

Ex-state Sen. Shannon Robinson disbarred

BY COLLEEN HEILD / JOURNAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER

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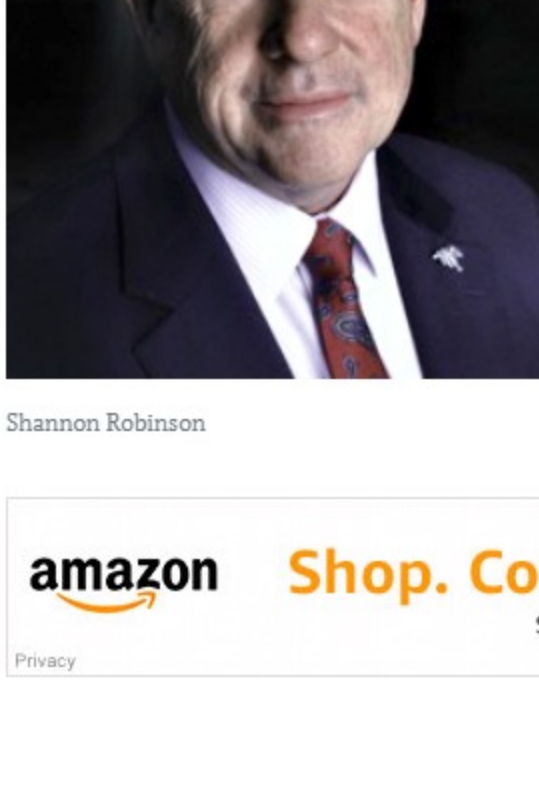
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The state Supreme Court on Tuesday decided to disbar former state senator and longtime attorney Shannon Robinson for spending settlement money intended for a client's "horribly injured" daughter on his personal expenses, such as keeping his Albuquerque law practice afloat.

Despite a plea from lawyer Shannon Robinson for "mercy," the court adopted the recommendation of a disciplinary board hearing panel to impose what Chief Justice Shannon Bacon described as "the ultimate penalty of disbarment."

Robinson, 74, had two prior disciplinary offenses over his 48-year legal career in New Mexico, but those weren't mentioned Tuesday during oral arguments prior to the court ruling. He served 20 years in the state Senate representing District 17 in Albuquerque as a Democrat before losing a reelection bid in 2009.



Shannon Robinson

Robinson contended he wasn't dishonest when he spent about \$43,000 from a client's legal settlement reached in 2016. The client was caring for her daughter who he said on Tuesday was "horribly injured" in a motorcycle accident.

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He attributed the lapse to poor record keeping and his attorney Charles Vigil told the justices that he tried to repay \$35,000 four years later but his client wouldn't take it. The client by that time had hired another attorney to file a malpractice case against Robinson.

Robinson was also faulted by disciplinary board assistant counsel Jane Gagne on Tuesday for waiting until disciplinary charges were filed against him to try to repay a portion of what he owed.

Gagne also told the court he exhibited a lack of cooperation in responding to requests for information about the missing money.

Bacon questioned how Robinson could not have had a "dishonest motive."

And she noted the "harm" of Robinson depriving his client and her family of the "funds that haven't been available to care for the child."

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"Where's that money now," Bacon asked, to which Robinson's attorney Vigil responded, "I don't know the answer."

Robinson, in addressing the court, didn't reply to the question. He said he had "tremendous regret" and "tremendous remorse that I used the funds to keep my practice alive."

"I ask for your mercy," he added.

He said he represented the family of the accident victim for "many, many, many years and I did a lot of things for them besides (representing them) in this accident."

Robinson has explained his lack of communication about his accounting of the settlement money in part to being "too sick to get out of bed and having a hard time reading in late 2019 and early 2020," Gagne told the court, adding that Robinson provided no medical evidence of his illness.

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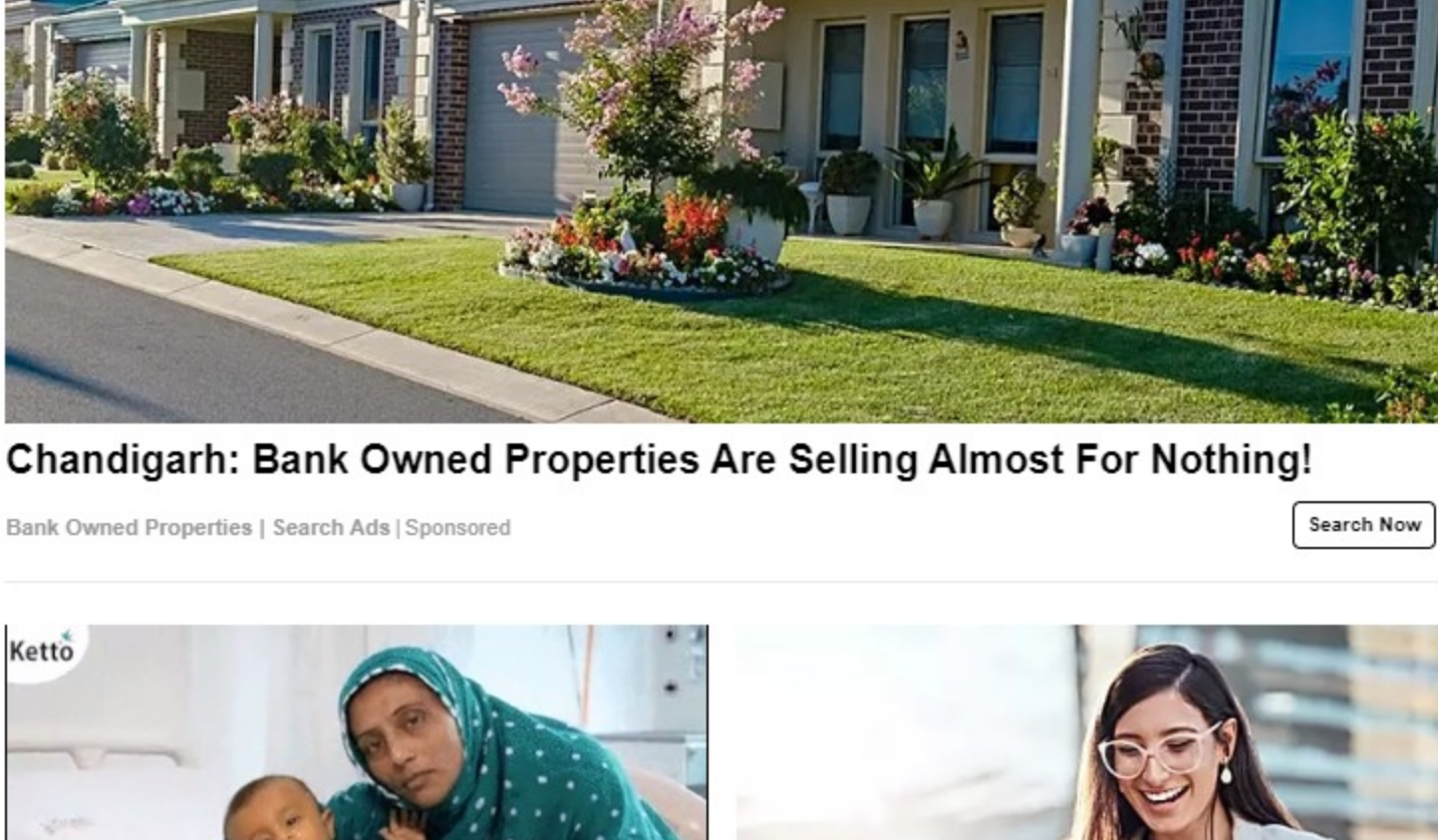
Court records state that one of Robinson's prior disciplinary offenses involved a lawsuit he filed that had no basis. In the other, he received a formal reprimand for failing to promptly notify medical providers of settlements in four of his personal injury cases, the court record shows.

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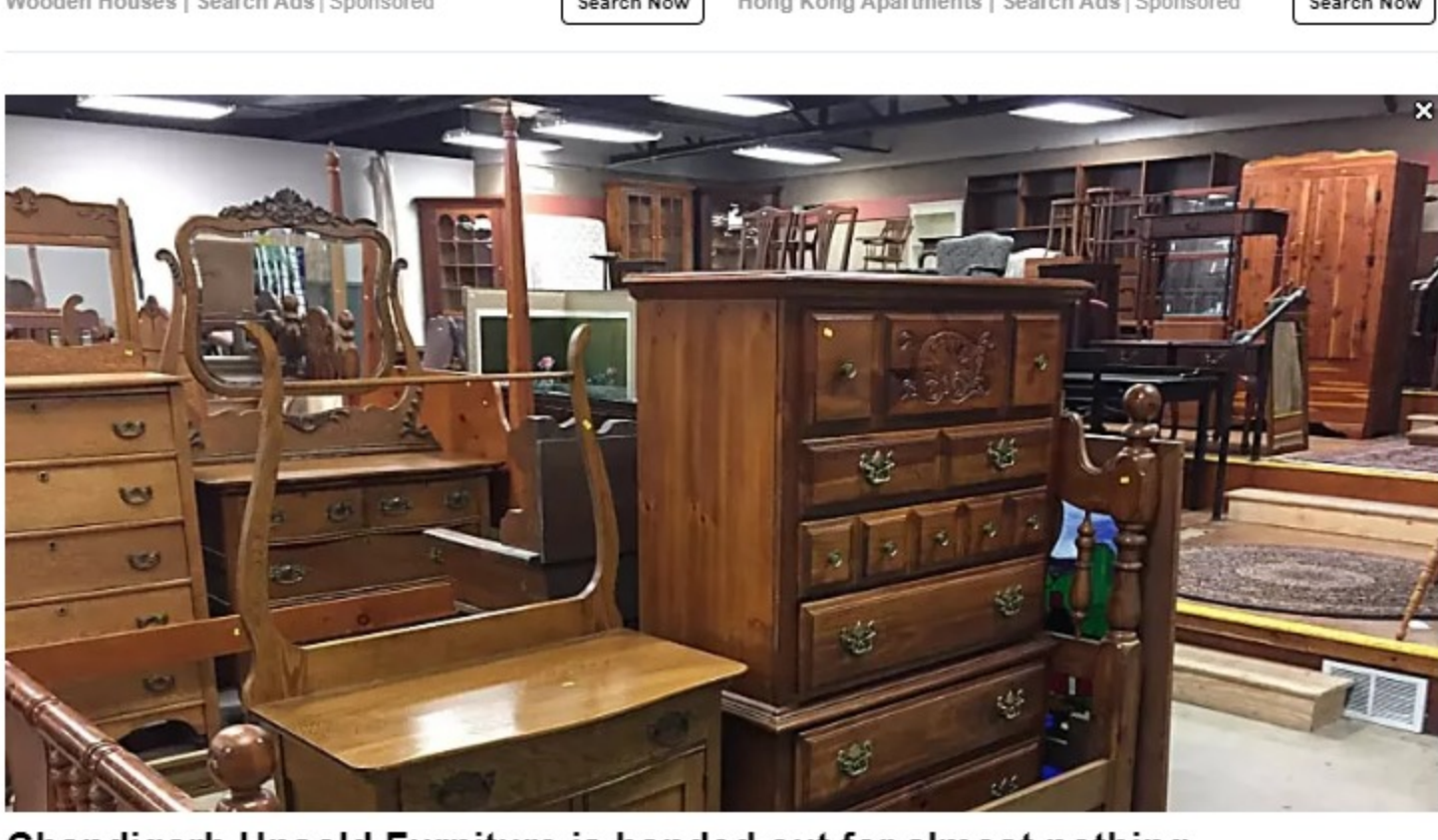
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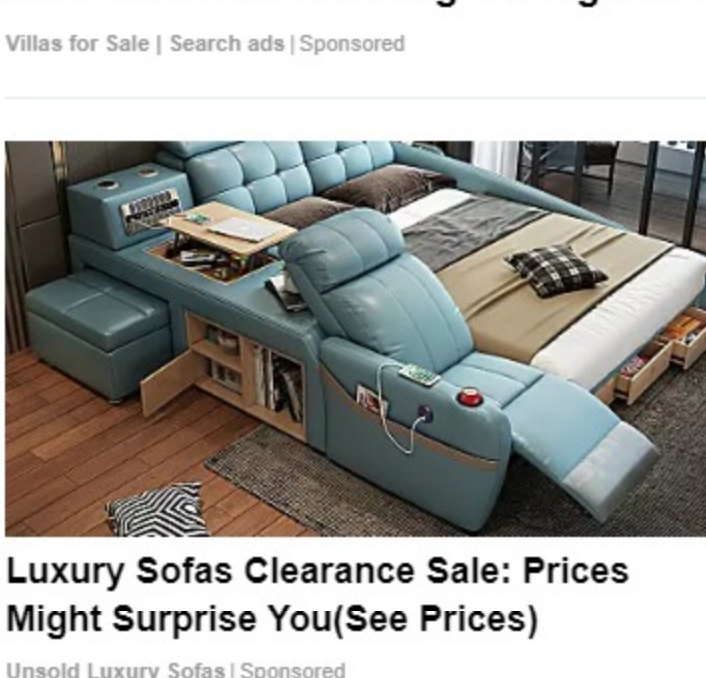
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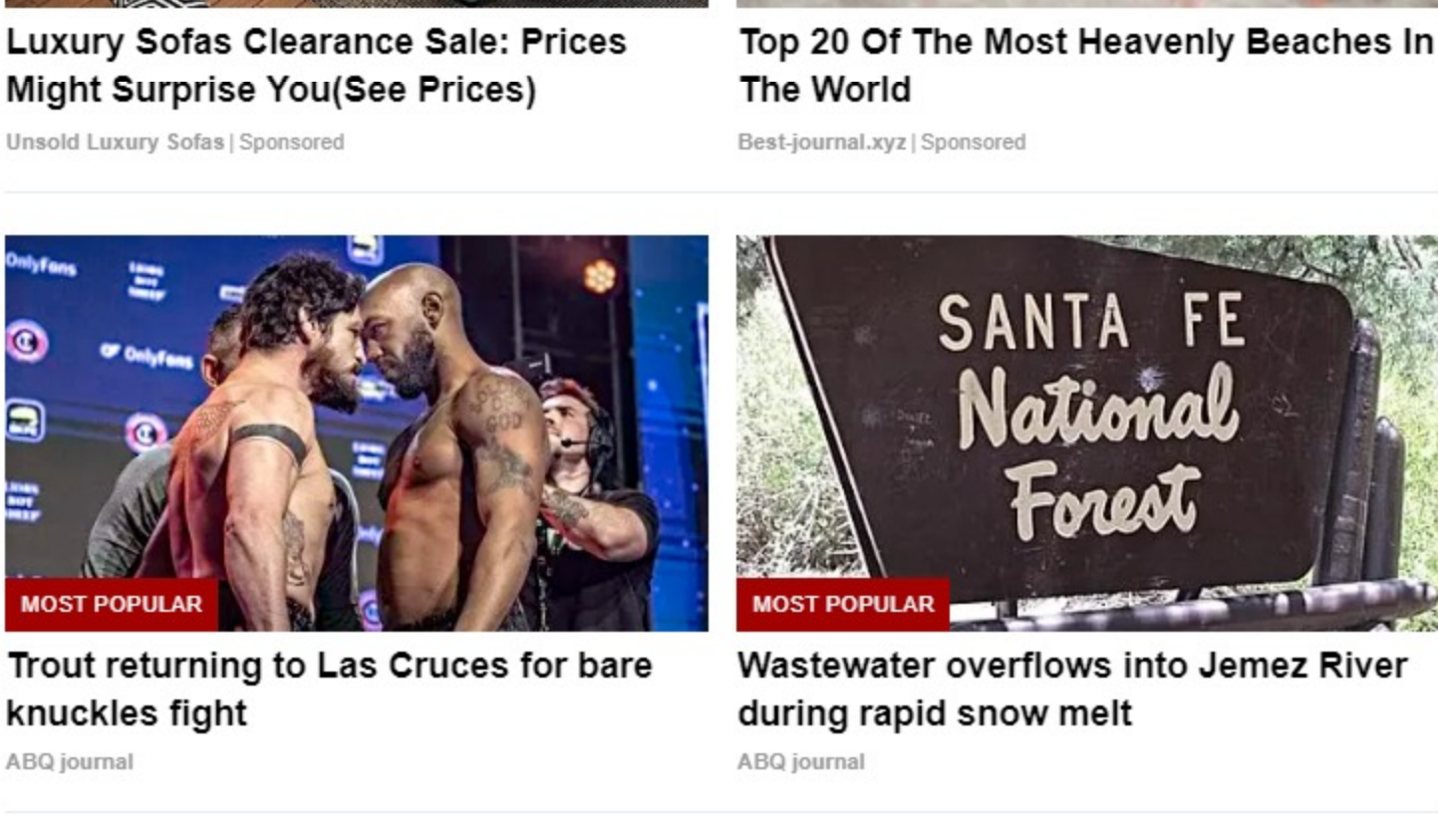
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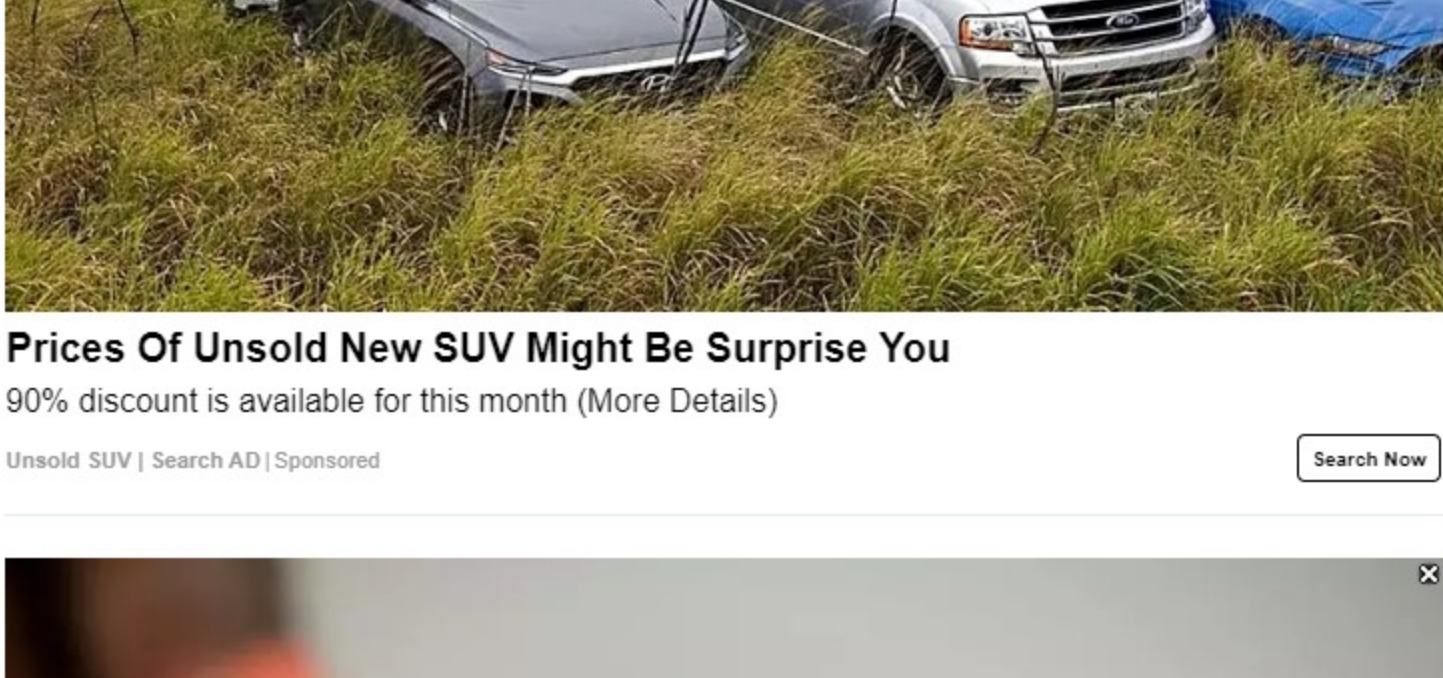
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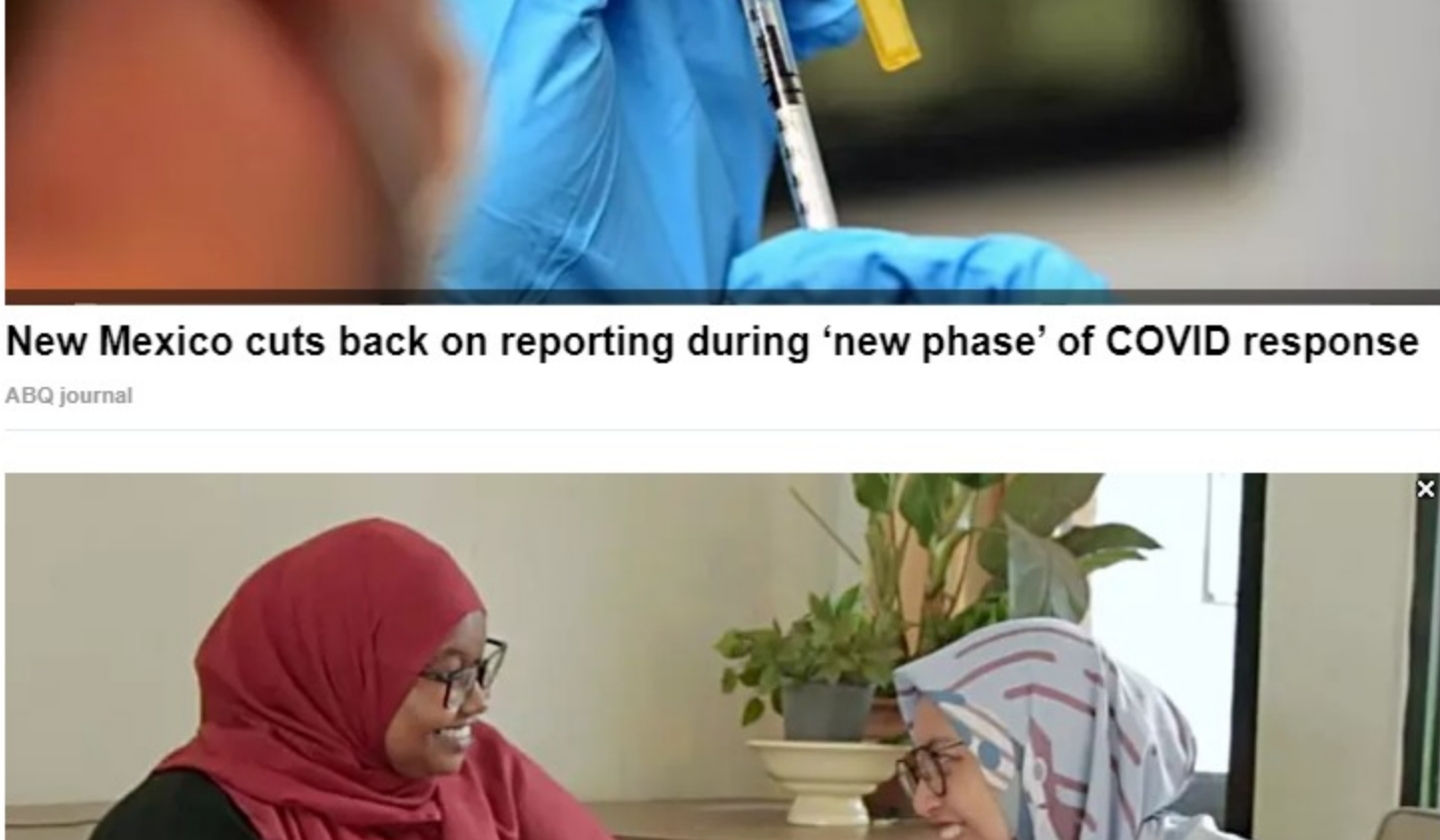
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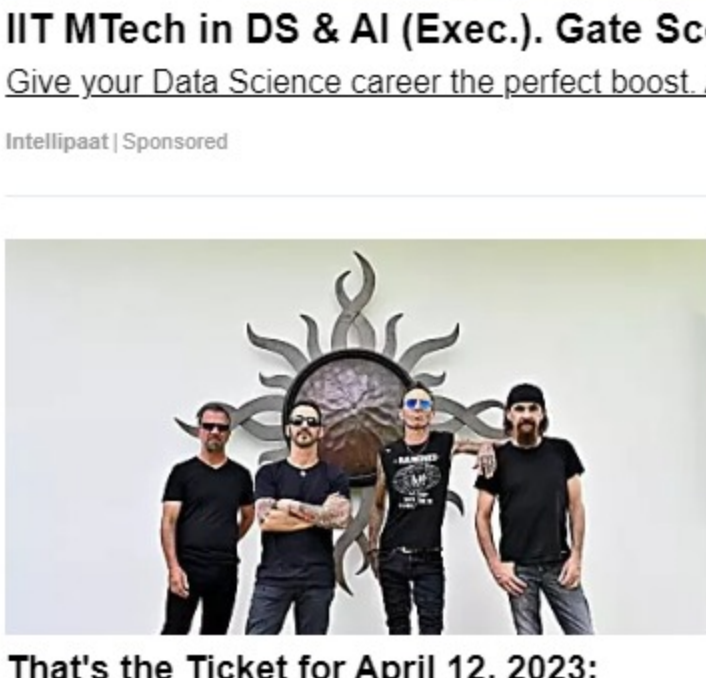
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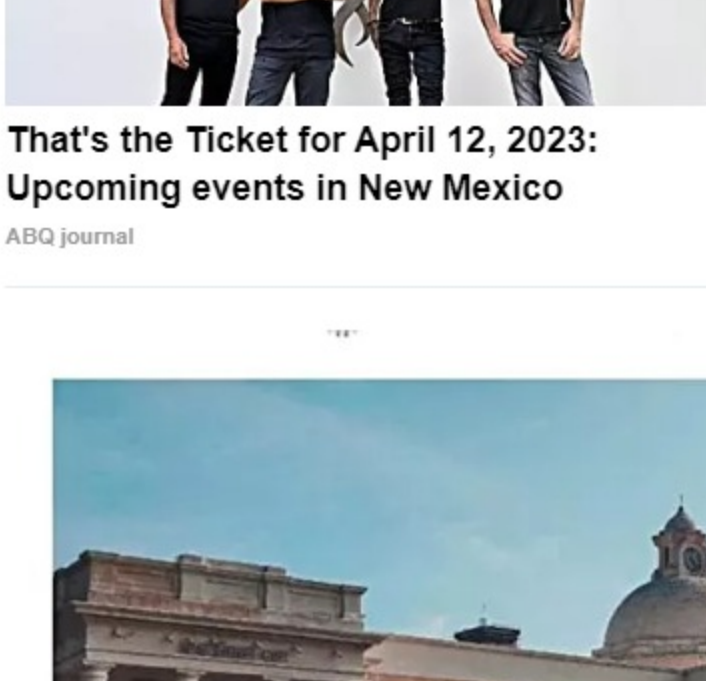
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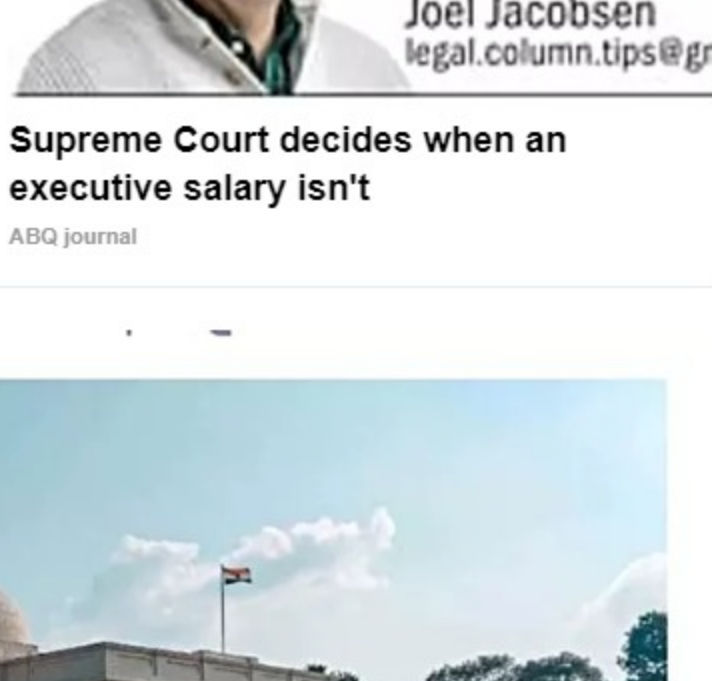
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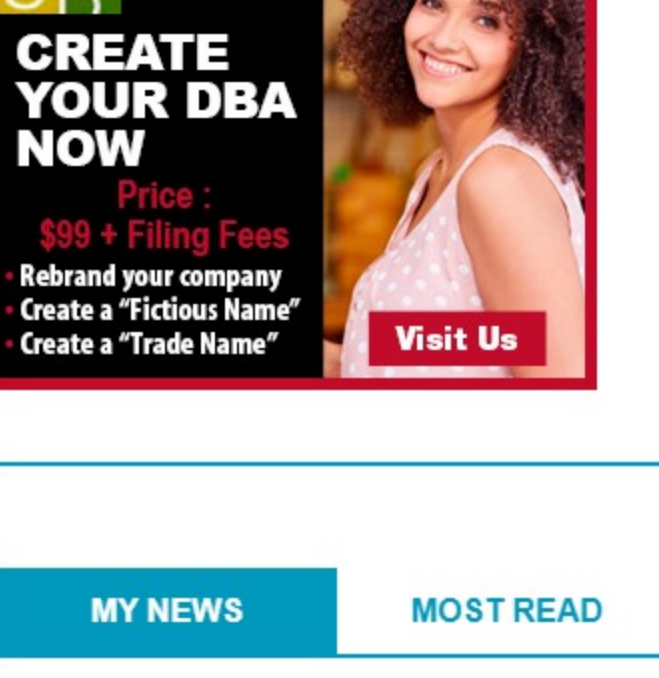
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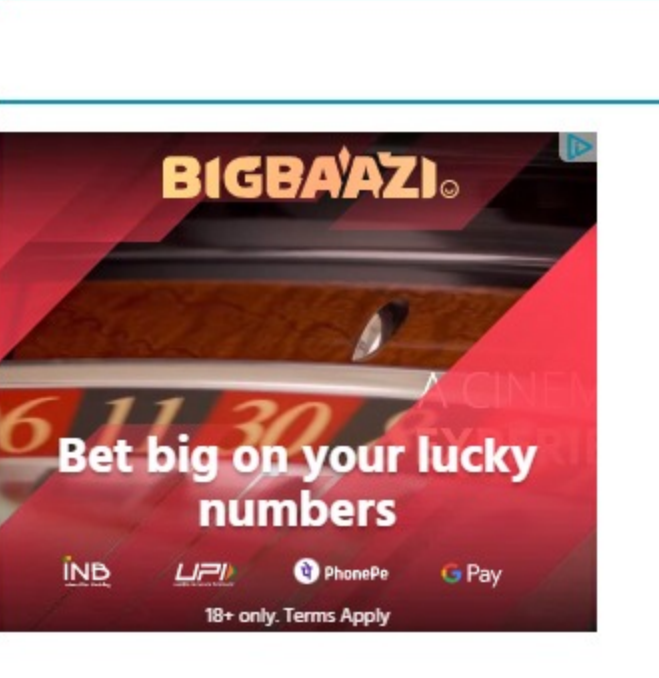


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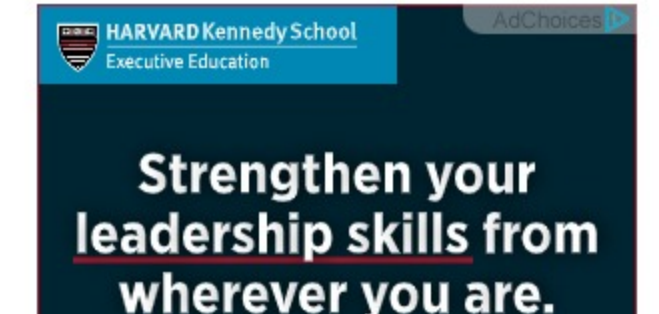
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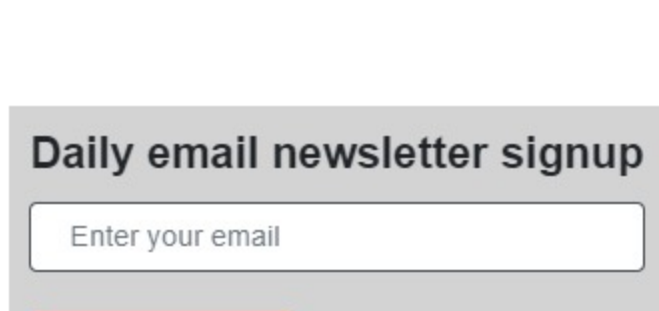
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