

ABDUL "MANNIE" RAHMAN

**EDDIE,** a jaguar cub sold in Texas to a buyer in California, was eventually dumped, malnourished, at a San Diego sanctuary.

#### **COLUMN ONE**

### Jaguar cub's journey to sanctuary

One mistreated animal's story exemplifies the exotic pet trade's dark underbelly

By Brittny Mejia

t less than a month old, unsteady on his small paws, the jaguar cub was already working.
While others born in the Amazon rainforest were still being nursed by their mothers,

he was rented out to do a photo

op in a Texas hotel room for \$1,000 an hour.

People snapped their fingers to get the cub's attention and held him on their laps. They posed with him for photos later posted on Instagram.

In video of one such photo shoot, the cub — smaller than a house cat — shrank back from the loud voices around him. As the jaguar wandered on the hotel carpet, Abdul "Mannie" Rahman, who had paid to rent him, decided he wanted to purchase the tiny feline.

Rahman, who made his money illegally selling marijuana, paid a discounted rate of \$25,000 and \$1,000 more to have the cub transported from Texas to his California home — breaking federal law.

g federal law. "All I knew was the jaguar was cute, and I had the money, and I wanted it," Rahman, now 36. told The Times.

The love affair did not last long. Investigators say the jaguar was sold from one drug dealer to another.

Six months after he was born, the cub was dumped at a San Diego sanctuary, malnourished, patches of fur missing, [See Jaguar, A8]

# Launch pad for women in high office

San Francisco has given the U.S. many female leaders. Soon one may be president.

By Jessica Garrison and Hannah Wiley

SAN FRANCISCO — Lateefah Simon, a front-runner to represent Oakland in Congress, still vividly recalls that day in third grade, nearly 40 years ago, when her class took a field trip to San Francisco City Hall.

Simon remembers walking through the grand marble building and sitting cross-legged on the carpet at the feet of then-Mayor Dianne Feinstein, the first woman to hold the job. The mayor — famous for her flawless coiffure, elegant outfits and backbone of steel — delivered a pointed message to the girls in the class: Any one of you can grow up and become a leader.

Simon, 47, who is Black and legally blind, grew up poor in San Francisco. She would drop out of high school at 16, rack up shoplifting charges in juvenile court and become a single mother at 19. But she never forgot the lesson of that field trip, of what it felt like to see a woman running her city. And in her early 20s, she got a job working for another barrier-breaking woman: San Francisco's first female district attorney, Kamala Harris

Harris pushed Simon to go to college, and she now has not only a master's degree but, at 26, was awarded a MacArthur "genius" grant for her work with girls in the criminal justice system.

Simon, a Democrat, is running to represent an Oakland seat being vacated by Rep. Barbara Lee. But she said the roots of her success, like those of so many other women in politics, run through San Francisco.

If Harris becomes the nation's first female president in November, it will be the latest — and greatest — in a [See Women, A9]

## A path to balancing renovation and affordability

Property owners find a way to make needed improvements while keeping rent modest.

By Andrew Khouri

To pay just \$770 a month in rent, Mariana Puche Hernandez tolerated the mold growing in the bathroom of her studio apartment, even the sparks that flew when she plugged her phone into an outlet.

Then the 11-unit complex

on Simmons Avenue in East L.A. went up for sale and became a prime target for investors looking to renovate apartments and hike the rent beyond what residents could afford.

"There was panic," Puche Hernandez said.

Across the nation, the United States is losing thousands of homes affordable to low-income families as individual investors and large companies buy older apartment buildings to renovate and sharply raise rent. The investments have sparked concerns over gentrification, displacement and

homelessness

But affordable housing advocates say there doesn't have to be a choice between renovation and affordable rent. A number of models exist to repair older properties and keep rents low — including nonprofit ownership and certain bond financing programs. They just need public subsidies and the political will to preserve them or get new ones off the ground.

"These units are important to save," said Matt Alvarez-Nissen, a researcher with the nonprofit California Housing Partnership.

[See **Apartments**, A10]



MICHAEL BLACKSHIRE LOS Angeles Tim **DESTINY JARAMILLO**, left, and Mariana Puche
Hernandez in front of their apartment in East L.A.

#### A sex offender 'dumping ground'

Antelope Valley locals say releases to the high desert area occur too often. CALIFORNIA, B1

#### An L.A. firm's rise and slide

Bryant Riley took years to build a thriving platform. Then came one bad deal. **BUSINESS**, A12

#### Weather

Remaining hot. L.A. Basin: 94/61. **B9** 

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# Good pay, less debt: A look at college majors that may surprise

By Teresa Watanabe

Edgar Roa was mostly raised by an immigrant mother without a high school degree, surviving on welfare benefits as his family frequently moved around Southern California in pur-

suit of affordable housing.
But he is poised to graduate next spring with a degree in a medical field with median earnings of \$126,318 five years after graduation, and from a university with an average net cost of just \$4,000

annually. Those low tuition costs and high earnings — along with his GI Bill benefits and a federal Pell Grant — will enable Roa to graduate debt free and transform the future of his family.

He attends Cal State Dominguez Hills, one of the state's most effective campuses in delivering top payoffs to low-income students, according to a new report. Among 28 programs examined at Dominguez Hills, 23 delivered earnings high enough to recoup the cost of the degree in a year or less —

including registered nursing at \$122,899, business at \$61,910 and teacher educa-

tion at \$43,988.

As more people question the value of higher education, the report released Thursday provides clear data on how much graduates enrolled in 2,695 degree and certificate programs at 324 California colleges and universities earn after five years compared with a high school graduate. The data show the net educational cost and how quickly stu
[See Colleges, A7]

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