

Lapira, Katrina

From: Lapira, Katrina
Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2020 11:50 AM
To: Pearson, Alene
Subject: RE: Paul Lee, "What Chris Schildt Means to South Berkeley"

From: Paul Lee [<mailto:beistorage17@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:35 PM
To: Pearson, Alene <apearson@cityofberkeley.info>
Cc: Chris Schildt <cschildt@gmail.com>
Subject: Paul Lee, "What Chris Schildt Means to South Berkeley"

Dear Ms. Pearson,

As per your request, please find attached the text of my remarks at tonite's regular Berkeley Planning Commission meeting in support of Chris Schildt's appointment to the BART Community Advisory Group.

I'd like to apologize to the commission for my emotionalism, which I'd like to explain. Like most non-"white" Berkeleyans, I'm daily traumatized by the constant assault of micro- and macro-aggressions being wrought by—the "racial" and economic gentrification of my beloved hometown, which is displacing and disempowering South Berkeley's historic residents.

As a result, I find it deeply painful and alienating to address public meetings concerned with the future of South Berkeley, where, as my friend Willie Phillips noted, none of the decision-makers look like us and were not born here. Increasingly, we are made to feel like exiles in our own community, a community that, in fact, was created by earlier expressions of the same invidious force -- namely, white power. White power forced us into South and West Berkeley and now it's forcing us out.

The reason that I wrote out my remarks is because I was afraid that, had I spoken spontaneously, my trauma might've expressed itself in tears or screams, or both, which is what most of us feel like 24-7 in today's cruel, heartless environment. Feel free to include this cover letter as part of your official record. Thank you.

I have the honor to be

Grate-full-Lee yours,

Paul

Paul Lee, visiting scholar
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NOTE: If you do not require it for your reference, kindly **DELETE** my original letter from the **BOTTOM** of your reply. Thanx!

What Chris Schildt Means to South Berkeley

Remarks by Paul Lee, Friends of Adeline, in support of Christine Schildt's appointment to the BART Community Advisory Group, Berkeley Planning Commission regular meeting, South Berkeley Senior Center, Wednesday, January 15, 2020

I never thought that I'd have an occasion to publicly express what my dear friend and spiritual sister Chris Schildt means to our beloved hometown, but I welcome it.

I say "our beloved hometown" because, somehow, in ways that I might never understand, but am nonetheless grateful for, Chris is the very stuff that makes historic South Berkeley such a distinctive and culturally valuable community.

I've told her, family and friends that, when I returned to South Berkeley after living in Detroit for 15 years, I never felt *completely* at home until I met Chris — who, ironically, is not from here. Nor, as you could see, is she "black," although, if you happen to catch her in silhouette, you might think that she is because, as I've assured her, she stands like a "black" woman, with the same regal bearing.

But Chris is historic South Berkeley — and, by this, I mean mostly-"non"-white South Berkeley — to the bone. She's warm like us. She looks you directly in the eye like us. She touches you like us. And, most importantly, she speaks from her heart like us. In a word, this so-called "white" woman, from another part of the state, *is* one of us.

I saw proof of this while walking her home from a meeting one nite. As we approached a stretch of Adeline that wholly ignorant, insensitive and arrogant newcomers and outsiders have stigmatized as being "dangerous," we saw a group of brothers — that is, "black" man — in two rows facing one another, engaged in conversation.

Several "white" people, who looked and acted like newcomers or outsiders, were ahead of us, having just gotten off BART at the Ashby station. Clearly too frightened to simply say, "Excuse me," to the brothers, they timidly skulked around either side of them.

Because I'm from here, I could safely surmise what the brothers were thinking. "You don't make room for us; in fact, you price us out of our own homes, our own community, so we ain't movin' for you."

When the brothers caught sight of us, I was confident how I'd be greeted. They probably knew me and, if they didn't, they'd still recognize me as one of them — a brother. But I was a little nervous about how they might greet Chris.

When we got to the brothers, I shook hands with them and hugged them, as “black” people do. When I looked to my right, I was surprised to see Chris doing the same thing — and with *gusto!* As we began to leave, I almost did a double take. One of the brothers actually bent at the waist, as a sign of respect to Chris, and another one told me, “Brother, if we ever see her without you, don’t worry — we *got* her.”

I asked Willie Phillips, a fellow South Berkeleynan, why the brothers treated Chris that way. “Cause they know she’s an ally,” he said, and added, “They’re easy enough to spot ‘cause we have too few of them.”

This, in sum, is why Chris should be a representative of the BART Community Advisory Group. She doesn’t just *live* here, like an increasing number of newcomers and outsiders, who couldn’t care less about historic South Berkeley’s non-“white” residents; who treat us with fear, suspicion and a silent contempt that we can feel; and who loudly proclaim that they only have South Berkeley’s interests at heart when, in fact, they only care about the vested interests of Realtors and developers who cater to wealthy “white” people.

We ain’t stupid. We can see the game that’s being played — ‘cause it’s an *old* game.

Chris, on the other hand, is *one of us*. She understands and respects us. She doesn’t separate her interests from our interests. She wants fairness, like we do; she wants equity, like we do; she wants justice, like we do. She resents any and all encroachments by presumptuous, money- and land-hungry newcomers and outsiders, aided by “black” mascots and sellouts, who envision and are being subsidized to bring about a “new” South Berkeley — without our troublesome presence.

We couldn’t have a better representative, or a better advocate, or a better champion than Chris. If there *is* any justice left in this *Goddamn* city, Chris should represent her district, and us.

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Lapira, Katrina

From: Pearson, Alene
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 10:24 AM
To: Lapira, Katrina
Subject: FW: BART Community Advisory Group

From: Ariana Thompson-Lastad [mailto:arianajl@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 10:11 AM
To: Pearson, Alene <apearson@cityofberkeley.info>
Cc: Owen Thompson <chicagoowen@gmail.com>
Subject: BART Community Advisory Group

Dear Berkeley Planning Commission,

My name is Ariana Thompson-Lastad, and my husband Owen Thompson-Lastad and I have lived in West Berkeley for 10 years, now with our two young children. Our ability to continue living in Berkeley has been made possible through the city's renter protections, and we are currently applying for below market rate housing opportunities that would allow us to continue living in Berkeley.

We use North Berkeley BART several times a week to commute to work and school, and want to see ample affordable housing built at North Berkeley and Ashby BART that will increase housing access for our family and others who are unable to afford market-rate housing. We hope the commission will consider choosing Chris Schildt as your representative to the BART Community Advisory Group. We know she is a strong advocate for affordable housing, and will help to ensure equitable development at both BART stations that meet the needs of low-income families like ours.

Sincerely,
Ariana and Owen Thompson-Lastad