

LPSF Meeting Minutes
December 2021

PRESENT

Starchild, chair

Richard Fast, secretary

Traci Austin, guest speaker (non-voting)

ABSENT

Jeff Yunes, vice chair

Greg Michael, treasurer

The chair called the meeting order at 3:12pm on Saturday, December 11, 2021 via Jitsi videoconference.

Starchild found Traci Austin, tax preparer in Emeryville, via newspaper. IRS came after her, charged with falsifying tax forms. Starchild called her out of the blue and invited her to our meeting. Feb. 24 court date, has attorney who wants to wait on publicity.

Traci: Been in biz since 2017, with 7 offices, job creator, from Berkeley and Emeryville, cater to the low-income community. In 2016, hired 60+ tax preparers for her company. IRS focus on 2016 thru 2019. IRS came to her office in Emeryville, said she was under investigation for tax fraud. Attorney said let them do it. IRS came back to her ranch in Brentwood, IRS agent Kristine Stagner, first case, right before Thanksgiving, arrest warrant for tax fraud. Attorney turned the discovery into a “summons” instead of arrest warrant. Out of 3100 tax returns, 20 contacted, 42 filed fraudulently. Traci teaches tax basics with software. 4 students have their own tax business now, mostly from low income community. Speaks in a way to relate to the crowd. Mid-Feb thru March the dynamics of a tax office changes; ppl want their tax refund to make up the \$ they spent on gifts in the winter. Traci helped her mom with taxes as a girl and learned from real world business experience. Traci teaches data entry, the software handles most of the rest. 1-2 yr investigation, only one tax return directly.

Starchild: Document and expose review written by someone connected to the investigation. The IRS is not just investigating the business, but defaming Traci and her business. That’s something to make hay about.

Traci: BBB reports any time there is a federal or legal case. Do they have someone who actively monitors companies or just publish passively?

Starchild: Probably both. If in the news, they probably have ppl who notice and put it on their website. Harm the business outside of just prosecuting.

Traci: I wish there was someone like me, a black woman, who has gone up against the IRS to prove her innocence. I think the IRS thinks because I'm black that I'm doing wrong. That's not the case in my situation.

Starchild: Try the Institute for Justice. Don't do much with tax law but might have leads. Pretty high power law firm that works with minorities. On Tuesday we can contact them together. I've been meaning to talk to them anyway. I subscribe to their newsletter.

Traci: The judge is Black, from Oakland, went to UC Berkeley. Hopefully she can understand my side.

Starchild: It's hard to find info about judges. Look into the legal records. Generally, I don't trust judges. Even black female, it's not guaranteed.

Traci: She's educated, graduated from Saint Mary's. Her name is Candice Westmore. The court is on Zoom. Feb 24 court date.

Starchild: Chesa Boudin, DA, holding police accountable. Police are trying to go after him with low prosecution rates. Prop 47 passed reduce penalties, 3 strikes, for minor crimes. Backlash, ppl want to repeal 47, and "tough on crime" laws.

Traci: I mostly stayed away from politics. I married a cowboy. With Covid, we enjoyed retreating to our Brentwood ranch.

Starchild: There's a phrase "You may not pay attention to politics but politics will pay attention to you."

Traci: I'm really a rancher now. My husband competes in rodeos. We travel up and down the state. I don't go now but because of investigation. I can't go to Oregon or Nevada.

Starchild: Feb 18-20 is LPC Convention in Long Beach. Ppl might be interested hearing your story.

Traci: (paraphrase) This one guy, who the IRS cites as evidence of fraud, was upset with my services one year but then came back next year to another one of my offices. People are scared of the IRS. They think once the IRS come after them, ppl will back down and let them walk over them.

Traci: A lot of people operate a small biz without knowing it. Dog walkers, babysitters, etc., who work under the table are really small business owners.

Activist Reports

Starchild: 1) Participated in a protest in front of Australian consulate against Covid mandates. 575 Market St. Men in black suits took photos, not sure if they were part of the consulate. 2) “Crossing Party Lines” meet up, 5-7pm every Sunday, re: slow postal service, “behind our votes”. 15-30 ppl at these meetings in 2 rooms, range of perspectives. Their mission to bring ppl of diverse perspectives together in a civil discourse.

Traci: Any activism in Berkeley?

Starchild: Statues of protestors taken down a few years ago. Disappointing. City gov said they were rusty, needed maintenance, some nonsense. Last year raise banners on over passes.

Richard: Trying to sustain a College Libertarians group in Alabama, where finishing an M.A. in Economics. May take a class or two at Berkeley City College or City College of San Francisco and start a College Libertarians group there. Starchild, would you be willing to participate?

Starchild: Sure. I think activism among college groups is really important. I was appointed to the IT committee at City College of SF.

Richard: Motion to approve the November meeting minutes.

Starchild: I don’t know if we have quorum with half of the officers absent.

Motion failed for lack of a second.

Open Discussion

Action Item: Richard will e-mail the membership about officer elections next month and mention the state convention coming up.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05pm.

The next meeting will be the Annual Membership Meeting the second Saturday of January 2022 from 3-5pm via Jitsi.

