

Two outrageous verdicts draw widespread scrutiny

by Anna Esslinger
Culture Editor

Two rape cases have attracted media attention in Massachusetts and Montana. Both are controversial not because of the extremity of the cases, but because both judges made decisions that do not seem fair.

After pleading guilty to four counts of statutory rape in 2011, Jamie Melendez of Massachusetts is now fighting for visitation rights to his and his rape victim's child.

In 2009, a twenty-year-old Melendez raped an unnamed fourteen-year old girl in her home. According to the Huffington Post, "Melendez went to the girl's house when he knew her mother would not be home and pressured her to have sex with him. She said she felt threatened and intimidated by Melendez." As a result of the rape, the victim became pregnant and kept the child.

Melendez was sentenced to sixteen years probation and frequent visits to family court, where disputes regarding children are settled.

This court order forces the underage victim to have an unwanted legal relationship with her rapist until their child is eighteen.

When Melendez was forced to pay child support in 2012, he also requested visitation rights to the child. The court date is set for November to decide whether or not the rapist's request will be honored. Currently, paternal rapists can sue for custody in 31 states.

The victim is suing Massachusetts in federal court for forcing her to have a legal relationship with her rapist. Her attorney argues that Judge McGuire did not have the authority to force Melendez to go to family court, a ruling which initiated the custody battle. Her attorney argues that the judge should have ordered Melendez to pay restitution instead. If the victim wins the suit, the November custody trial will be cancelled.

Meanwhile, in Montana, Judge J. Todd Baugh gave a mere thirty-day sentence to former high school teacher, Stacey Dean Rambold. Rambold was fifty-four when he raped a fourteen-year-old student. Baugh said that the student was "as much in control of the situ-

ation" as the the fifty-four year old teacher and that she seemed "older than her chronological age." The victim killed herself at age 16 in 2010, before the case went to trial. Baugh did not use the girl's suicide to add to the severity of Rambold's sentencing.

Baugh has issued an apology saying, "What I said is demeaning of all women, not what I believe and irrelevant to the sentencing. My apologies to all my fellow citizens." Many people including the victim's mother, Aulia Hanlon, have rejected Baugh's apology because it did not seem sincere and he did not reverse his decision.

The case has attracted attention from the Montana National Organization for Women. Marian Bradley, the president of the organization issued the statement, "She was 14 years old, and she was not an age where she could give consent, and he groomed her like any other pedophile."

Both cases show that there are still faults in our legal system and that it takes public outcry for widespread recognition of these faults. (Sources: Huffington Post, Fox News, 90.9 WBur0, LA Times)

Student-athlete murdered

by Jonathan Friedland
National Editor/Businessman

On Aug. 20, three teenagers killed a student-athlete because they were bored. James Edwards, 15, Chancey Luna, 16, and Michael Jones, 17 are all charged with killing Christopher Lane who was shot in the back while jogging by one of the suspects' houses. Lane immediately collapsed as bystanders unsuccessfully attempted to revive him. Lane was an incoming senior and an Australian native on a baseball scholarship at East Central University.



PRISON LIFE: The three murder suspects get their mugshots taken.

The killing coincides with a string of other teenage, thug-related murders including the most recent beating of a World War II veteran in Spokane, Washington.

Regarding the family of Christopher Lane, Lane's father, Peter, called the killing "heartless" and stated that an attempt "to understand it is a short way to insanit (Sources: Washington Post, Fox News)



ENJOYING LIFE: Christopher Lane visits his Oklahoma girlfriend.

According to several police reports, the murderers were "gang-wannabes" and were heavily influenced by their violent surroundings. When the police questioned the killers' motives, Jones said, "We were bored and decided to kill somebody." Jones went on to admit that the attackers simply killed Lane, "for the fun of it." Edwards and Luna are both charged with first-degree murder and could face life in prison if convicted. Michael Jones is charged with being an accessory to murder and driving the getaway car.



AUSTRALIAN FUNERAL: Friends and family mourn the loss of Lane.

Texas voter law installed

by Ari Sweedler
People Editor

In accordance with the new Texas law, voters are now required to show more exclusive photo ID when they go to vote. This law was put into place to prevent voter fraud, but other motives behind the new ordinance. The public is aware that because of this law, the poorer Texan population will have a harder time voting. Almost all of the valid forms of ID cost time and money to acquire, and thus are impractical for some citizens to get. According to the Texas Secretary of State's website, there are seven types of photo-ID that will be recognized and accepted when a citizen tries to vote. They include:

1. A driver license
2. A Election Identification Certificate
3. A personal identification card
4. A concealed handgun license
5. A United States military identification card containing the person's photograph
6. A United States citizenship certificate containing the person's photograph
7. A United States passport

The only form of accepted photo ID that is free to get is the second one, an EIC. Even though, getting an EIC is free, it takes 60 days for one to arrive after the order has been processed. If a low-income individual with no photo ID makes a last minute decision to vote, then he or she is unable to do so. People unable to acquire photo IDs are African American or Mexican, the majority of vote for the more

democratic option. While the official purpose of this law is to prevent voter fraud, until solid evidence is provided as to how effective this law is, the only affect backed up by evidence so far is the limitation of the mostly democratic poor to vote.

Sources: Texas Secretary of State, Texas Department of Public Safety



EXAMPLE ID: A Texas Driver's license is acceptable to vote.



ID REQUIRED: The new Texas law is ground-breaking in America.

Jerry Brown signs transgender equality bill into law

by Violet Wallerstein
World Editor

On Aug. 12, California Governor Jerry Brown signed AB1266 into law, giving transgender students in grades K-12 the opportunity to participate in sex-segregated sports and use locker rooms according to their personal gender identity. For example, the law allows a bio-sex female, whose gender identity is male, to play on the boys' basketball team, though previously he would have been forced onto the girls' team because he is biologically female on the school form.



CHANGING THE STATUS QUO: The law permits transgenders to use any bathroom.

The law will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2014. It is the first state-mandated law for transgender rights, even though policies that protect transgender students are already active in school districts such as L.A. and San Francisco. A few policies also exist in Maine and Maryland, and more state-mandated laws may soon follow. The National Center for Lesbian Rights, the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, and Gender Spectrum are some of the bill's more prominent backers.



all photos courtesy wikicommons

PROTESTING: The transgender community showed their support of the bill during a march on the Sacramento capital building in order to draw liking from governor Jerry Brown.

Since the law was signed, there has been discussion as to whether it is acceptable to have girls in a changing room with bio-sex males who view themselves as female. The parents who have made these arguments fear their children would be uncomfortable and that it is generally inappropriate to allow this to occur, but other people believe this will decrease bullying and make transgender students much more comfortable at school.

The current attempted suicide rate for transgender students is a staggering fifty percent, caused by a combination of bullying, aban-

donment, and lack of self-confidence. Transgender issues are also belittled in the world as the main focus is on gay and lesbian rights. The goal of this bill is to decrease the struggles and difficulties of being transgender in a sex-segregated community. Therefore all of these factors will have less impact on struggling students. We can only wait and see if the rest of the country follows California's bold lead into transgender territory.

(Sources: CNN News, National Center for Lesbian Rights, Huffington Post, Youth Suicide Prevention Program, Mercury News)