



A federal lawsuit filed in April 2016 made disturbing allegations against Jeffrey Epstein and Donald Trump. It was signed by someone who may not exist.

science laboratory. What were the odds that my would-be puppet master learned her subterfuge skills watching lab techs crack encrypted cellphones and analyze hard drives?

But something tells me this Colorado secretary didn't file a lawsuit in Southern California. (Then again, what a good way to divert suspicion.) Which brings me to my second phone number hit and back to Hessee, who independently comes up with the same name.

We'll call her "Bethany."

Bethany is a 29-year-old esthetician living in Riverside County. According to PeopleFinder, she's a Christian and a registered Republican. According to a criminal background check, she was convicted of possessing methamphetamine almost a decade ago, with a couple of traffic infractions on either side of that.

Her husband is tall and rawboned, with a light-bulb-shaped head and heavy tattoo ink crawling up his long neck.

If someone hoaxed the lawsuit as a stunt to blow up in the media's face and discredit all of Trump's other accusers, could it have been them? Could Bethany's husband be the nameless man who tried to get me to bite?

Critically, Hessee is able to determine that the phone number was registered to Bethany between July 23, 2011 and June 6, 2019. That means the number belonged to her during the time I received texts from it.

So now what? Place a call from a blocked number like they engineered? Maybe in the dead of night. Maybe during a listless sleep, while they're waiting for word of a loved one's demise.

But that isn't journalism. It's vendetta.

He called once more, the nameless man,

in October 2016. He left a message. I no longer remember his exact words. But the same voice, husky and solicitous, left a brief rejoinder, a juvenile tease.

My memory aborted the rest. I deleted the message. I waited for my mom to die, for the call I dreaded all my life: *Come now. It's happening.* It arrived on Oct. 22, 2016.

A couple weeks later, Trump was elected president. At the time, it felt like he broke the last promise I ever made to her. As she rasped and shook into the void, I squeezed her hand and told her we'd be all right.

Maybe she would find this country unrecognizable today, its people worn down to the coarse edges of fear and suspicion, quick to blame and so afraid to look inward. Every clumsy expression an excuse for revenge, every stranger an enemy. Maybe she wouldn't recognize this country, but had I changed, too?

I return to Bethany's Facebook page and weigh the value of a curated life. She's married with two children. She and her husband look happy. They've been together a while. A 2012 photo shows them kissing a newborn girl. Three months later, they walk an aisle hand-in-hand under an overcast sky. Four years later, a son is born.

I don't know them. And I may never know who called on that desolate October night. But I know who I am. I slide my phone away. Good luck, Katie Johnson. Whoever you are. ■

For more on the search for Katie Johnson, visit [sacblog.newsreview.com](http://sacblog.newsreview.com) for an extended version of this story.

# ARE YOU A LOCAL ARTIST?

Do you dream of covering the city in artwork? Well, we've got a box-shaped canvas you can start with.

If you're a local artist interested in painting one of SN&R's newspaper racks, reach out to Greg Erwin at [GREGE@NEWSREVIEW.COM](mailto:GREGE@NEWSREVIEW.COM)

## SN&R



## 14TH ANNUAL FAIR OAKS CHICKEN FESTIVAL

Presented by Fair Oaks Recreation & Park District

**SATURDAY, SEPT. 21<sup>ST</sup>**  
**10AM – 5PM**

**FREE GENERAL ADMISSION & PARKING**

Village of Fair Oaks – 7003 Park Dr., Fair Oaks, CA 95628 | [www.forpd.org](http://www.forpd.org)

- Pancake Breakfast (\$3 child & \$6 adult)
- Craft Brew Tasting (\$3 tastes)
- Vendors (craft & company)
- SactoMoFo Food Court
- Cluck n' Crow Contest @ 12pm
- Great Chicken Display

- Pop-Up Paint Class (\$30)
- Live Entertainment
- Jax Hammer @ 10am
- FBI @ 12:30pm
- Mullet Mechanix @ 3pm
- Kid's Park & Family Entertainment
- Inflatables & Carnival Games (\$7)

Sponsored By

