

Fox Rothschild Podcast

Legally EmpowHERed Podcast

Episode 15

Featuring Sahara Pynes with Meeghan Henry

Pynes: Welcome back to "Legally EmpowHERed." I'm your host, [Sahara Pynes](#), and I'm really excited to bring this podcast to you. As an attorney and former business owner myself, I'm passionate about drawing on my own experiences and insights to set my female clients up for success.

In celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, I'm honored today to be joined by another LA-based Fox Rothschild attorney, [Meeghan Tirtasaputra](#). Meeghan was born in Indonesia and came to the U.S. at the age of four. Welcome to the podcast, Meegan.

Tirtasaputra: Thank you for having me on, I'm so happy to be here.

Pynes: I have to tell you that your professional bio is totally full of surprises, including the active TikTok thing. I checked out your profile, and I also understand that some of your videos have gone viral. We'll talk a little bit more about that later, but let's start with some of the basics. Tell me, what kind of legal work are you doing?

Tirtasaputra: I am a litigator and I practice in appellate and intellectual property litigation. I'm also a member of the Entertainment Department, which is really awesome because before I became an attorney, I was actually a singer. I worked in entertainment as an artist.

Pynes: Did you always want to be a lawyer, or did you always want to be in entertainment?

Tirtasaputra: I definitely wanted to be an entertainer first, but my experience as an entertainer pushed me to go into law. I was pretty young when I was in entertainment and my mom was the only one looking at contracts. I thought to better myself, and to familiarize myself with the industry, going to law school and understanding how contracts work was probably the best decision for me at the time.

Pynes: Before you went to law school, you were a member of an all-girl pop group that was created by JC Chasez of the band NSYNC. Tell me more about that. Was it your experience as a performer that drew you into the entertainment law space?

Tirtasaputra: Yes, that was definitely a memorable experience. It was a 12-girl pop group, so a lot of personalities, but it was a lot of fun while it lasted. Of course, it was a dream to work with JC, who I loved when I was younger. NSYNC was my favorite boy band.

We recorded a couple songs, made music videos, and at one point we were even filming a pilot for a reality TV show. So, that was crazy.

Pynes: Wow!

Tirtasaputra: I was super young at the time, and my mom and I were the duo looking over contracts ourselves, because we couldn't afford an attorney. That's kind of how I decided I wanted to be an attorney and just understand contracts in the entertainment industry.

Pynes: What happened to the band?

Tirtasaputra: We broke up.

Pynes: All right, well, I'll have to get more details on that.

Tirtasaputra: It was 12 girls.

Pynes: Yeah, I get that. Is anyone still doing entertainment?

Tirtasaputra: I think some are, but we've all branched out into just dancing, just singing. Whereas the girl group was a little bit of both. Some people are in acting.

Pynes: And you're just lawyering.

Tirtasaputra: I'm just lawyering.

Pynes: And TikToking.

Tirtasaputra: Yes!

Pynes: Another fun fact that jumped out at me from your bio is that you are also a title holder. A little more than 10 years ago you were competing in pageants. You do not strike me as the pageant type. You were actually crowned as Miss Teen Asia USA in 2011. Tell me about that.

Tirtasaputra: I represented Indonesia, which is where I was born. When I won, I used my platform to advocate for the integration of eastern and western cultures. I myself learned a lot about other Asian cultures during that time. It was a really great experience. I made a lot of lifelong friends.

I think I was not the pageant type back then, either. I still don't think I am, but it really helped me in terms of speaking in public and growing into the woman I am now. I think I was 16 or 15 when I won that title, so I was still growing up.

Pynes: Tell me more about that. What was it like to meet the other girls from so many different Asian cultures? How did that shape your advocacy work towards that?

Tirtasaputra: I think when people think of Asia, they don't realize how many different cultures are under that umbrella, including myself. In Indonesia alone, there are over 300 dialects that are used. So, I can't imagine all the things that I don't know about other countries.

The way I learned during the pageant experience was, of course, through the other girls educating me about their home countries. And then, we always had these delicious, culturally themed potlucks. That was a way for us to learn more about other countries. We would learn about the foods and bring a certain type from that country each week.

Pynes: I love that.

So, AAPI is short for Asian American and Pacific Islander. When we say AAPI, we're using an umbrella term, and that includes cultures from the entire Asian continent, like you just mentioned, including east, southeast and south Asia, and the Pacific islands of Indonesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

When we think about AAPI Heritage Month, what do you hope to accomplish with this annual observation?

Tirtasaputra: I think we should all use it as a month to educate ourselves about Asian cultures. Appreciate them. Celebrate them. Accept them. Whether it be through food, which is my favorite way, or watching a documentary about Asian history or Asian American history. Or even just talking about Asian history and asking questions about the culture.

I think that's especially important now, when Asian hate and violence against Asians has seen a pretty big rise in America.

Pynes: That's a good point, Meeghan. At this particular moment in time, what does it mean to you to be a member of the AAPI community in America?

Tirtasaputra: I think when I was younger, I definitely struggled with my identity and my culture growing up in America because I didn't feel like I belonged. But now, more than ever, I feel accepted for who I am, because there has been really a lot of effort for diversity and inclusivity in all industries. I can truly feel the effect on myself, personally. What the firm is doing to promote diversity and inclusion, I love that. I'm an active participant in those initiatives. I'm definitely proud to be part of a firm that takes it so seriously.

Pynes: I'm so glad you talked about that because I feel like as society, we're really in the midst of a long overdue reckoning for so many different races and cultures. Having these conversations is just a small part of that. But obviously, a lot of work remains to be done. Thank you for being part of the solution, as they say, and being a terrific role model for young girls who might be considering following the path that you're on. Although, you've got so many different paths and so many different things going on.

Tirtasaputra: Thank you for having me on. This has been really fun.

Pynes: I don't want to end without circling back to talk about your TikToks. I mentioned I've watched a few of them and you've got some behind the scenes of our offices, which is really fun. Maybe I can make a cameo one day since I am not really on TikTok, or at least not active.

My sense is that you also see TikTok as a great way to raise your visibility as an Asian female lawyer, and as a tool for mentoring other aspiring lawyers and young Asian women. Can you tell us what got you started and about some of the reactions and interactions that you've had on TikTok?

Tirtasaputra: I'll be honest, when I first started on TikTok, I was just a stalker. I wasn't active in making videos.

I saw a lot of law students struggling because they were first-generation law students. I identify as a first-generation law student. No one in my family is a lawyer. I didn't know what I was doing when I was going into law school. So, I thought, why not hop on this platform, and if anyone finds this useful, then that's great. If I can just make a difference in one person's life, that'd be awesome.

Since then, I've grown my following to over 10,000 followers. I've been invited on panels at law schools and undergrad schools, just to talk about my life as a lawyer, how to get to law school, how to get to Big Law.

I've definitely interacted with my followers, which is awesome because then it becomes a community rather than just me talking into a black hole. I think it's not only beneficial for them, but it's beneficial for me too, to make all these connections. Mentorship is definitely a passion of mine.

Pynes: Now you're also teaching, right?

Tirtasaputra: Yes, I am teaching at my alma mater, USC Gould School of Law. I'm teaching copyright law, which is really fun, too.

Pynes: That's another great way that you can get out in front of our youth and be a mentor.

Tirtasaputra: Exactly.

Pynes: Thank you so much for being here. Listeners, if you would like to follow Meeghan on TikTok or Instagram, she's @MeeghanHenry. Hopefully you'll have a few new followers from today's podcast, Meeghan. Thanks for being here.

Tirtasaputra: Thanks so much.