Opinion

Lindsay Clancy's trial shows what happens when mental health waits too long

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

Over 14 years ago, Lindsay Clancy earned a biology degree from Quinnipiac University and then spent close to a decade as a labor and delivery nurse, standing beside other women through their first hours of motherhood. This summer, she sat in a wheelchair in a Plymouth, Massachusetts, courtroom, on trial for strangling her own three children.

Lindsay grew up in Wallingford, Connecticut, roughly 20 minutes from campus. She graduated from Lyman Hall High School, made the dean's list at Quinnipiac and went on to work at Massachusetts General Hospital.

On Jan. 24, 2023, Clancy killed 5-year-old Cora Clancy, 3-year-old Dawson Clancy and 8-month-old Callan Clancy inside the family's Duxbury, Massachusetts home, then tried to take her own life. She survived, but was paralyzed from the waist down. Her attorney, Kevin Reddington, has never disputed that she caused their deaths. He argues she should not be held criminally responsible because she was in a postpartum psychotic episode.

Let me be clear about what I am not saying. I am not saying she is innocent, and I am not asking anyone to not grieve for Cora, Dawson and Callan. Three children are dead, and no psychiatric diagnosis undoes that.

However, the months before Jan. 24, 2023 are what make this entire case so unsettling, particularly for someone who spent five years trying to get help from the people closest to them and was constantly let down.

I live with anxiety, depression, PTSD and ADHD, and I have written about the summer I nearly took my own life.

There was a loss of trust in the people who were supposed to be there to help. It was only after that summer that I finally got the treatment I needed. For Lindsay, help never came, which pisses me off the most.

Maternal mental health conditions are the leading complication of childbirth in this country, affecting roughly one in five women. Fewer than 20% of mothers get screened. About 75% never receive treatment.

Suicide and overdose are the leading causes of pregnancy-related death in the United States, and between 2016 and 2023, mothers reported a nearly 65% increase in fair or poor mental health.

However, for Lindsay, testimony and medical records show that in the months before January 2023, she saw multiple psychiatric clinicians, went to an emergency room and called crisis lines. She spent five days as an inpatient at McLean Hospital three weeks before the killings. She was prescribed 13 medications in four months while nobody coordinated any of it.

Her mother, Paula Musgrove, testified that Lindsay told her she was having thoughts of harming the children. Her former mother-in-law, Susan Clancy, said five words on the stand: "She was begging for help."

Several clinicians who treated her testified for the prosecution that they never saw signs of psychosis. That does not necessarily rule out the defense's theory, because postpartum psychosis appears in an estimated one to two of every 1,000 births, and it is not listed as a distinct diagnosis that many clinicians use to identify mental illness.

Dr. Susan Hatters Friedman, a reproductive and forensic psychiatrist at Case Western Reserve University, told WBUR, "This is the scariest mental illness that I know of."

The prosecution's case is not weak, and pretending otherwise would be dishonest. Dr. Jennifer Tufts, the psychiatrist treating Lindsay, testified she saw no signs of psychosis or mania the day before the killings and did not recommend hospitalization. Prosecutor Jennifer Sprague told jurors that Lindsay looked up how long her husband's errands would take and argued the children were the only thing keeping her alive.

Their rebuttal psychiatrist, Dr. Avram Mack, testified she was in a severe depressive episode rather than a psychotic one and could still tell right from wrong. Jurors have to weigh that against Dr. Phillip Resnick, a forensic psychiatrist who testified for the defense that "she was clearly psychotic on that day."

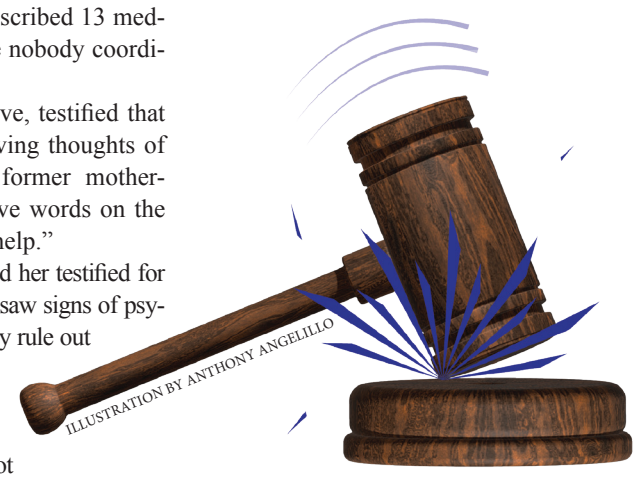
ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY ANGELILLO

Two experienced doctors examined the same woman and reached opposite conclusions, which tells you how much work this corner of medicine needs.

Under the precident set by Commonwealth v. McHoul, in Massachussetts a defendant is not criminally responsible only if mental disease or defect left her without substantial capacity to appreciate the wrongfulness of her conduct or to conform that conduct to the law. Once the issue is raised, the state must prove she was responsible beyond a reasonable doubt. A serious illness, by itself, does not decide it.

I understand that instinct completely. However, how do we hold the doctors and health care providers accountable after this case is done? The Clancy trial is the worst possible outcome for people living with postpartum psychosis.

The far more common outcome is a mother who is never screened, never diagnosed, who is quietly coming apart and never makes the news at all.

Hundreds of demonstrators in pink gathered outside the Plymouth courthouse Aug. 20 to talk about gaps in maternal psychiatric care. It should not take a triple homicide and attempted suicide to get that crowd there.

Whatever the jury decides, we can't go back to the months when she was aware, frightened and asking anyone who would listen for help. Because the truth is, the system failed millions, especially Lindsay , and now that same system has to wash its hands in the blood of three more victims.

Foreign fans saw a different side of America during The World Cup

By REX NAYLOR
Staff Writer

Every four years, the World Cup comes around, and each time there are countless questions surrounding it, most of them regarding off-field politics. One of the biggest fears fans had this time around was about the style of play.

Personally, one of my biggest fears heading into the tournament was seeing another example of football becoming more tactical and statistical. European football has become increasingly pragmatic and slow, with players being micro-managed like a video game. It seemed as though creativity and instinct were attributes of the past until the World Cup kicked off.

The first match between Mexico and South Africa seemed like a different game. The space in the midfield allowed a player to carry the ball from their defensive third to the final third countless times.

Shots were taken quickly instead of players waiting for the perfect opportunity. I couldn't look away from the TV as something eye-catching was happening nearly every second.

From the first match, it was clear the quality of the game had dropped a few levels rather than rise as one would expect. This isn't to say the tournament was a letdown, though. It was better for fans and the product of the World Cup that the quality dipped a little bit.

With a larger skill gap between players and teams, unpredictability was in abundance. No one would've seen the DR Congo, Cape Verde or Paraguay compete as well as they did.

As overall quality dipped, stars would have the space to remind the world who they were.

Star players like French forward Kylian Mbappe, Norweigan striker Erling Haaland, Argentinian forward Lionel Messi and English midfielder Jude Bellingham all impressed as some of the best of the tournament.


ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA MIRABELLA

This was my favorite part of the tournament. Individual players impressed rather than systems; players could take over a match and create moments that will live on for generations.

Not only did the on-field performances remind us why the World Cup is the greatest tournament in sports. The numerous memories and stories traveling fans got to leave with reminded everyone how the media can often display a narrow view of America to foreigners. Why news and targeted media are only a small percentage of who Americans really are.

Every state has something different to offer. Countless videos of Brits trying barbecue gained popularity, while others shared their experiences with SEC stadiums as American hospitality was on full display.

America is often portrayed as a divided, dangerous and chaotic place filled with unhealthy foods. Even though the last part is true, foreigners didn't find America like that at all, though. Rather, they shared that people were kind, helpful and welcoming.

FreddyLA7 was an anonymous German fan who documented his and his friends' time in the United States. They started in Chattanooga, Tennessee, then made their way down all along the Southeast into Texas.

They stopped at notorious staples of American culture such as Buc-ee's, Waffle House and Taco Bell. They were invited to the NASA Johnson Space Center, an Ella Langley concert and received hospitality from NFL legend J.J. Watt.

Although his home nation of Germany was knocked out by Paraguay in the first knockout round, Freddy and his friends stuck around a bit longer in the New England area, shocked it was the same nation as what they saw in the south.

Freddy is just one example of thousands who came to America for the World Cup. Whether it was a Scottish takeover of Fenway, Japan's stadium-wide cleanup, Norwegians doing the "row," or the Dutch takeover in Houston, the fans who came lived their best lives in the States this summer.

What happens on the field is just one half of the World Cup; what happens off of it is the other. The game is nothing without the passion of fans and you don't get these moments anywhere else but at the World Cup.

What makes the World Cup so special in my mind is that it breaks down preconceived notions about the boundaries that divide us. It gives us a month in the summer, once every four years, where the sport returns to its purest form and unites those who care to give it a chance.