me to host a show—their Sweet 16th birthday party. Once I had a mike in my hand, there was no stopping me. And now, there'll be no stopping me from saying we've brought this all on ourselves. Support your gay businesses—or soon ping me. And now, there'll be no stopping me from saying we've brought this all on ourselves. Support your gay businesses—or soon..."
India
Continued from page 1

As the news spread, the streets outside the courthouse erupted in cheers as opponents of the law danced and waved flags.

“We feel as equal citizens now,” said activist Shashi Bhushan. “What happens in our bedroom is left to us.”

In its ruling, the court said sexual orientation was a “biological phenomenon” and that discrimination on that basis violated fundamental rights.

“We cannot change history but can pave a way for a better future,” said Justice D.Y. Chandrachud.

The law known as Section 377 held that intercourse between members of the same sex was against the order of nature. The five petitioners who challenged the law said it was discriminatory and led to gays living in fear of harassment and persecution.

Jessica Stern, the executive director of the New York-based rights group OutRight Action International, said the original law had reverberated far beyond India, including in countries where gay people still struggle for acceptance.

“The sodomy law that became the model everywhere, from Uganda to Singapore to the U.K. itself, premiered in India, becoming the confusing and dehumanizing standard replicated around the world,” she said in a statement, saying “today’s historic outcome will reverberate across India and the world.”

The court’s ruling struck down the law’s sections on consensual gay sex, but let stand segments that deal with such issues as bestiality.

Homosexuality has a tangled history in India, and some of Hinduism’s most ancient texts are accepting of gay sex. But same-sex couples have also been harassed for centuries in many Indian communities, whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian.

Transgendered people known as “hijras,” for example, have long been a common sight in India. But their treatment—both shunned as impure, and embraced for the belief that they can bring powerful blessings—reflects the complexities of gay life here.

Homosexuality has gained a degree of acceptance in deeply conservative India over the past decade, particularly in big cities. India now has openly gay celebrities, and some high-profile Bollywood films have dealt with gay issues. But many gay people still face isolation and persecution, and the court’s ruling will do little to change life on the ground for millions of people.

On Thursday, a leader of a prominent hard-line Hindu group noted that while it doesn’t see homosexuality as a crime, it believes gay marriage is not “compatible with nature.”

Arun Kumar, a spokesman for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the parent organization of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, said Indian society “traditionally does not recognize” gay relationships, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

A New Delhi High Court in 2009 declared Section 377 unconstitutional, but that decision was overturned in a ruling by three Supreme Court justices in 2013 on the grounds that amending or repealing the law should be left to Parliament. But lawmakers failed to take action and in July the government told the Supreme Court to give a ruling in the case.

Sukhdeep Singh, a gay rights activist and editor of Gaylaxy Magazine, said the community still had a lot of distance to go "to be legally with your partner."

"This will obviously open the doors for a lot of more things, more civil rights. And we’ll fight for our rights, definitely. This is the first battle that has been won and there are many more battles that we are going to fight," he said.
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