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Shiva Ayyadurai wins \$750,000 in lawsuit with Gawker over email invention claim

By AB Wire | November 4, 2016

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Defamatory articles will be pulled down.



Dr. Shiva Ayyadurai has won \$750,000 in a bankruptcy court settlement with Gawker Media for defamatory articles which derided and mocked the Indian American's claim that he invented the email in the 1970s.

"History will reflect that this settlement is a victory for truth," Ayyadurai stated in a statement released by his lawyers.

Ayyadurai was represented by attorneys Charles Harder of Harder Mirell & Abrams LLP in Los Angeles, California and Timothy Cornell of Cornell Dolan, PC in Boston, Massachusetts.

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Gawker's bankruptcy was the result of a high-profile lawsuit brought by Terry Bollea, aka Hulk Hogan, which ended with a \$140 million judgment against the media company. Bollea will receive approximately \$32 million from Wednesday's settlement, pending court approval, reported Boston Business Journal.

Ayyadurai sued Gawker Media, as well as founder Nick Denton, editor John Cook and staff writer Sam Biddle, in federal court in Boston in May, several months after the Bollea judgment was handed down in March. Ayyadurai sought \$35 million in damages for "defamatory" articles posted on Gawker and the associated site Gizmodo that mocked his claim to have invented email.

After Gawker filed for bankruptcy in New York in June, Ayyadurai became a plaintiff in the case alongside Bollea and several others.

It's not clear whether tech billionaire Peter Thiel, who funded the Bollea lawsuit, also backed Harder's representation of Ayyadurai.

As part of the settlement agreement, one of the articles about Ayyadurai will be removed from the internet. Univision executives voted to remove the two other articles about Ayyadurai when they bought Gawker's constellation of sites earlier this year.

Gawker founder Nick Denton wrote in a blog post that the Ayyadurai article was one of "three true stories" being removed from the site in what he considered "the most unpalatable part of the deal."

"After four years of litigation funded by a billionaire with a grudge going back even further, a settlement has been reached," Denton said in a blog post on Wednesday.

"All-out legal war with Thiel would have cost too much, and hurt too many people, and there was no end in sight," Denton added. "Gawker's nemesis was not going away."

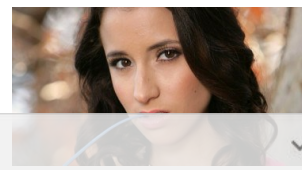
ET Tech reported that in May, Thiel, a founder of PayPal and one of the earliest investors in Facebook, acknowledged in an interview with The New York Times that he was providing financial support for Bollea's lawsuit, saying he was financing cases against Gawker because it published articles that "ruined people's lives for no reason." Thiel was outed as gay by Valleywag, one of Gawker's now-defunct blogs, nearly a decade ago.

In a statement issued Wednesday, Thiel said, "It is a great day for Terry Bollea and a great day for everyone's right to privacy."

Gawker employees struck a more ominous tone and expressed outrage over what the decision could represent.

"This entire sorry spectacle spells doom for anybody who aspired to do what we aspired to do," said John Cook, the executive editor of Gizmodo Media Group.

Gawker Media was not the only casualty. Denton, who was also a defendant in the lawsuit, filed for personal bankruptcy in August, saying, "I



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don't have that kind of money lying around." Bollea's lawyers also pursued money from another defendant, Albert J. Daulerio, the former editor-in-chief of Gawker.com.

If the settlements are approved by the bankruptcy judge, including for Ayyadurai, the money would come from the proceeds of the sale to Univision.

Founded in 2002, Gawker became a go-to site for New York media gossip and a magnet for young journalists who would later go on to work at places like The New Yorker, The Awl and Time. Denton was widely known for saying journalists shared their most interesting stories at the bar after work, and his mission was to guide those stories onto his sites — to entertain and surprise their readers with information that traditional news organizations often shied away from.

"Obviously, the way that we ran this, we suffered the maximal possible damage and gained the least from it," said Tom Scocca, the executive features editor of Gizmodo Media Group. "A settlement at this point does nothing to repair any of the harm that was done."

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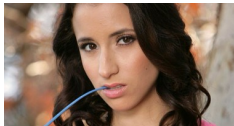
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