

# Lifestyle

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Fireworks explode over the Lincoln Memorial during the Fourth of July celebrations in Washington, DC. — AFP

## US accuser drops civil suit against Kevin Spacey

A young man who accused Kevin Spacey of a sexual assault in a Massachusetts bar has dropped his lawsuit against the award-winning actor. A motion for "voluntary dismissal" of the civil complaint against the former "House of Cards" star was filed in Superior Court in Nantucket, Massachusetts, with no reason



In this file photo US actor Kevin Spacey arrives at a fashion show in Milan, Italy. — AFP

given. Possible motives for the dismissal this week include a private settlement or the accuser's desire not to risk damaging his odds in a separate criminal case with the civil suit, which was filed just six days ago.

William Little's lawyer, Mitchell Garabedian, who made a name for himself defending victims of sexual abuse by Catholic priests, gave no comment. A hearing on the criminal charges against Spacey is set for Monday in the District Court in

Nantucket, the posh island community where the alleged aggression took place in July 2016. Little has said he took a smartphone video of the incident, which he says took place when he was an 18-year-old busboy in a Nantucket bar/restaurant.

The smartphone images, which Little has said he shared with a then-girlfriend, allegedly show Spacey shoving his hand into the teen's pants and fondling him. But the plaintiff's lawyers say they have been unable to find the smartphone, which Spacey's defense team has demanded to see. Little has said he has not seen the phone since handing it over to police investigators in December 2017. Police say they turned it over to the young man's father, but he says he has "no memory" of it.

If the phone is not located by Monday, the District Court judge has said he will call on Little to testify about it. Spacey, who is 59, was charged in January with indecent assault and battery. The actor has insisted on his innocence. The charges carry a penalty of up to five years in prison. The allegation of sexual misconduct against the two-time Oscar winner was one of more than a dozen to emerge since 2017 — in both the United States and Britain—with devastating effect on his acting career.

He was dropped from the cast of the popular "House of Cards" series and from a leading role in director Ridley Scott's "All the Money in the World"; Christopher Plummer was brought in as a last-second replacement.—AFP

## Statue on Slovenia's Melania tourist trail divides opinion

After Melania cake, Melania honey, and even Melania slippers, the Slovenian hometown of the US first lady will now boast a statue of its most famous daughter—albeit one that has faced decidedly mixed reviews. The life-size statue on the outskirts of Sevnica was inaugurated on Friday and is the brainchild of 39-year-old American conceptual artist Brad Downey, who says it's the first monument anywhere dedicated to the wife of US President Donald Trump.

The sculpture was carved into a tree using a chainsaw and depicts Melania in a blue dress raising her left hand in a waving gesture, emulating a pose she struck at her husband's 2017 inauguration. Its somewhat naive style has led some critics on social media to brand it a "scarecrow". "I can understand why people might think that this falls short as a description of her physical appearance," Downey told AFP, but insisted that he found the end result "absolutely beautiful".

Since Donald Trump took office in 2017, sleepy Sevnica has become a magnet for tourists and journalists searching for insights into the American first lady's past. Entrepreneurial locals have been cashing in on the influx, offering a bewildering array of Melania-branded food and merchandise as well as a tour of the area taking in the key sites of her early years. Downey came up with the statue as part of a project aimed at exploring the first lady's Slovenian roots and commissioned local artisan Ales Zuperc-also known as "Maxi"—to actually carve the sculpture.

Downey told AFP he was struck by the fact that Maxi was born in the same year and in the same hospital as Melania herself. He said conversations with Maxi had enabled him to see



A picture shows what conceptual artist Ales 'Maxi' Zuperc claims is the first ever monument of Melania Trump, set in the fields near town of Sevnica, US First Lady's hometown. — AFP

Melania's ancestral region through local eyes. "You see this river that she would have seen as a child, you see the mountains," he said. However, not everyone has been moved to wax lyrical about the artwork.

Nika, a local 24-year-old architecture student, told AFP: "If the monument was meant to be a parody, then the artist has been successful. "We in Sevnica can only laugh and, at the same time, hold our heads in our hands over

their (the Trumps') catastrophic reputation," she added. Katarina, a 66-year-old resident of nearby Rozno, said that she thought the monument was a "good idea". "Melania is a Slovenian hero, she made it to the top in the US," she said.—AFP

## KAREN MOK HOPES TO BRING BROADWAY TO CHINA

Karen Mok may be currently performing on what she says will be her final concert tour but the Hong Kong-born actress and singer has no plans to retire just yet, setting her sights on bringing Broadway-style musicals to China. The 49-year-old has released 20 solo albums and starred in more than 40 films during her 25-year career including Keanu Reeves' "Man of Tai Chi" and Wong Kar Wai's "Fallen Angels". She also worked alongside fellow Hong Kong star Jackie Chan in "Around the World in 80 Days".

"It doesn't mean that I'm retiring or anything...I could never quit the stage but I just feel that it's a good time to call it a day where pop concerts are concerned," Mok told Reuters in London while on a visit to promote her tour. "Going forward I want to go into doing musicals and musical theatre because that's my one true love in performing."

Mok, who in 2005 and 2006 starred in the hit Broadway musical "Rent" on its 10th anniversary tour, said she wants China to have its own version of the

New York theatre district or London's West End. "There's a lot of theatre going on in China but like the West End as an industry (it's) not really there yet but at some point it will happen so I feel that I should contribute towards that," she said.

"My next big mission in my career is to create, from scratch, a musical for the Chinese audience...I really love musicals because they allow you to simultaneously act, dance, sing and play music and getting to do it live every evening is just amazing...We should

have our own original musicals." The singer's "Ultimate Karen Mok Show" kicked off in Shanghai in June 2018 and has included shows in Singapore, Taipei and Beijing. In Europe, she will play the Folies Bergere in Paris on Sept. 12 and the London Palladium on Sept 15 - a show Mok, who studied at the University of London, described as "a little bit of a homecoming".—Reuters