

VET SAYS: TRY THIS IF YOUR DOG NEEDS HIS GLANDS EXPRESSED

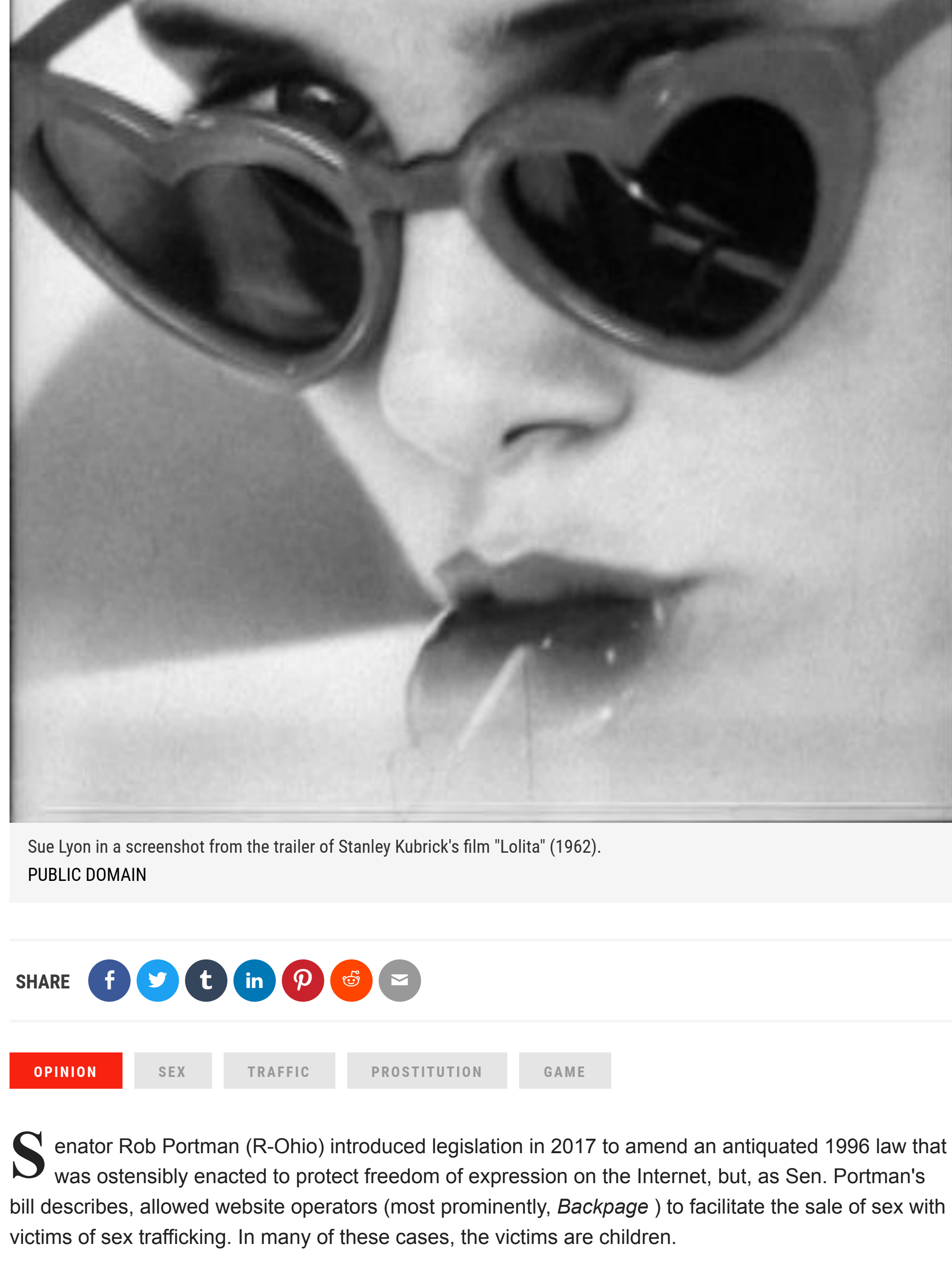
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OPINION

WE HAVE SET UP A SYSTEM TO SEX TRAFFIC AMERICAN CHILDREN

MICHAEL DOLCE

ON 1/12/18 AT 9:36 AM EST



Sue Lyon in a screenshot from the trailer of Stanley Kubrick's film "Lolita" (1962). PUBLIC DOMAIN

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OPINION SEX TRAFFIC PROSTITUTION GAME

Senator Rob Portman (R-Ohio) introduced legislation in 2017 to amend an antiquated 1996 law that was ostensibly enacted to protect freedom of expression on the Internet...

The frequency of child sex abuse is a true epidemic. Since at least 2000, the U.S. Department of Justice has reported that some 67 percent of all sexual assaults are committed against victims under 18 years old.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports confirmed child sexual abuse cases number approximately 58,000 per year in recent years.

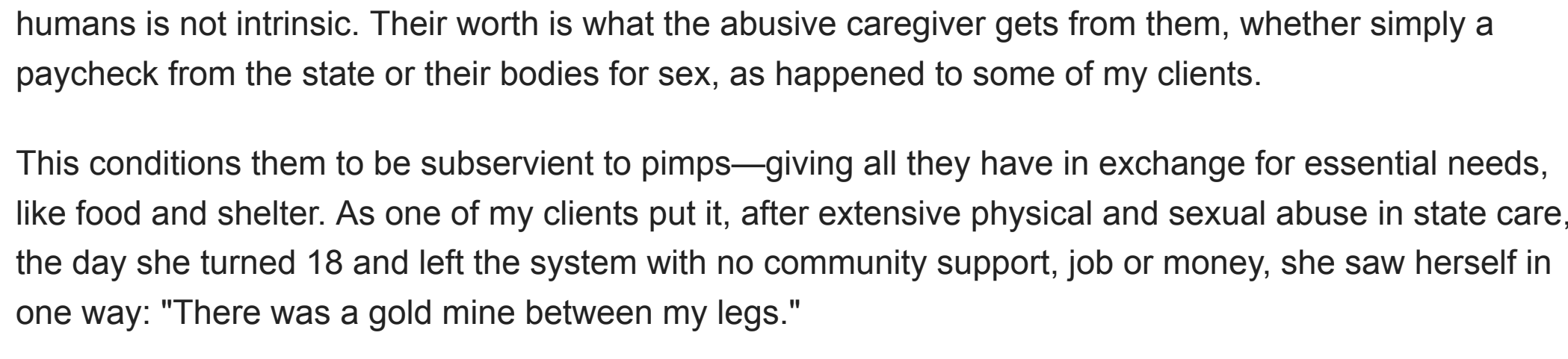
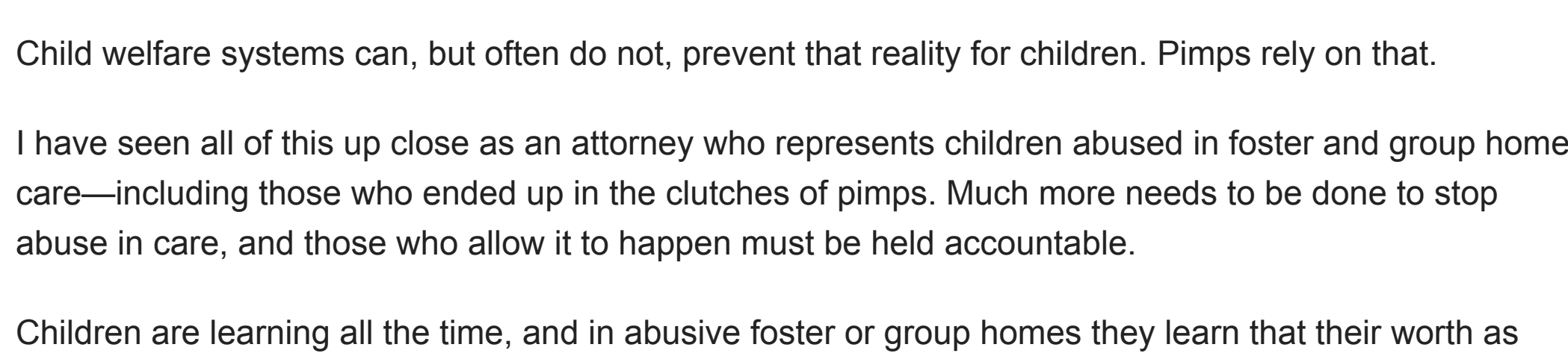
Unreported child sexual assaults are estimated at 80 percent and supported by multiple studies and experts.

Sex predators are misusing the Internet daily to access their prey, and by taking their shield away website operators who ignore such misuse—or profit from it—will have to monitor and prevent illegal user content.

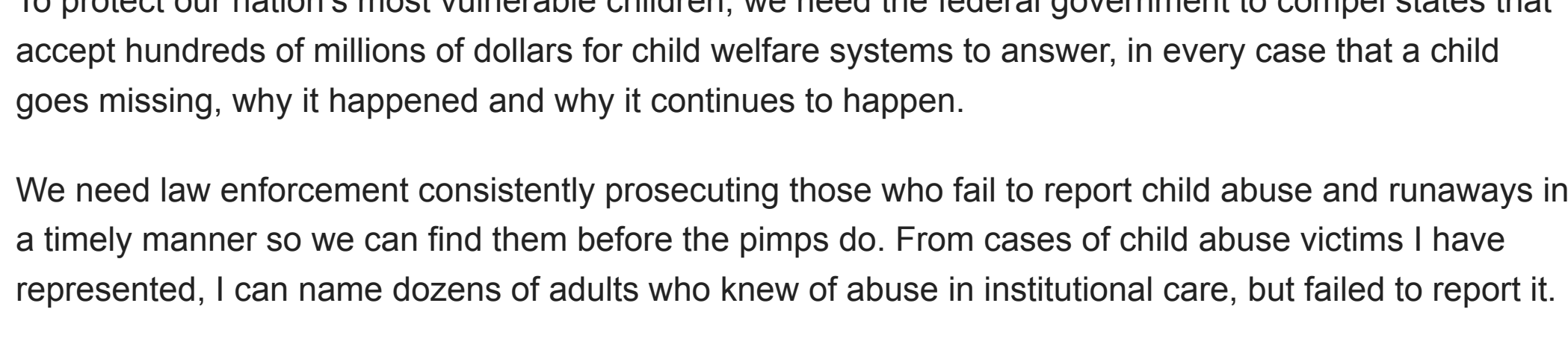
Sen. Portman's legislation is landmark and a key step in helping sex trade victims, but the reality is that predators will find other venues. We must ask the question that gets to the root of the problem: where are these victims coming from?

Here's the ugly truth: most Americans who are victims of sex trafficking come from our nation's own foster care system. It's a deeply broken system that leaves thousands vulnerable to pimps as children and groans them for the illegal sex trade as young adults.

We have failed our children by not fixing the systemic failures that have allowed this to happen for decades.



Most people don't know about our nation's foster care to sex trafficking pipeline, but the facts are sobering. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) found that "of the more than 18,500 endangered runaways reported to NCMEC in 2016, one in six were likely victims of child sex trafficking..."



The outcomes of law enforcement efforts against sex traffickers repeatedly support the NCMEC estimate. In a 2013 FBI 70-city nationwide raid, 60 percent of the victims came from foster care or group homes.

In 2012, Connecticut police rescued 88 children from sex trafficking; 86 were from the child welfare system. And even more alarming: the FBI discovered in a 2014 nationwide raid that many foster children rescued from sex traffickers, including children as young as 11, were never reported missing by child welfare authorities.

The essential failure is how we care for these children. As NCMEC's CEO told Congress in 2013, "Children in foster care are easy targets for pimps ... [they] are the most susceptible to the manipulation and false promises that traffickers use to secure their trust and dependency."

Child welfare systems can, but often do not, prevent that reality for children. Pimps rely on that. I have seen all of this up close as an attorney who represents children abused in foster and group home care...

Children are learning all the time, and in abusive foster or group homes they learn that their worth as humans is not intrinsic. Their worth is what the abusive caregiver gets from them, whether simply a paycheck from the state or their bodies for sex...

This conditions them to be subservient to pimps—giving all they have for essential needs, like food and shelter. As one of my clients put it, after extensive physical and sexual abuse in state care, she turned 18 and left the system with no community support, job or money...

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The rates of runaways from state care remains essentially unchanged since 2003, so the volume of potential trafficking victims has not changed. To protect our nation's most vulnerable children, we need the federal government to compel states that accept hundreds of millions of dollars for child welfare systems to answer...

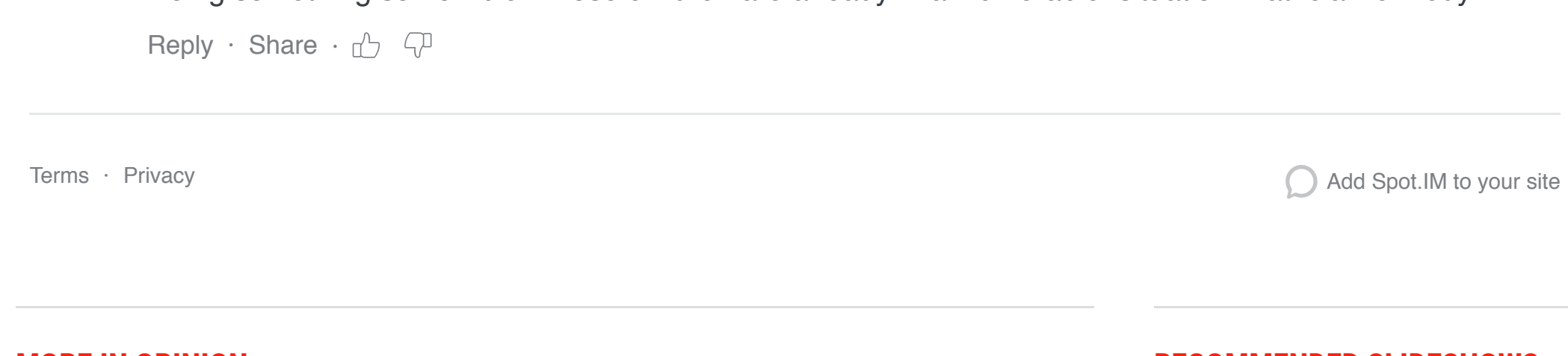
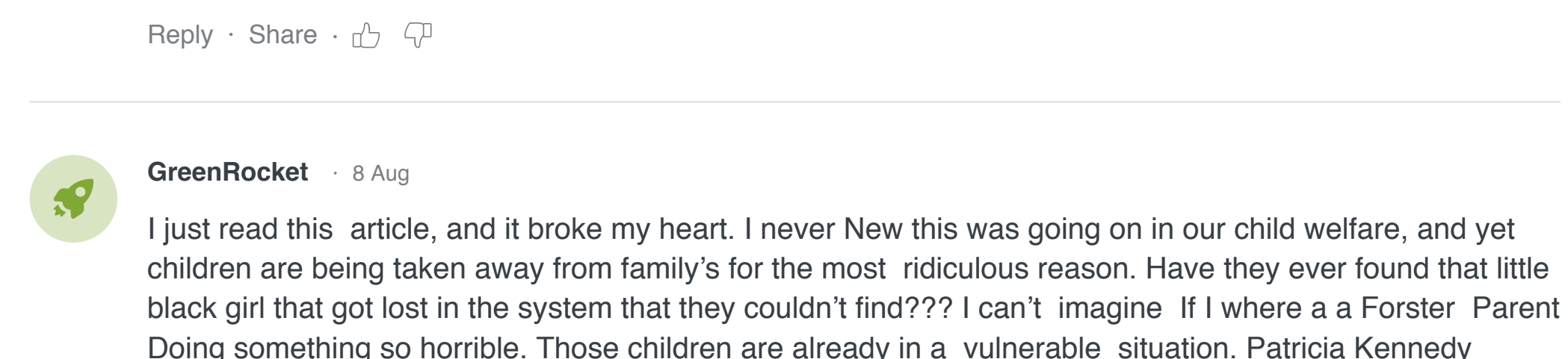
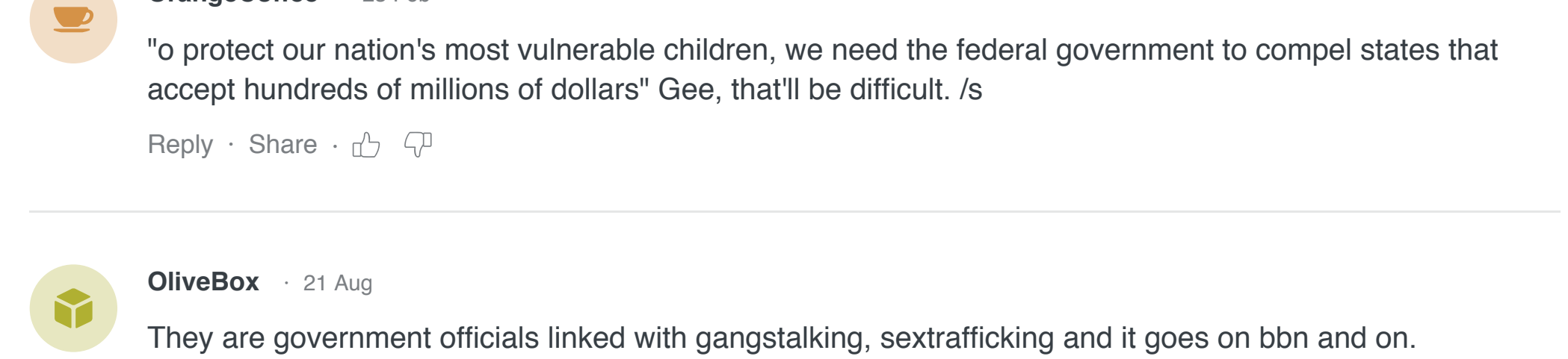
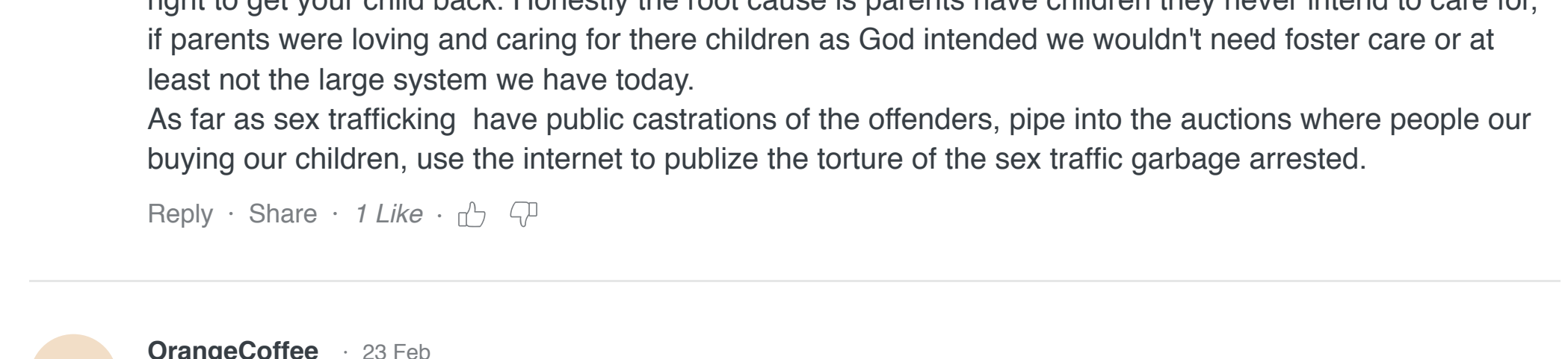
We need law enforcement consistently prosecuting those who fail to report child abuse and runaways in a timely manner so we can find them before the pimps do. From cases of child abuse victims I have represented, I can name dozens of adults who knew of abuse in institutional care, but failed to report it.

Not one of them was arrested, even when I asked law enforcement to do it. And we must fire child welfare officials accountable for their role. I have never seen an official be fired in any case; in fact, I've seen one responsible official get a job promotion.

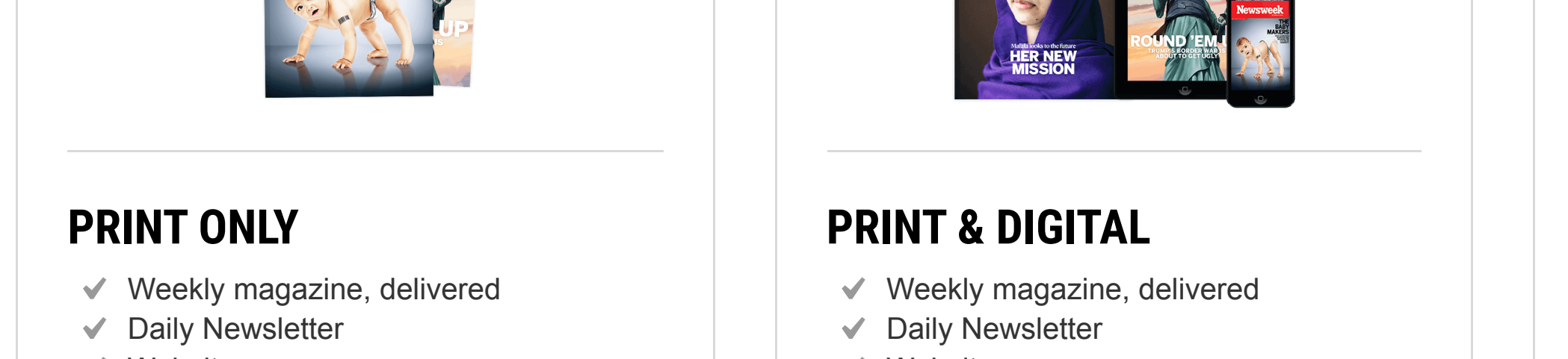
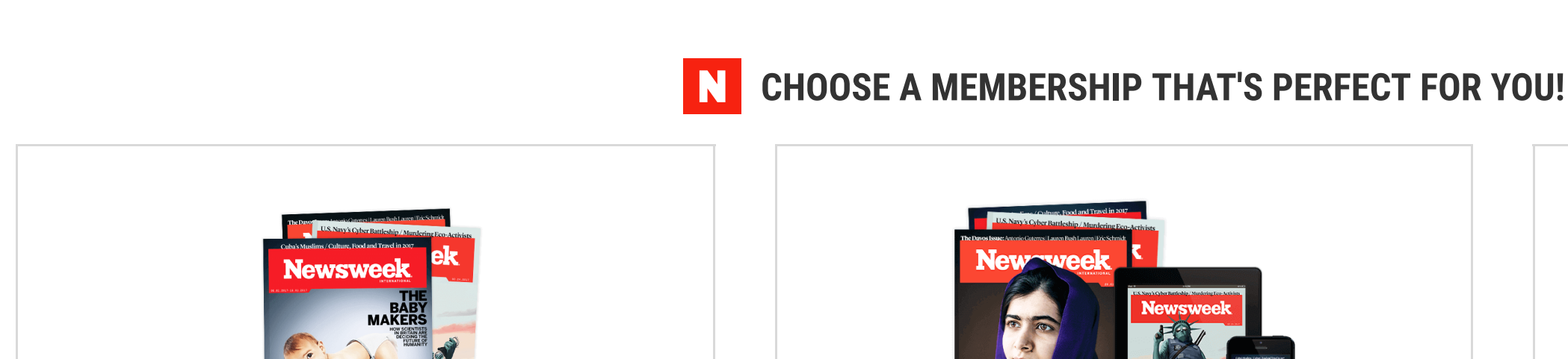
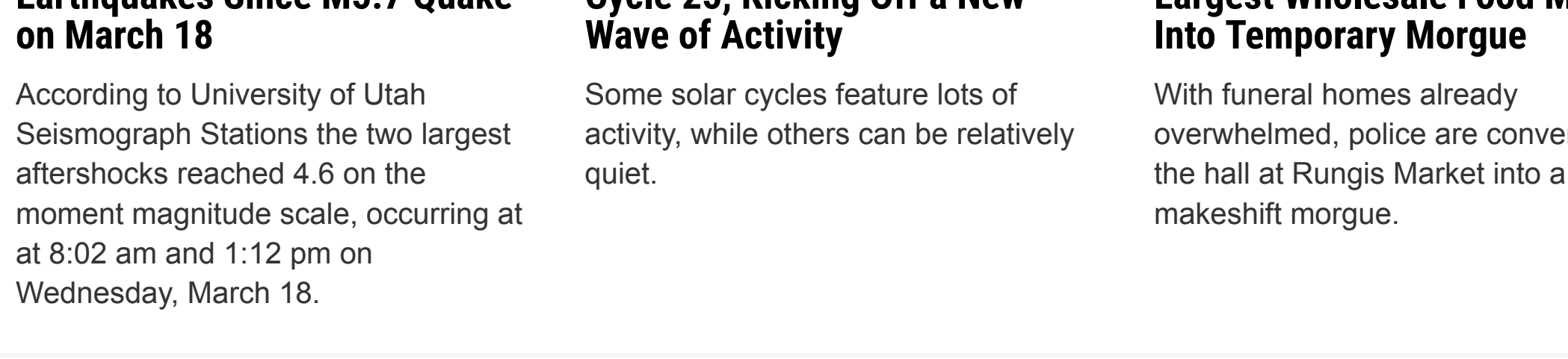
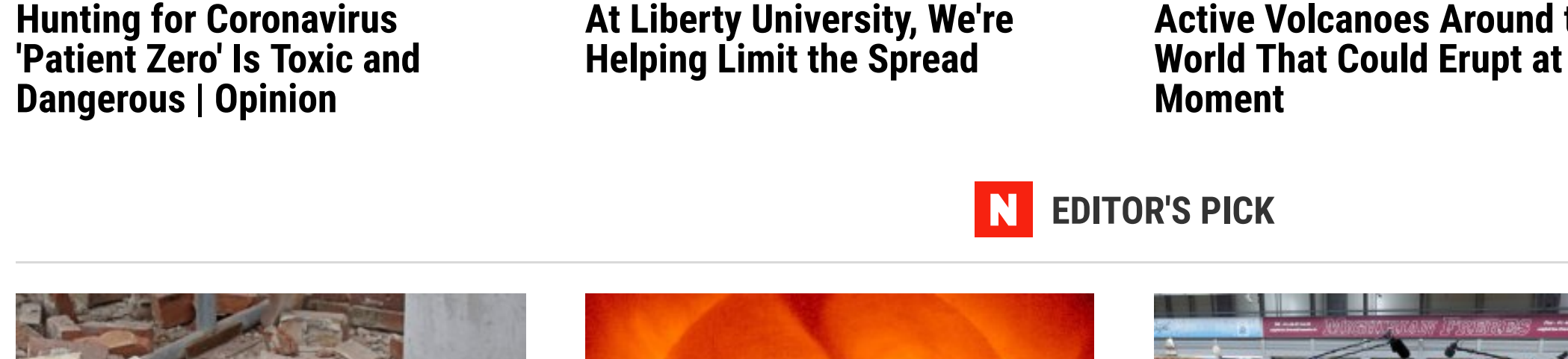
With or without the Internet, predators will continue to find vulnerable children to build the sex trade. Until we address the source of the victims, this will continue to be the truth we create for our nation's youth.

Michael Dolce is Of Counsel at Cohen Milstein, and a member of the firm's Catastrophic Injury practice group.

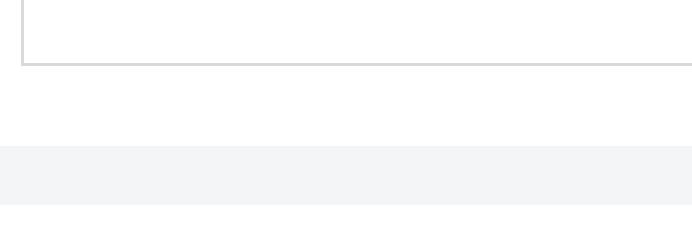
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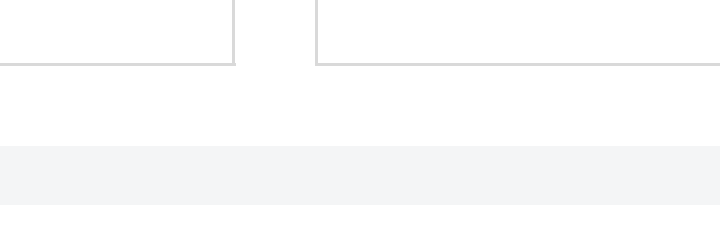
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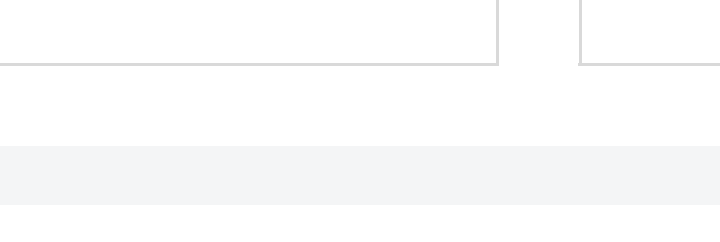
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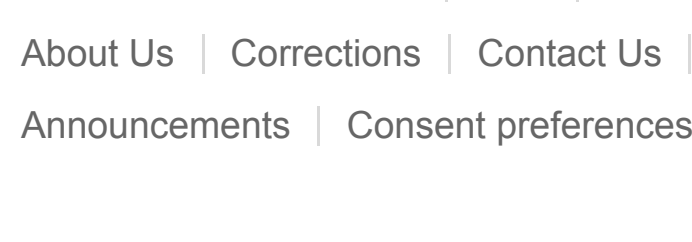
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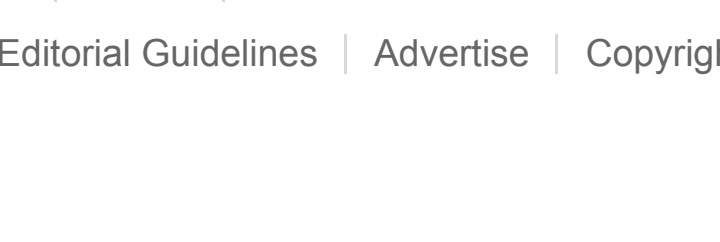
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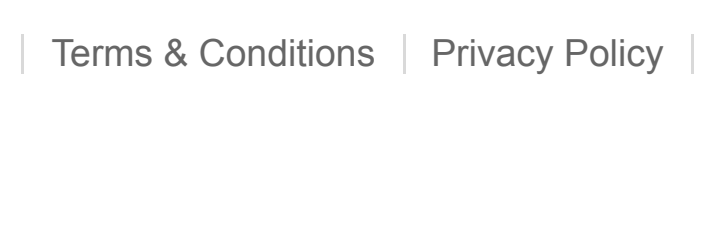
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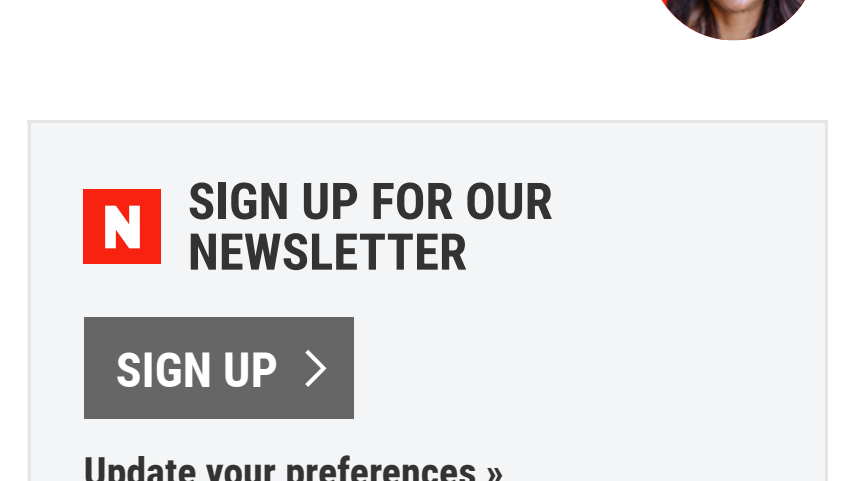
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