

## Plugged In: I Know What You Did Last Summer

By T.J. DeGroat September 18, 2012

*This piece originally appeared on the [WaPo Labs Blog](#). [WaPo Labs](#) is the digital team at the Washington Post Company focused on innovation and experimenting with emerging technologies.*

As a fan of the increasingly popular [tech sabbath](#) concept, I had lofty ideas about making my recent trip to Mexico an unplugged excursion.

It would be epic, I thought while making my final, pre-vacation preparations. For once I would roll through airport security without frantically filling a bin with my iProducts. I would sip my cafe de olla peacefully while flipping through the pages — yes, pages! — of a magazine. I would meander through an unknown neighborhood and stumble upon hidden gems without prior knowledge of their online reputations. I would be completely present in each moment.

Yeah, right.

As romantic as the idea of disconnecting is, I just couldn't do it. It's 2012 and I need my iPhone at all times, okay?

From the taxi app I used to get to the airport on time to the websites I relied on to find and vet potential dining options, I turned to my prodigious smartphone every step of the way.

I regularly fired up my go-to trio of apps — Foursquare, Twitter, and Facebook — to obnoxiously share photos of turquoise water and hip cafes with the friends, family, and coworkers stuck at home. After all, I spent all summer jealously swiping through their photo albums; it was my turn to post status updates from a balcony overlooking the ocean.

The truth? I even took a peek at my work email once my trip reached its halfway point. Because, really, it seemed better to quickly get a sense of what's going on back at the office than to come home to a completely overwhelming inbox, battling the stress of the unknown.

Could I survive for eight days without technology? Of course. And as recent articles note, there are [obvious benefits](#) to doing so. But for every feature story urging people to [unplug](#) while on vacation, there's another touting the latest batch of travel apps that will [change their lives](#).

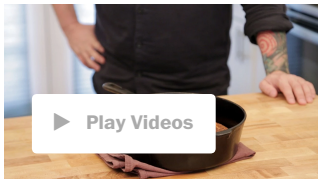
So while I may not have experienced the benefits of a [digital detox](#), I enjoyed the perks of crowdsourced restaurant recommendations, on-demand car service, and GPS-aided exploration.

And, best of all, I enjoyed the satisfaction of reading comments from jealous friends simultaneously loving and hating my photos of blue skies and bluer water.

It's what vacation 2.0 is all about.

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# Higher Education: Why It Matters, How You Can Prepare

**A** recent study of black parents found that nearly all of them consider a college education key to future success. But a lack of information about paying for higher education has created a gap between aspiration and realization, especially for black and Latino families.

The study of black students and parents in five cities, conducted by the United Negro College Fund (UNCF)'s Patterson Institute, found that 99 percent of black families believe a college education is an important part of success in life. But almost half of the parents could not name a single source of financial aid and 70 percent of students indicated they wanted to receive financial-aid information earlier in their high-school years.

"The unfortunate effect of that gap is preventing many thousands of high-aspiring kids from those communities from going on to college because there is this perception that college is out of reach," says Hugh Rosen, a spokesperson for The Sallie Mae Fund.

## The Knowledge Gap

Part of the problem is the way information is being disseminated. It's important to reach out to underserved communities through local organizations, from churches to grassroots groups. For example, a California program run by Wells Fargo, No. 17 on The 2006

DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity list, arms mothers with the knowledge they need to run financial-education workshops for their peers. The classes, held in schools, churches and private homes, are informal and relaxed.

In October, on the heels of the UNCF study, The Sallie Mae Fund kicked off its campaign to improve higher-education access among black students by offering free "Paying for College" workshops in community centers and local schools.

"This work is about getting knowledge out in ways these communities would like to receive it," Rosen says.

Sallie Mae also announced a commitment to renew its "American Dream" scholarship program with the UNCF, pledging to provide a \$500,000 grant for 2006–2007 academic-year scholarships. The fund has made \$2 million in scholarships available since 2003.

This work is an off-shoot of the fund's Project Access, a program focused on providing information and opportunities to underserved populations. It was launched in response to a 2002 Harris poll commissioned by The Sallie Mae Fund, which found that families with the lowest income levels had the least amount of financial-aid information at their disposal.

Of families that earned less than \$50,000 a year, about 60 percent said they needed more information about how to pay for college, compared with 37 percent of

families making \$75,000 or more. People of color, in particular, are victims of a knowledge gap, according to the survey. Two-thirds of all black parents and 62 percent of Latino parents surveyed said they needed more information about paying for their children's college education, compared with 44 percent of white parents.

Adding to the problem is the size of the country's unbanked population. An estimated 10 percent of the U.S. population does not use the banking system. The problem affects all lower-income Americans but is most common among Latinos. Only half of the nation's 40 million Latinos have checking accounts, according to the American Bankers Association.

In a 2005 survey of New York City Latinos, Charlotte, N.C.-based Bank of America, No. 25 on The 2006 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity list, found that 34 percent hadn't established a relationship with a mainstream bank.

Many of the unbanked Latinos are undocumented immigrants who can't legally open an account. But about half of undocumented residents come from Mexico, a country that issues matricula consular cards, which can be used to open bank accounts in the United States.

## Creating a Comadre Culture

Knowledge about creating banking relationships is increasing as financial-services institutions con-

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**BY T.J. DEGROAT**

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# Financial Literacy



ILLUSTRATION / VICTOR GAD

continue to roll out financial-literacy initiatives. Particularly noteworthy is San Francisco-based Wells Fargo's recent work in Southern California.

For the past few years, hundreds of women who call themselves "comadres" (Spanish for "comrades" or "sisterhood") have been attending a series of five financial-literacy classes organized by Wells Fargo with the help of the Valley Economic Development Center.

The classes were needed in the small, immigrant-heavy city of Pacoima in the San Fernando Valley, where some people thought high-fee check-cashing facilities were their only option, says Wells Fargo spokesperson Dolores Arredondo.

When the company opened a branch in the community, it realized that without education, few people would walk through the doors. "We had to go to them," Arredondo says.

One of the most popular modules focuses on saving for kids' college educations. "Once we got past those initial banking issues, we got into saving for your children's education," Arredondo says.

"A lot of the comadres are now experiencing their kids going to college, so there's a huge emphasis on saying it's possible, our kids from Pacoima can go to college if we prepare," says Gloria Lazalde, a former Valley Economic Development Center employee who continues to help organize the comadres.

## How to Save

How do they make college a reality for their children? Before talking about what to do, Diane Maloney, a financial planner in Plainfield, Ill., likes to discuss what not to do. At the top of her list, if it can be avoid-



ed, is accumulating debt by way of student loans, home-equity loans or borrowing from retirement plans.

“If you’ve got a youngster in their last semester of college and there are no funds available, then a small, short-term debt intended to be paid off as soon as possible may be the only way to go,” she says. But “starting life as a student going into the working world with a lot of debt is a really bad idea.”

Both Maloney and James Suh, regional sales manager, Wells Fargo Private Client Services, are less enthusiastic about UGMA (Uniform Gift to Minors Act) or UTMA (Uniform Transfers to Minors Act) accounts. They are created in the child’s name with the

parent acting as the guardian—until the child reaches the age of maturity, which is set by state law and ranges from 18 to 21. Then, the child controls the money.

“Some 18- or 21-year-olds are not ready for that responsibility,” Suh says. Maloney agrees, mentioning one student she knows who blew his entire savings on gambling boats in one night.

Especially when advising middle- or lower-class families, Suh advises that people “save as much as you can without it causing stress. I always tell clients to have a balance.”

If parents can’t afford to set aside much money, don’t stress. There are options available.

In addition to various federal

student-aid possibilities (see chart), students can take advantage of work-study programs. Ambitious undergraduates sometimes can accelerate their college experience by completing a degree in three years instead of the typical four.

Scholarships remain an overlooked option for many. Maloney recommends that parents get a copy of the list of their local high school’s scholarship winners, which typically is handed out at graduation ceremonies. “Get a hold of that a couple of years before your youngster is going to be a senior and identify which might be possible,” she says.

Maloney also guides parents to programs such as Dollars for Scholars, a network of more than 1,200 grassroots community-based, volunteer-driven scholarship foundations located throughout the United States. Last year, Dollars for Scholars chapters awarded about \$29 million in scholarships to more than 35,000 students.

“With enough lead time, you can groom yourself to be acceptable for an award. And don’t stop at one,” she says.

Often, a combination of savings, scholarships, grants and loans is required, especially if a child wants to attend a private university.

Whether parents start saving during pregnancy or when those college applications arrive, there’s always a way to make higher education a reality. And as other companies continue improving the education of their workers, education becomes an increasingly important investment for U.S. parents, Maloney says.

Adds Suh, “My dad used to tell me knowledge is the one thing a thief can’t take away.”

**DI**

### HOW TO PAY FOR COLLEGE

Financial experts agree that college never is out of reach if parents and students start saving early enough and students remain realistic about their options. Here are their tips:

- **State-sponsored 529 college-savings plans**, the best option, puts parents in control of the money. Tax-deferred and tax-exempt when used to pay for qualified higher-education expenses.
- **Education savings accounts** (formerly called education IRAs) are similar to 529 accounts but the maximum annual contribution is \$2,000, compared with \$11,000 for a 529.
- **UGMA and UTMA accounts** give students control of the accumulated savings once they’ve reached the age of maturity (from 18 to 21, depending on the state).
- **Federal Stafford loans** provide up to \$18,500 a year and **Perkins loans** up to \$4,000 for undergraduate students and \$6,000 for graduate students.
- **Pell grants**, which do not have to be repaid, range from \$400 to \$4,050.
- **Start investigating scholarship options early** by obtaining a copy of your high school’s awards listings.
- **Accumulate debt through student loans only when out of other options.**

Source: [www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com)

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## Best of Digg: January Comments


 by [T.J. DeGroat](#) on February 2, 2010 - 3:51am in [Company](#)

We all know that Digg is a fantastic resource for discovering the most interesting content the Web has to offer. But just as entertaining as the submissions are the conversations the Digg community builds around the news stories, funny images and quirky videos that hit the homepage.

With that in mind, we've decided to spotlight a few of the comments from the past month that have made us at Digg HQ laugh. All three of these are among January's 10 most-dug comments.

The most popular contribution of the month, with **+2345 diggs** at our last count, makes fun of annoying celebs who we're equally impressed and disgusted by — in this case, Michael Cera. User [XYconfiguration](#) (who, with just 17 comments since November 2005, goes for quality over quantity) also provides prime fodder for other commenters — see user [CaughtThinking's](#) take on [Zoey Deschanel](#).

[XYconfiguration](#) on 01/05/2010 What's that movie where Michael Cera plays a socially awkward teenager? **+2345 diggs** [21 Replies](#) — best has 821 diggs [Reply](#)

Also making us chuckle in January was this classic Digg switcheroo, with **+1976 diggs** at last check. User [scsraus](#), who pulls us in for an intriguing and seemingly serious story and flips the script, leading to — where else? — a bad-ass comment-off (and the G-rated rap that probably drove every parent on early-90s middle school students crazy). Yo homes, to Bel-Air!

[scsraus](#) on 01/08/2010 Contestant #1 **+1976 diggs** [34 Replies](#) — best has 1062 diggs [Reply](#)

Basically, I was interviewed in Union Square Park for a show called "Show Me New York", which would feature New Yorkers of all walks of life talking about their favorite spots in the city. Awesome, right??? I wasn't sure why that show required a trivia quiz in the interview (maybe they didn't want anyone stupid on-air?), but I aced it. After 2 weeks of emails with the producers, I got my film date. My friend and I waited for a cab, which we were told would take us to Century 21 downtown, where we were going to film our segment. Except, when the cab pulled up...the obvious happened... The license plate said "Fresh" and it had dice in the mirror. If anything I could say that this cab was rare, but I thought naa forget it, "yo homes, to Bel-Air!" I pulled up to a house about seven or eight and I yelled to the cabbie "Yo, homes, smell you later!" I looked at my kingdom- I was finally there. To settle my throne as the prince of Bel-Air...

[Hey, I see what you did there!](#) Proving that the comments Diggers provide are as funny as the much-loved stories The Onion submits, user [dawnraid101](#) hits us with the pun factor in his 1565-digg beauty. A tip o' the hate and a very good gay to you, sir.

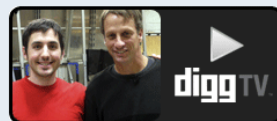
[dawnraid101](#) on 01/13/2010 Gay the pray away. **+1565 diggs** [9 Replies](#) — best has 94 diggs [Reply](#)

Props to all the users who make comments so much fun. As always, we welcome feedback, so please hit us with your questions or comments. You can contact us via email at [http://digg.com/contact](mailto:help@digg.com) or follow us on Twitter at [http://twitter.com/digg\\_community](http://twitter.com/digg_community)

Hasta pronto,  
 T.J.

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## FearNet: Victims Wanted

Today is an exciting day at GUBA -- and not just because Skittles and Twix have joined the regular lineup of snacks in the kitchen. Today, Comcast marked Halloween by launching the much-talked-about FearNet, a horror-themed multi-platform entertainment experience (forgive the verbosity but that's the best way I can think of explaining it). A co-venture with Sony and Lionsgate, FearNet has three parts: a video-on-demand channel, [a website](#) and a mobile offering.

It's the first of several multi-platform networks Comcast plans to launch and it's the first of many similar partnerships GUBA plans to create. It's really exciting for us to see this product garner [major attention](#) from the [media](#).

Here's my quick schpeel about [GUBA's part](#) in FearNet: Visitors to FearNet.com can purchase horror movies for rent or to own. The site is powered by GUBA's co-branded online video store. Pricing is the same as in our [Premium Section](#): \$0.99 for rentals and \$4.99 to \$9.99 for download-to-own titles. We think the solution we provided to Comcast through FearNet.com is further validation of the flexibility and robustness of our online video distribution capabilities -- bringing the immediacy and ease-of-use of online video viewing to a new audience.

So check out [FearNet!](#) As of this morning, the most popular title seems to be "A Clockwork Orange." Peep this:



**STANLEY KUBRICK'S**  
**A CLOCKWORK ORANGE**

### A Clockwork Orange (1971)

Rating: UNRATED / Runtime: 02:17

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**Synopsis**  
The head of a gang of toughs, in an insensitive futuristic society, is conditioned to become physically ill at sex and violence during a prison sentence. When he is released, he's brutally...

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**Actors**  
Malcolm Mc Dowell, Patrick Magee, Adrienne Corri, Warren Clarke

**Categories**  
Drama, Scifi - Fantasy, Action, Thriller, Horror



## Armed with HT, the Hip Get Hipper in Portland

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Portland's not for everyone. But the people it's for are generally superior humans. After all, the city has awesome access to the outdoors, from the Willamette River to nearby Mt. Hood. It's a foodie haven, a coffee snob's paradise and a sanctuary for the eco-conscious. Oh, and we hear there's some sort of hipster-related stuff happening too. But best of all, Portland now has HotelTonight. Check out a few of the partner hotels we'll be displaying on the app in the coming days:

**the Nines** - Between the hip atrium lobby, rooftop bar and high-end steakhouse, this place is happening seven days a week. Contemporary art, French-inspired furnishings and rustic accents come together in an approachably elegant mix. And the location is about as good as it gets. Atop the landmark Meier & Frank Building, it's in the heart of downtown and across from Pioneer Place.

**Jupiter Hotel** - This retro-inspired hipster haven is definitely for the young and young at heart. Quirky guestrooms include photo murals and chalkboard doors (keep those notes witty; you're being judged). An airy, bamboo-laden courtyard with an outdoor fireplace is perfect for relaxing, and the Doug Fir Lounge is *the* spot for an evening of debauchery. You know there's fun to be had when the hotel supplies earplugs.

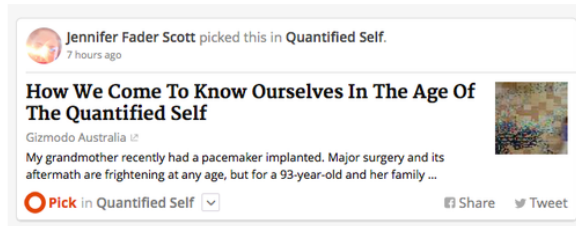
**RiverPlace Hotel** - Victorian elegance meets Northwest casual at downtown's only real waterfront hotel, which boasts rave-worthy views from the restaurant and the bar's patio. Comfy rooms contain contemporary furnishings and plush beds. And guests are pampered. Loaner bikes and a DVD library are just a few of the complimentary perks.

1 week ago / 0 notes /


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## Curators We Love: Jennifer Fader Scott

**Jennifer Fader Scott** describes herself as an “executive with an insatiable passion for information science, applied neuroscience, communications arts with a side of jiu jitsu.” Among her biggest passions: promoting how technology can help anyone become a happier, healthier person. That makes her the perfect person to curate [a trove about the quantified self movement](#).



This Californian knows her stuff: Bay Area PBS station KQED recently featured Jennifer in a documentary about the digital health revolution titled *Future of You*, in which she described the movement as “knowing yourself through numbers.” She went on: “It can reveal some patterns that you would never recognize otherwise. It sounds anecdotal, but if you track it every day and then you see the numbers you can see causality.”



“I became truly addicted to the quantified self movement a few years ago when I was one of the first people to own a Nike FuelBand,” she said via email. “Since then, I’ve started to track activities, heart rate, heart rate variability, sleep, and more. It’s been a journey of self-discovery through numbers.”

And luckily for the Trove community, Jennifer is passionate about sharing those discoveries. “The quantified self movement has changed my life,” she said, “so I enjoy curating the best news I can find as a way to share my love of the topic.”

Ready to join her? Just follow these [simple instructions](#) to create your own trove. And feel free to [contact us](#) with any questions.

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## The Big Story: Supreme Court Takes on Same-Sex Marriage

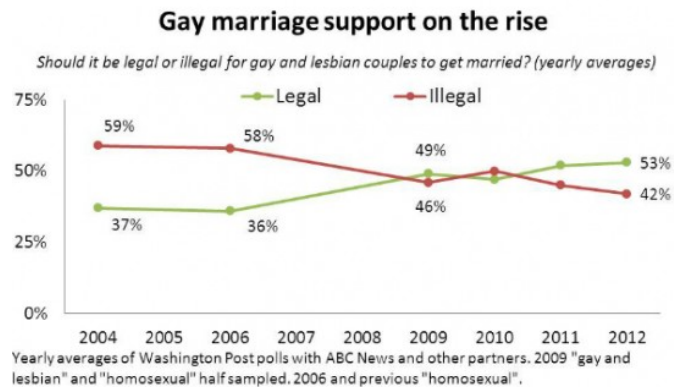
Social Reader Editors, The Big Story by WaPo Labs Editors

135 weeks ago



Whether you're for or against same-sex marriage, you should pay attention to the Supreme Court this spring, when the nine justices take on two pivotal cases, both of which could have a sweeping impact on the definition of marriage in the United States. The first set of briefs in the cases — which involve California's Proposition 8 and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) — were filed last month, and additional filings are due next week. As the high court prepares to consider the constitutionality of same-sex marriage, catch up on what's at stake and how Americans view the issue in 2013.

**Public opinion of same-sex marriage in the United States has changed dramatically in recent years:** In a December USA Today/Gallup poll, 53 percent of Americans said gay couples should have the same marriage rights as straight couples — nearly twice the percentage who said so in 1996. Don't expect that shift to reverse, either. A massive 73 percent of the 18- to 29-year-olds who were polled said they support same-sex marriage. Data from a Washington Post-ABC News poll on the question of marriage equality also shows how opinions have changed since 2004:



The president's view of gay marriage has evolved, as well. During his 2004 U.S. Senate campaign, he defined marriage as being "between a man and a woman." Eight years later, in a potentially risky pre-election move, he used a TV interview to publicly come out in support of full marriage rights for gay couples. More recently, he highlighted gay rights in his inaugural address and this week's State of the

Union.

**High-profile wins for supporters of gay marriage in last year's general election marked a major shift:** After more than 30 losses at the ballot box, voters in Maine, Maryland and Washington approved gay marriage, marking the first time the feat was achieved [at the polls](#). The same day, Minnesota rejected a constitutional amendment banning gay unions.

Same-sex marriage is legal in six other states — Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont — in addition to the District of Columbia. Activists in other states, including Illinois, are aiming to make legislative gains this year. Outside the United States, gay and lesbian couples can tie the knot in 11 countries on four continents and in some other major jurisdictions, such as Mexico City.

**The Supreme Court will hear two cases during two consecutive days of arguments in late March:** *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, better known as the Prop 8 case, involves California's constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage. The other case, *United States v. Windsor*, is one of several legal efforts to abolish DOMA, which denies legally married same-sex couples the federal benefits available to their heterosexual counterparts.



(Getty Images)

*Hollingsworth v. Perry* gets at the constitutionality of California voters banning same-sex marriage by referendum in 2008 after the state Supreme Court had legalized it earlier that year. The case is being argued by a somewhat surprising duo: David Boies and Ted Olson, foes in the famous *Bush v. Gore* showdown, but allies in the effort to overturn California's ban.

The DOMA case centers around Edie Windsor and Thea Spyer, who were together for 30 years before registering as domestic partners in 1993. The couple married in Canada in 2007, just two years before Spyer died. While their home state of New York recognized their marriage, Windsor lacked spousal rights under federal law and was ordered to pay \$363,053 in [estate taxes](#).

**The court's decisions could have a wide-reaching impact on marriage rights:** A decision that Prop 8 is unconstitutional could create two [possible outcomes](#). A narrow ruling upholding the lower court's decision would clear the way for same-sex marriage to resume in California. A broader decision proclaiming that all bans against gay marriage violate the U.S. Constitution would force all states to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples. Alternatively, the justices could let Prop 8 stand, overturning the lower court's ruling. It's also possible that the justices will essentially punt, disposing of the case on procedural grounds.

DOMA is a complicated case with more jurisdictional issues for the justices to consider. Assuming they don't dismiss the case on those grounds, they could uphold the section of DOMA under scrutiny, which would maintain the status quo of denying federal benefits to legally married same-sex couples. Striking down DOMA would pave the way for gay couples to receive federal benefits.

**It could all come down to a single vote:** As is often the case, the Supreme Court's

decision will likely depend on Justice Anthony Kennedy. Considered a moderate conservative, Kennedy has authored [important decisions](#) expanding the rights of gay people. But there is uncertainty about which way he'll go. "It may be that he will see these cases as a chance for the Court—and for himself—to rise to the [challenge of history](#) and write a new chapter in the long story of equality," writes Garrett Epps in *The Atlantic*. Yet there is no "clear sign" that he believes marriage should be open to same-sex couples, adds Epps.

**Hurry up and wait:** The first [briefs](#) from supporters of Prop 8 and DOMA were filed Jan. 22. The process continues throughout the next half-year:

Late February: Briefs will be filed by opponents of Prop 8 and DOMA.

Mid March: Final briefs will be filed.

March 26: Oral arguments in the Prop 8 case will be heard.

March 27: Arguments in the DOMA case will be heard.

Late June: Decisions in both cases are expected.

**For both sides of the debate, the stakes are high:** Emily Bazelon of *Slate* called this "the [civil rights issue](#) of our generation" and noted that much is at risk, "because when the Supreme Court gets the big stuff wrong, it can take a long time to undo the damage."



(Getty Images)

President Obama used his inaugural address to reinforce his support of [equal rights](#) for gay and lesbian Americans, saying, "Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law, for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal, as well."

In a brief urging the Supreme Court to [uphold DOMA](#), the top three Republican members of the House of Representatives — Speaker John Boehner, Majority Leader Eric Cantor and Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy — said, "Judicially constitutionalizing the issue of same-sex marriage is unwarranted as a matter of sound social and political policy while the American people are so actively engaged in working through this issue for themselves."

The Washington Post's editorial board put it this way: "The court's job is to determine judges' proper role in moving the country away from discrimination, not to enshrine that discrimination in constitutional doctrine."

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Your Credits:  
\$<<Total credit  
balance>>



Reason #67 to Use HotelTonight: Carmageddon

When we launched our original three markets, Hollywood was ground zero for our LA offerings. Since then, we've spread like SARS. Our SoCal presence stretches from the sand and sun in Santa Monica to the vibrant nightlife in downtown San Diego to the family-friendly theme parks in Anaheim, our newest destination.

This expansion could prove particularly useful for Angelenos this weekend, when Carmageddon strikes. For the unaware, a 10-mile stretch of one of the country's busiest freeways, which cuts through the heart of the car-crazy city, is being closed for a major overhaul. Ever been stuck on a busy city's streets when a gnarly accident blocked a lane or two of the closest major freeway? Well, this will be way worse than that.

If you're an LA resident and you don't feel like spending the weekend trapped in your pad, consider a last-minute staycation. Race to one of our hip Westside hotels before the side streets lock up. Or, if you can beat closing time, book it out to Anaheim for some of that Disney magic.

Of course, there's a chance the disruption will be minimal (denying voyeurs their moment of gleeful schadenfreude). But if it takes some overhyped road work to prompt folks to be more spontaneous, then Carmageddon FTW.

Another Round: Bars We Love

• LA •



Palihouse Holloway Hall

The lobby lounge, Hall, has become one of West Hollywood's go-to spots for

• NEW ORLEANS •



French Market Inn Marie Laveau's Bar

If your ideal bar experience includes sipping a sweet cocktail on a velvet chaise,

• SEATTLE •



Pan Pacific Hotel Lobby Bar

This downtown gem has two things we love: seasonal outdoor seating (yes, such a

young Hollywood types and well-traveled hotel guests to unwind. It'll be an even bigger draw now that well-known New Zealand-born DJ Dan Mancini has become the hotel's resident lounge master and beverage manager.

skip this hotel's tiny watering hole. Named after New Orleans' voodoo queen, Marie Laveau, the intimate dive bar is where guests can chat up colorful locals with stories to share. Raise a glass to the queen.

thing does exist in Seattle) and a late-night happy hour. Combined with the lobby's sleek Japanese-inspired design, featuring zebrawood and limestone, and hip local clientele, you've got a reason to cheers.

Rate Rewind: This Week's Big Discounts


Not compulsively checking our rates? Then you're missing out on some spectacular deals. Here are just a few of the awesome discounts our users took advantage of during the past week. Feeling spontaneous? Want in on the action? It just takes a tap to open up our app.

\$95

\$259

Hip Denver Hotel

Booked at 1:12pm MDT on 7/13/11 by N.B.




\$121

\$360

Modern LA Hotel

Booked at 11:03 pm PDT on 7/13/11 by L.K.




\$79

\$179

Elegant Las Vegas Hotel

Booked at 12:32 pm PDT on 7/11/11 by S.M.




\$33

\$99

Basic Miami Hotel

Booked at 1:56 pm EDT on 7/11/11/ by N.B.



You Like Us, But Do You Like Us?

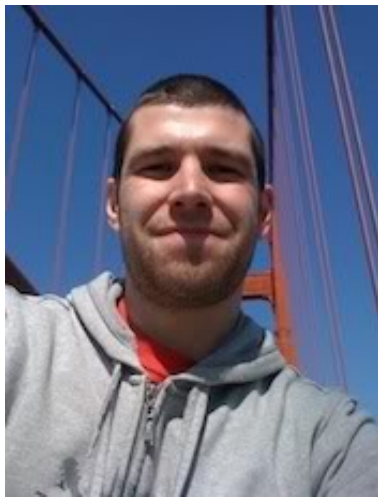


Similar to that whole tree-falling-in-a-forest deal, if you like HotelTonight without 'liking' us on Facebook, do you really like us? To be safe, let's [make it official](#). While you're at it, be sure to follow [HotelTonight on Twitter](#) for opportunities to earn credits and info about rates that are too good to keep to ourselves.

But wait, there's more! We know you can't book a hotel every night, so check out our Instagram pics for travel inspiration when you need a fix. You can find tips we've gathered while researching our hotel partners and their neighborhoods on our Foursquare page. YouTube is our go-to for sharing quick demos and peeks behind the curtain. And for little of everything, peep our Tumblr, where we (over)share like true children of the online age.

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Foursquare](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Tumblr](#)

User Spotlight: Road-Tripping the HT Way



Paul H. has the kind of spontaneous spirit we celebrate. A grad student with the summer off, he hit the road on a cross-country trip from NYC to LA. He's got bros in (nearly) every area code, so finding places to crash was no big deal, until a couple of weeks ago. Fearing he was wearing out his welcome on his friend's air mattress, he jumped in his car and headed north toward San Francisco. "Without any friends there to crash with, I found myself lamenting the cost of hotel choices. Motel 6 for \$130?! No thanks," he wrote. "Luckily, a friend had told me about HotelTonight, so I figured I'd give it a shot." The result? "My first night I got a beautiful room at the Hotel Adagio and the second night a similar room at the Galleria Park Hotel, and all for under \$115 per night!"

And it wasn't just a weekend fling. Paul was so sold on the Bay Area experience that, once back in LA, he booked one of the suites at the Palihouse Holloway Hotel. Three times in one week? Looks like this is getting serious.

Has HotelTonight helped you while on the go? If so, we'd love to hear about it. Reach out via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or email ([sleeptight@hoteltonight.com](mailto:sleeptight@hoteltonight.com)). We give \$50 in HT credits to users whose stories are used in the newsletter.

And remember, you can earn \$25 in credits for every friend you invite to HT who books a room. Just use your personal invite link:

[<<Invite Code>>](http://www.hoteltonight.com/invite/)

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Following

Prayers and tears at tonight's  
#ChapelHillShooting vigil: [trov.es/1MerXfB](http://trov.es/1MerXfB)



RETWEETS

135

LIKES

91



5:11 PM - 11 Feb 2015





Trove

@trove



Following

Joan Rivers left specific (and fabulous)  
instructions for her funeral: [trov.es/WhXLd9](http://trov.es/WhXLd9)

When I die (and yes, Melissa, that day will come; and yes, Melissa, everything's in your name), I want my funeral to be a huge showbiz affair with lights, cameras, action.... I want Craft services, I want paparazzi and I want publicists making a scene! I want it to be Hollywood all the way. I don't want some rabbi rambling on; I want Meryl Streep crying, in five different accents. I don't want a eulogy; I want Bobby Vinton to pick up my head and sing "Mr. Lonely." I want to look gorgeous, better dead than I do alive. I want to be buried in a Valentino gown and I want Harry Winston to make me a toe tag. And I want a wind machine so that even in the casket my hair is blowing just like Beyoncé's.

RETWEETS

73

LIKES

48



5:20 PM - 4 Sep 2014

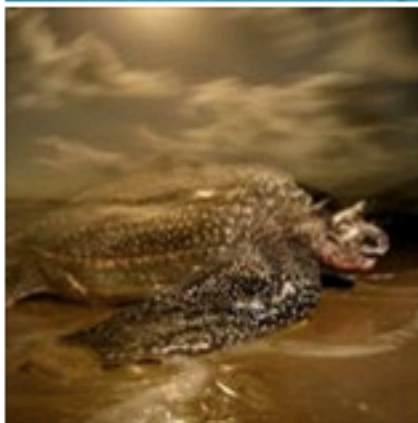




**Trove** added 4 new photos to the album: Ocean Photographer Captures Life in the Sea.

April 4, 2013 · 🌐

Photojournalist Brian Skerry has a pretty cool office. It's beautiful, quiet and big -- like 70 percent of the Earth big. [Smithsonian Magazine](#) shares some of Skerry's remarkable images: <http://wapo.st/17g0Uft>



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## LATINO FAMILY STRUGGLES TO EDUCATE THE NEXT GENERATION

In the neighborhood where celebrated Mexican-American labor leader Cesar Chavez grew up, two Latino parents are doing whatever they can to ensure that their children receive the best education San Jose, Calif., has to offer.

Like many of their compatriots, Cristina Ortiz and her husband, Alberto, legal U.S. residents since last year, planned to return to their native Mexico after spending a few years working in the United States. But once the couple had their first child

16 years ago, their priorities shifted.

Cristina and her husband stopped their schooling after the equivalent of 10th grade. Education, especially for women, simply wasn't a goal.

But Cristina, who works as a restaurant server, and her husband, a mechanic, have made their children's education a chief concern.

Because of the couple's research of San Jose's educational options, all three of the children—Karen, 15, Jennifer, 10, and Alberto, 7—have claimed spots in alternatives to traditional public schools.

Karen earned a scholarship to a private high school—a must since Cristina and her husband earn about \$40,000 a year. Karen, who recently completed her sophomore year, had attended the local public

schools, but Cristina realized her daughter wasn't receiving the same education as students in San Jose's wealthier neighborhoods.

Jennifer just finished her first year in a college-preparatory public school that students attend six days a week and one month every summer. Cristina says the new school's teachers are much stricter than those her daughter had in public school.

"It's the best thing to happen to me because I

was afraid last year for Jennifer," Cristina says. "She was so distracted and always forgot the homework and the teachers [didn't] do anything. Now she never forgets her books, she never forgets her homework. She can't."

Alberto got the earliest start in nontraditional public schools. He recently finished second grade at LUCHA—a small autonomous school that opened two years ago. The family has been involved with LUCHA—which means "struggle" in Spanish and stands for Learning in an Urban Community With High Achievement—since the very beginning, when a founding staff member who taught Jennifer contacted Cristina.

Cristina doesn't doubt that Alberto will be better prepared than her oldest child, who has struggled at her private high school despite earning good grades in her less challenging middle school. Nevertheless, Cristina expects all of her children to attend college.

That would be quite an accomplishment, considering that less than 10 percent of students of color in the district go to college, LUCHA teacher Kristin Henny says. But if any family can make it happen, the Ortiz's can, she says.

"With Cristina and Alberto being so focused on finding better schooling options, I have no doubt in my mind that Alberto, Jennifer and Karen will all go to college and succeed," she says.



BY T.J. DEGROAT  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTIAN PEACOCK