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Oral History Conversation with Cecilia Sibony

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This is an oral History conversation on social enterprise between students in Business Ethics at the University of San Diego and Miss Cecilia Sibony.

Could you give us a brief overview of what Sesamaise is and the social impact it seeks to achieve? Sure, so Sesamaise tahini is essentially a tahini snack company.

So we make different snacks all using...
tahini

00:00:39.700 --> 00:00:45.950
that we source from Israeli and Palestinian family businesses. All those

00:00:45.960 --> 00:00:52.330
snacks are vegan, delicious, nutrient dense, a few simple real

00:00:52.340 --> 00:00:57.620
pronounceable ingredients and ready made
So you can open up and eat it right away.

00:00:57.630 --> 00:01:03.740
Not too much mess with it. The social impact we are trying to make is we're

00:01:03.750 --> 00:01:09.210
trying to use business incentives to get Israelis and Palestinians to the same

00:01:09.220 --> 00:01:14.630
table and then their shared love of tahini
to get them to work together. So the idea

00:01:14.640 --> 00:01:20.770
is that we're increasing demand for their tahini through our products that

00:01:20.780 --> 00:01:22.450
comes as

00:01:22.450 --> 00:01:27.760
a result of their cooperation so that when we have enough sales and enough

00:01:28.580 --> 00:01:33.050
of that financial incentive we can come to the region and say OK now instead of
two companies that I work with now ten companies or fifteen companies you have

a chance to have

a piece of this this deal but in exchange you have to be involved in

a sort of conflict resolution program. That program would help them to build

trust and relationships and then work together to solve the business problems

and challenges that we present them. So I need an organic line or need to come down

X percent in costs or we want to vertically integrate or you know one of

a million possible challenges, and then give them the tools and the facilitation

and skills to be able to meet the challenges. Ultimately the short answer

is to in terms of the impact is to build
a model for scalable, sustainable constructive relationships and

interactions between Israelis and Palestinians. So I know that

your main focus is on Israeli Palestinian conflict or at least one of them. I know

a lot of people including myself don't understand that conflict or even conflict

in the most general sense. I feel like a lot of people think conflict always leads to argument.

and never goes anywhere and people ignore it. I'm wondering if you can walk us through how you got involved in conflict resolution?

Do you have any experiences from childhood or upbringing or events in your life that drove you in that direction? Sure, I've been interested in conflict

since I was a little girl. Specifically
Israel Palestine, but I think it's also deeper and broader than that. The story I like to tell is that I was 4 years old

The first Intifada was happening which was a major violent clash between Palestinians and Israelis. All of my cousins were outside playing with the kids, and I was sitting at home with my Israeli family. One side of my family is Israeli.

I was sitting with the adults watching tv. I couldn't take my eyes off of it and all the violence. It was making me really upset. I was 4. I said to my dad "Why do people fight if peace makes you happy?" and it's so simple and so naive but the truth is I've been in search of answering that question and fixing that since back then. In terms of my personal life I'm very much the black sheep in my family so I come from
a very conservative and very traditional background on both sides honestly.

And so I have I was always sort of more liberal. I don't want to say open minded because that is a judgment statement. So more liberal and I constantly sort of been in conflict with the people in my family for years and I used to fight every one I used to argue, I used to get really mad and blow up, and me and my dad yelling at the table and everyone getting upset. I think part of my interest in conflict resolution has been a personal one of how can I maintain relationships and still have interesting conversations and not destroy relationships. That also I
think motivated a lot of the
work that I do and have done. So I am

00:05:07.200 --> 00:05:14.190
a conflict facilitator. I’ve worked
with Israelis and Palestinians but I’ve

00:05:14.200 --> 00:05:21.030
also facilitated interpersonal conflicts.
I actually now do workshops on having

00:05:21.040 --> 00:05:27.790
hard conversations inspired by my own
hard conversation about Trump

00:05:27.790 --> 00:05:32.870
with my family. I messed it up. You know
like after ten years of being

00:05:32.880 --> 00:05:36.710
a facilitator I had a really
really bad blowout with

00:05:36.720 --> 00:05:41.190
a family member in the campaign. And
I was like if this is my

00:05:41.200 --> 00:05:45.890
actual profession and I still
messed it up, maybe other people are.

00:05:46.290 --> 00:05:50.670
So, I do these workshops on bringing
facilitating skills and mediation skills

00:05:50.670 --> 00:05:55.630
to interpersonal life so that’s
another way that I’m connected to this

00:05:55.640 --> 00:06:00.500
world of conflict. I am a certified mediator in Israel. I’ve mediated

conflicts. What does that look like when you’re mediating conflict?

So there’s a couple ways. You could be

a court ordered mediator which is something I never did but have that certification but I never actually went through the process of doing that and that’s like

there is a low level conflict between two parties and instead of taking up the resources and

time of the court system, the judge refers some them to court ordered mediation and

they try to

find a solution. I’ve done that more families, friends, workplaces.

Stuff like that
in a less formal way but I have the academic background and training

00:06:40.920 --> 00:06:43.960
in it. It is different.
It is

00:06:43.970 --> 00:06:48.210
a different skill set than facilitation, which is

00:06:48.270 --> 00:06:50.270
a different skill set than arbitration

00:06:50.270 --> 00:06:54.390
All these are under the umbrella of conflict resolution and other stuff.

00:06:56.260 --> 00:07:03.270
Can you walk us through some of those experiences in conflict resolution

00:07:03.270 --> 00:07:12.880
that became the seeds for Sesamaise tahini? We're trying to, or at least I am

00:07:12.880 --> 00:07:19.210
understand how I can become involved with a conflict that is so complex and remote

00:07:19.220 --> 00:07:21.920
It's not something that I can just walk around the street and get involved in.

00:07:21.920 --> 00:07:25.910
Can you walk us through how a student like us could get involved with something

00:07:25.910 --> 00:07:31.980
like that. Sure, so the whole idea behind
the company is actually to empower people

00:07:31.980 --> 00:07:39.130
around the world to vote with their
wallet and say we want to see peaceful

00:07:39.130 --> 00:07:44.150
relationships and peaceful interactions
between these two sides. So by the sheer

00:07:44.150 --> 00:07:48.680
act of supporting our crowdfunding
campaign which is happening right now

00:07:48.680 --> 00:07:53.770
or ordering tahini or bringing us to an
organization or place of worship or a

00:07:53.770 --> 00:08:04.080
group. You're actually giving us financial
incentive to get them to work together.

00:08:04.080 --> 00:08:09.090
It's really drawing that connection or
line between these very remote worlds

00:08:09.090 --> 00:08:16.570
that we do care about or maybe we care
about or we want to see a better way. My

00:08:16.570 --> 00:08:20.620
vision for the company is actually that
this is a model that can be copied and

00:08:20.620 --> 00:08:26.010
scaled to other conflict or social issues
so this idea that

00:08:26.010 --> 00:08:32.150
a supply chain can be more than just a
driver of like financial welfare can

also be

a driver of social welfare social cohesion and change I think that businesses

it's not enough anymore that businesses can be driven solely by profit right and

when they are we're seeing the negative impacts of that. I think business has

a responsibility to be

a positive force for good and for social change and that’s the model that we're trying to prove and then to scale. Did I answer your question? Yes

So when you are you know talking about using this as your model or example for

other companies to use. One of the things we were talking about in class is

diversity interactions and communicating with different people and cultures and
understanding one another. So with your company, what I’m understanding is that you are working with families who are essentially enemies and don’t like each other. And they compete with one another. Yes, they’re in a business competitive environment. That does not seem like it would be grounds for a conflict free zone or easy communication. I was reading in the Net Impact LA press release and there was this idea of breaking up the fight by breaking bread so I was just wondering if you could explain kind of what that vision is and maybe walk us through a time or an example where you actually saw your tahini
kind of bringing together both sides?

The idea is that, and this goes for all conflict and specifically Israel Palestine right. There's

the perception of a fixed piece of land and if one side wins then the other side loses. This idea of a zero sum game right. What we tried to do in the conflict resolution world is challenge this idea that there's a fixed pie because if we can expand that pie then each person can win right you're getting maybe more of a big. You're getting less percentage but of a bigger pie so you end up with more right So this is sort of that idea that drives this idea behind their enemies but they're also competition right. Right now
they have let’s say just for sake of numbers one hundred dollars of export in

00:11:10.410 --> 00:11:16.440
the US. Anything above that is expanding their pie right. Doesn't matter what the

00:11:16.450 --> 00:11:21.850
other guys getting either so if I come to them and say you can have I’m bringing

00:11:21.860 --> 00:11:23.780
you. I need half

00:11:23.790 --> 00:11:28.180
a million dollars worth of tahini. If you want in then you have to be part of this

00:11:28.190 --> 00:11:32.690
program which means that you have to work together. But if you decide not to do

00:11:32.700 --> 00:11:35.520
that because you’re competition then you just don’t get

00:11:35.520 --> 00:11:39.500
a piece of that pie right. So we’re saying can we expand that pie in order to give

00:11:39.920 --> 00:11:43.350
more companies. It’s relatively like

00:11:43.360 --> 00:11:48.020
a smaller percentage but absolutely much more than what they started with and the

00:11:48.030 --> 00:11:54.520
idea that like to sort of have them experience this while they’re building
relationships and getting the financial benefit from it and seeing and feeling and experiencing how cooperation is going to be better for them than conflict and competition is the main lesson that we want them to live and experience and then apply to more political issues which everything in that region is political, so that's going to be not an issue not a problem now in terms of your second question about like examples so we are not yet at the point where we have that like expanded. But right now we're making small back in L.A. Selling mostly there. And our crowdfunding campaign is essentially the first step to scaling and to getting bigger and then the idea is that with the campaign with the money and the
preorders we get from the campaign then we can start to bring in more companies and offer them this deal but we’re not we’re not there yet and right now I work with one Palestinian one Israeli company. I have another Palestinian-Israeli company meaning they’re Palestinian with Israeli citizenship. On deck and then And the idea is that I would want to bring in more of these companies. They right now won’t cooperate. Because I don’t have the incentive right like that financial incentive is the key. So when you say they won’t cooperate, I’m just trying to imagine what it would look like. a customer of these two companies so I buy from them what’s going to change is that the minute that we have a bigger order to place, is we call
a meeting. I already have partnerships built with an organization that will help me

to do this and I also from my work in the region know the facilitator that I want
to bring in to do it and I essentially come up and say OK we invite fifteen

companies from both sides of the green line so both from Israel and from pals and say

I need to order X

amount of tahini. I need to do it for this price you guys got to work together to

get it to me and these guys behind me these facilitators are going to help you do

that and you can opt in or not and if you don't want then you know you don't get

a piece of the pie but the people who will. So that's what that would look

like and then the sort of public resolution program would be

a staging of, sort of, they call it "people to people"
programming. Which is essentially storytelling and building trust between

them and then the, sort of, problem solving skills that they would need

to work together to meet the challenges so probably the first and they to be need
to you know lower the price. The easiest way to do those

is to share shipping container. That can be pretty straightforward if you're in

if you're in communication with one another. And then you

teaching them like how to communicate without fighting essentially and then,

but they have the financial incentive to do it so we're hoping that that's the key

that's been missing. That makes sense because money gets people to do it all

If money and food can't do it then I give up. I don't know, I don't know
what can. Those facilitators really have a job cut out for them yeah. That definitely takes a certain kind of person. I'm the person that kind of just avoids it and not talk about it but that creates more conflict. You should come to my work shops. I probably need to. I literally haven't taken any classes at USD that have at least given me skills. These are important skills. Yes I don't even think of them as conflict resolution skills I think of them as like really fundamental human skills. Like an emotional intelligence and like and it drives me crazy that like the I had to go and get two degrees and this and a certificate and ten years of experience to be able to do it. That this is stuff that they should be teaching kids in elementary because when you teach them at
that age it makes it so much easier for them to just practice and get better at

00:16:31.580 --> 00:16:37.200
it so much harder to do it at this age.
Four years old it makes sense to a kid

00:16:37.210 --> 00:16:43.610
like that’s not right. Yeah yeah
Exactly. That’s where it all is rooted

00:16:43.620 --> 00:16:44.680
But there are

00:16:44.690 --> 00:16:48.150
a set of skills and this is like what
my workshops are about and that’s

00:16:48.160 --> 00:16:54.290
also a social business that I’m possibly
putting more energy into in the next

00:16:54.300 --> 00:16:59.880
couple months. I want to sell the these
workshops to offices and then do them pro

00:16:59.920 --> 00:17:01.820
bono for non-profits and movements and
I have a couple non-profits

00:17:01.830 --> 00:17:08.349
a couple nonprofit that I’m already doing
them for. But it’s like basic skills that

00:17:10.020 --> 00:17:14.430
sound pretty straightforward like
active listening and like reframing and

00:17:14.440 --> 00:17:18.060
paraphrasing and these are things that but
they’re not easy things. You have to learn them and you have to practice them. So yes I think this is stuff now

Google just did it this is crazy Google just did this meta data analysis to figure out which characteristics of their employees make their best employees right so I’m not sure how they ran all the data

data or what that sort of quantitative side behind it was, but they were expecting, as Google, that it would be like you know software engineer, coder,

programmer would be. And they did have attributed like empathy and compassion and like communication and like what they consider the soft skills

and what did they find for their best employees? Meaning the ones that moved up the ranks, that got promoted that were
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considered the most like value driving?

They all across the board had the soft skills at the top all of the like the
technical skills fell in the bottom like couple slots. So now finally I think we're
starting to understand that like also I mean robots and "hey future!" robots and machines are going to do all that work, right?
What we can do is this kind of stuff. The empathy, the
relationship building, the creativity that comes from that like. So that's just my little soapbox moment. It's almost like because the skills aren't taught in elementary school, you have to have someone you know sitting there be like play nice. It all goes back to elementary school so it's like alright say you're sorry now. Yeah but just like anything,
you know? I always give this example in

00:19:02.700 --> 00:19:09.020
all my workshops. We do somewhat silly
like seemingly silly or like contrived

00:19:09.030 --> 00:19:10.656
practicing of it. And, like, you have
to do that because like let’s say you’re

NOTE Paragraph

00:19:14.334 --> 00:19:15.360
weightlifting, right? before you’re
going to go and lift a big bar

00:19:15.370 --> 00:19:19.460
you’re going to want to get your
form down right so like you have to

00:19:19.470 --> 00:19:23.220
learn it and then you have to
practice it like any skill on the you get

00:19:23.230 --> 00:19:28.780
better. But like and can still mess
it up like I mess it up

00:19:28.790 --> 00:19:34.040
big time with my cousin and
when we had this like huge blowout

00:19:34.050 --> 00:19:41.000
argument and you know still trying to get
better. You always can and yeah it’s

00:19:41.010 --> 00:19:44.870
a it’s a really interesting and I saw a lot
of these workshops that people there’s
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00:19:44.880 --> 00:19:50.670
a real need for it, I, like a
very serious need for. We are

00:19:50.680 --> 00:19:57.340
in like a small scale starting to catch
up to that because I know the engineering

00:19:58.980 --> 00:20:05.710
department here now requires their
students to take a public speaking and

00:20:05.720 --> 00:20:06.770
communications class so I think that,
I'm hoping that we're getting there. Yeah

00:20:06.770 --> 00:20:09.770
the thing is, my guess is that that class
when you say published public speaking

00:20:09.770 --> 00:20:13.940
and communication is about speaking.
When I think of communication it's mostly

00:20:13.950 --> 00:20:18.710
about listening. Yeah, 95% percent of the
workshop on communications is

00:20:18.720 --> 00:20:25.570
on listening. And that's where we have trouble.
I wasn't used to this because I think

00:20:25.580 --> 00:20:31.090
America has changed honestly
in the time like when I was

00:20:31.100 --> 00:20:35.900
a student to when I moved back after
being in the Middle East and I noticed
especially during the campaign season

a lot of similarities to what’s been going on in Israel in terms of people not able to talk to the other like there’s a lot of like talking at and past each other no one’s actually listening to what the other person has to say or what their experiences are it’s a lot of judgment you know hey Republican judged put them in that like in that corner in that pocket and then you know no trying to empathize you don’t have to agree with them but like to be able to have that conversation. And be able to talk about it. Right. And I saw like, and

That’s how it is in Israel and Palestine and it’s been like that for a long time. And it’s getting worse but I wasn’t expecting it to be like that here
and then move back in 2016 and I'm like oh my god

this is familiar. What's happening?

So like how do you think that future generations especially now with technology decreasing or I guess also increasing communication but less

How do you think we can strive to become better listeners? One of the things that comes up in every single workshop is like yeah they texted me something and then I texted back and I likes and I always say stop. That's the first problem.

To have a hard, I call them hard conversations I have to do it on like
with like

a medium in between you know is hard because we communicate so much with our bodies

our tone on like all these nonverbal cues that when you put like something between you and the other person. Miscommunication, right? You’re already starting that and most of conflict is miscommunication so like you’re you’re basically setting yourself back and you’re giving yourself

a handicap so I think that’s like really big I always say that the worst way to communicate is in like like Facebook Messenger where you’re typing because you can type really fast you don’t filter and it just like and it’s very difficult to tell tone and stuff like that that’s and it’s very immediate right it’s like you
know types of e-mail you know it's like messaging right you're talking the other

00:22:51.560 --&gt; 00:22:54.620
person and texting is a little bit better because it takes

00:22:54.630 --&gt; 00:22:57.670
a little longer so you filter a little bit so you actually have to like think

00:22:57.680 --&gt; 00:22:58.790
a little bit so that's

00:22:58.800 --&gt; 00:23:04.790
a little bit better than I would say e-mail and then I would say phone call and

00:23:04.800 --&gt; 00:23:10.140
then Face Time or like Skype and that in person in terms of like worse to best for

00:23:10.150 --&gt; 00:23:16.920
communicating. And your question was how technology will change. It's

00:23:16.930 --&gt; 00:23:20.590
a good question because and I'm testing this now because I have people that want to

00:23:20.600 --&gt; 00:23:27.380
do the workshops and like where I'm not there and I'm and trying to find like the

00:23:27.390 --&gt; 00:23:34.120
right platform or tool to be able to do that but again without losing on

00:23:34.740 --&gt; 00:23:41.340
this ability to tell these like nonverbal
cues. I haven’t found it yet so I’m not

I’m not sure I imagine like one day it will be possible and easy and it’s.

Robots? Robots, yeah

But you know when I do these workshops like let’s say have fifteen people around

I need to keep tabs on fifteen people not when they’re speaking but like how what

their body language looks like and what their face looks like and their reactions

when I say something and like are they getting bored or are they getting triggered

or are they so that I think is the challenge in terms of like using technology but I

think that the more that like I see you know my brother who’s younger than me and we’ll go out for dinner and he’ll have his phone in his face

like I’m talking I’m listening to you and I’m like but you’re not looking at me and

he’s like but I hear you
I think it it's like it's like

00:24:36.860 --> 00:24:43.520
I think is bad for relationships you know.
When you can't look somebody in the

00:24:43.530 --> 00:24:48.900
high or get their full like present
attention and I think technology is

00:24:48.940 --> 00:24:55.800
probably making that worse?. I think it definitely is. A lot of my friends in relationships

00:24:56.030 --> 00:25:01.610
you know they'll be together
and they'll be fighting and they'll stop

00:25:01.728 --> 00:25:06.815
and leave and text about it because they're more comfortable texting about their fight

00:25:07.119 --> 00:25:13.699
and not doing it in person and it's like, you don't learn anything, it just defeats the whole purpose

00:25:13.940 --> 00:25:18.950
I think you know when I grew up

00:25:18.960 --> 00:25:25.930
I'm a little bit older than you guys.
When we you know you had to be in

00:25:25.940 --> 00:25:30.810
school with people so you have that like
interpersonal face-time but even back

00:25:30.820 --> 00:25:32.340
then we did spend

00:25:32.350 --> 00:25:39.290
a lot of time like outside hanging out, like playing whatever it was, so
I feel like my generation is still more comfortable in these interpersonal interactions but I see, I've worked with a lot of interns like a lot of twenty maybe twenty year olds and I see it, you can see it there there's a difficulty in empathizing and in connecting and in storytelling and in you know all these things that have I mean human civilization develop because of our ability to tell stories right like think about religion and like civilizations they all grew up around some shared narrative and that allowed people to come together and work together and to build and to grow civilization, technology whatever. We're struggling to do that now so what happened then right. I don't know.
So do you think of a way, technology can somehow help with I guess, in the case of the Iranian-Palestinian Conflict.

00:26:36.580 --> 00:26:40.330
Do you think technology can somehow, I don’t know, bring more empathy, especially with future generations?

00:26:43.660 --> 00:26:47.680
I like to think that every challenge

00:26:47.690 --> 00:26:51.550
can also be viewed as an opportunity
that’s the facilitator in me and I

00:26:51.560 --> 00:26:58.420
think like the challenge right, is that we
are not communicating in person as much

00:26:58.430 --> 00:27:03.750
anymore but the opportunity there, is that
that the two sides have no spaces where

00:27:03.760 --> 00:27:09.230
they can physically meet. There's been a lot of like
systematic structural segregation of the

00:27:09.240 --> 00:27:14.880
two communities on purpose by the
politicians so that they don’t build

00:27:14.890 --> 00:27:20.290
relationships, so they don’t like support
peace. Technology can actually facilitate

00:27:20.300 --> 00:27:25.520
that right, because you can have meetings
on Skype or FaceTime or Google Hangouts

00:27:25.530 --> 00:27:31.660
and companies like Cisco, Google they
do have some programs in the Middle East

00:27:31.670 --> 00:27:37.960
doing things like that, so it could be used
as an opportunity for sure I think you

00:27:37.970 --> 00:27:41.360
know being able to do it
well so that you can do

00:27:41.370 --> 00:27:47.990
a proper like facilitated dialogue
is still coming, but I imagine

00:27:49.390 --> 00:27:55.170
it is not that far away. Yeah so you
have the opportunity,

00:27:55.180 --> 00:28:01.710
two sides of the same coin

00:28:01.750 --> 00:28:08.530
You mention that you have these meetings where both sides gather, and you talk about– They haven't happened yet

00:28:08.540 --> 00:28:10.090
They will happen

00:28:11.480 --> 00:28:15.500
Technology can really play a role in this

00:28:15.500 --> 00:28:21.940
I would love for them to meet in person, but if
that's not possible for like the systematic

00:28:21.950 --> 00:28:28.530
segregation issues, like Palestinians
need permits to get into Israel; Israelis

00:28:28.540 --> 00:28:32.210
are legally not allowed to go to certain areas in Palestine, in the West Bank

00:28:32.220 --> 00:28:35.220
Palestine, but there are

00:28:35.260 --> 00:28:39.460
a couple places that like peace people know about that both sides can get to and

00:28:39.470 --> 00:28:43.150
that’s where I would want to do these meetings and my hope is that I can build

00:28:43.160 --> 00:28:47.620
a factory in the region where both Israelis and Palestinians can access the factory

00:28:47.630 --> 00:28:51.330
and work there so they would be working together like an Apple Factory but that’s

00:28:51.650 --> 00:28:58.410
ways away. Yeah a lot of this is still I’m, still pretty early stage so

00:28:58.420 --> 00:28:59.370
a lot of this is like

00:28:59.380 --> 00:29:06.090
a theory of change that you know I have my hypothesis and am still testing. But

00:29:08.040 --> 00:29:09.790
yeah you never know right?

00:29:10.070 --> 00:29:18.400
It sounds like you have your ideas, you have an idea of what everything’s going to look like

00:29:18.490 --> 00:29:21.490
You have some systems in place to make sure that this happens

yeah I just need financing, which is like every female founder’s issues but yeah

yeah I think that starting a new company is like a lot of people of great ideas, but then the funding behind it is always something that holds people back from potentially profitable enterprises.

So you mentioned, was it crowdfunding?

I’m crowdfunding now.

So how is that how are you going about that can you tell us about that?

The idea, my main goal which is forty thousand dollars which would be enough to sort of, finance the first batch at a manufacturer, and then to be able to distribute nationally to the people that back the campaign and then it
would also provide me with that first financial incentive to come to the

region and be like okay guys, couple more of you and like I need

X number of kilos of tahini by

Y date at Z price and you guys got

to figure out how you're going to get that to me. So that's sort of the goal

behind their crowdfunding campaign. How I went about doing that? I work with

a digital marketing agency. They are also social business, everybody that I work

with is likes has some sort of like socially conscious component to what they're

doing that's been really important for me that everything is really values-aligned

and I only work with people that I align with ideologically. And

we've gone through the whole thing of you know identifying the right platform or using
Oral History Conversation with Ceci Sibony

00:31:05.770 --> 00:31:09.720
a California-based platform that only
does food and farming projects that are

00:31:09.730 --> 00:31:16.660
socially oriented so Kickstarter, a different one? You
know building up the rewards and doing

00:31:16.670 --> 00:31:20.990
the sort of testing on like what reward
people would want at what price points

00:31:21.730 --> 00:31:28.610
a ton of outreach and partnership
building. The peace building

00:31:28.710 --> 00:31:33.690
I tried to make, to build
relationships and partner with some peace

00:31:34.110 --> 00:31:37.020
oriented organizations and I got

00:31:37.030 --> 00:31:42.680
a lot of radio silence to be honest, like
organization that you would think makes

00:31:42.690 --> 00:31:48.710
sense, and they’re just like not
willing to share, partner like

00:31:49.530 --> 00:31:53.900
I’ve had much better traction with like
social enterprise organizations

00:31:53.910 --> 00:32:00.670
and stuff like that. Foodie
influencers and all different
kinds of Instagram influencers and stuff like that
At the end of the day, I sell food

like you need to have

a good food product but mostly it's been
about education and awareness so what is

Tahini, why you should eat, how you
should use it. Like these are

the basic things that Americans don't
really know. People know of Tahini

just as what goes in hummus
and then they maybe buy

a jar use it once and then it sits there
for like ever, they don't know how many

different things that you can do with it
and they also don't know that you have

different qualities of Tahini, so I use some of the
best Tahini in the world that tastes totally
different than what you find in Whole
Foods or something. So that has been
a big piece of this is the awareness building and then also the awareness

building on the story right, and then the mission behind the brand and we

combined all that into a two minute video. It was like

a sheer, sheer miracle it was so hard. But I think we did

a good job, you guys can check it out it's tahinitogether.com. You can check it out and truth is we're not going to hit our goal which doesn't mean that the campaign wasn't successful it's been successful in other ways so if you guys like the idea and it doesn’t it won't cost you anything

because I won't get the money because we won't hit the goal but if you guys want you can go in and preorder and then that helps me because it demonstrates
sales for when I do raise money
but it doesn't cost you anything, it just

00:33:35.920 --> 00:33:40.080
takes two minutes Have there been any
drawbacks of using that method of funding

00:33:40.350 --> 00:33:41.250
verses another?

00:33:41.700 --> 00:33:46.340
I mean yeah, for sure. I think crowdfunding is great but I think

00:33:46.340 --> 00:33:51.620
it's like it's already peaked and is on
its way down kind of it's no longer novel

00:33:51.630 --> 00:33:57.380
and everyone and their mother is like
crowdfunding right now and I think

00:33:57.650 --> 00:33:59.600
people are just bombarded with

00:33:59.610 --> 00:34:04.370
a lot of it also Facebook changed their
algorithms and is burying my content so

00:34:05.290 --> 00:34:12.110
these.
It's pay to play and

00:34:12.120 --> 00:34:16.350
I don't have enough money
to pay Facebook enough to like promote my

00:34:16.540 --> 00:34:21.500
So that's also an
issue and I think
So it's a good idea, I mean I think it was working for a while but I think it's much more difficult to get something to go viral now and that's essentially what I needed; Like I needed it to go a little viral and that didn't happen, so it's okay it's not the end, I just have to raise money conventionally which I wanted to avoid.

I actually worked for a changemaking agency called Rescue, it's on Morena, and they do a lot of things like this. We have seen a lot of fallout from Facebook algorithm and just digital marketing agencies are having a really hard time, having to change strategies.

In terms of how to help nonprofit organizations to market their cause.
It's getting a lot harder. In the last couple months even. Had I launched a crowdfunding campaign couple months ago I might have been a lot better off.

With Instagram too with a lot of the influencers and bloggers I follow, there's something with the way Instagram makes your news feed appear. I mean it pushes people's posts down so a lot of the bloggers are encouraging that you turn on your notifications for them so that when they post something, you're notified. So I know that something new that's been affecting people a lot.

I've been in touch with Instagram influencers that want thirty-five hundred dollars for a post.
I guess I’ve never really, like I seem them, but I never really know how much they get paid.

That’s for more on the higher end but like yet that person, I think had like a couple hundred thousand followers, so it’s legit right, like that’s a lot of followers but like thirty-five hundred dollars.

When you’re looking for people like that, do you usually go more on the foodie side? Yeah. At the end of the day I’m selling food

And I’m selling food like that I want people to preorder it on crowdfunding. They don’t know if it taste good or if they like it so I need somebody they trust to say "this tastes good," so I spend a lot of money shipping Tahini all over the country, like overnighting it which is
00:36:50.460 --> 00:36:56.270
really expensive actually, overnighing
it so that they can get it, try it, use it

00:36:56.870 --> 00:37:03.790
post about it, and there have been maybe five
to ten that have done that but it's

00:37:03.800 --> 00:37:08.250
not exactly converting into preorders, I
think it's still building.

00:37:08.540 --> 00:37:16.320
I saw some of your recipes on the website talking about "what is Tahini?" and "how could you use it?"

00:37:16.520 --> 00:37:22.300
For me I grew up eating Tahini
so it's very like

00:37:22.310 --> 00:37:27.370
culturally, I'm used to it but
for most Americans not.

00:37:29.940 --> 00:37:33.410
I knew of it, but it's definitely not on every table here.

00:37:34.560 --> 00:37:37.270
It's going to trend like hummus is coming down,

00:37:37.390 --> 00:37:42.330
kale is coming down, cauliflower is going up

00:37:43.750 --> 00:37:47.100
cauliflower and Tahini which are by the way, amazing together, that's like the next

00:37:48.010 --> 00:37:51.490
food trend, I keep hearing it from, I
mean I'm obviously in that world but I
keep hearing it and I really do believe it's just

am I going to be the company that does it. Like am I going to be the Sabra or the Chobani or the Sriracha, Hoy Fung or I don’t know.

Well I’m curious to try it

I actually, if you guys want to try it

The Kroc is doing some events with Craig Zelizer, so if you want to just go and they have my Tahini to taste because they bought some for their event so you can just go

and take some.

So is it just a dip?

It's a dip. In it's basic form it's a dip,

and then you can

use it in so many different ways

so it's like way more than just
a dip so I actually use it more
as like a dressing or like a sauce on

00:38:40.970 --> 00:38:47.600
a grain bowl or you can make pasta salad
out of it you can like use it on

00:38:47.610 --> 00:38:53.490
a roast like roasted veggies
like all kinds of stuff. You stay away

00:38:57.960 --> 00:38:58.960
from ingredients you can't pronounce,

00:38:58.960 --> 00:39:01.670
So it has no dairy in it?

00:39:01.670 --> 00:39:03.030
It's 100% vegan and plain based plant

00:39:03.070 --> 00:39:07.370
only a couple ingredients and they're
all real foods like I call it real

00:39:07.380 --> 00:39:13.450
food like. Is it gluten free? Yeah.
I have celiac and always looking for

00:39:15.200 --> 00:39:20.350
Something to use in a variety of ways
because I swear I eat the same things

00:39:20.360 --> 00:39:26.990
I have a lot in the Santa Monica farmers
market on Sunday and like different

00:39:26.100 --> 00:39:32.030
versions of my products but like I have
something for everybody so like if you're
00:39:32.040 --&gt; 00:39:38.220
celiac my facility right now is not
gluten free facilities so like technically

00:39:39.480 --&gt; 00:39:40.810
but when I’m in

00:39:40.820 --&gt; 00:39:47.460
a manufacture I could and there’s
nothing in there that is like gluten.

00:39:48.870 --&gt; 00:39:55.620
Like hummus? Right yeah. But like I have
you know besides for all the

00:39:56.220 --&gt; 00:40:02.200
plant bases now like trending right
this is the year of the vegan so that’s

00:40:02.210 --&gt; 00:40:08.740
like with all the documentaries
and subset like. All of the all the

00:40:08.750 --&gt; 00:40:10.930
diets now and the health trends

00:40:10.940 --&gt; 00:40:17.930
so like paleo is out. Keto is in, We’re
Paleo and Keto and my spicy

00:40:17.940 --&gt; 00:40:21.250
one has a little bit of sweetener in it so
like I would tell people not to do that

00:40:21.330 --&gt; 00:40:23.530
a lot of people are not eating
oil now it’s like I have

00:40:23.540 --&gt; 00:40:29.060
a little oil in the past one so don’t eat
that, you can eat other ones. Fog maps

that’s a whole other one. Legumes,

a lot of people are saying way from legumes
and so they can’t eat hummus so they get

really excited that they get like eat
my you know something for everyone. Yeah

yeah and and you know we are starting to
sort of finally pay attention to labels

and ingredients and I keep mine into like
very few ingredients very simple I just

use good quality ingredients you don’t need
to add all this crap to it. That’s what

everyone’s look for me, at least for me. Not by preference
but I’m so dietary restricted, I know in

a second by looking if I can eat it or not
Yeah for sure how many lines are there.

Yeah. The ingredients, good to go. I think that’s
a plus at least, you’re in the right time.

All this health change for you body
I did a lot of research
a lot of like development it could
because for me you know great

story not great story great mission not
great mission at the end of the day like

for all social entrepreneurs you
need to have a viable business like

a viable product and it needs tastes
good if it's food like it has to be

good so I've put a lot a lot a
lot of time and energy and creating

what I think, I mean not just me but my

customers do, um, a really really just
tasty product and then also of

course what people need.
The need that

I'm meeting, and I get this all
the time is, I don't eat X.

Whatever that is and I'm
hungry or I don't eat X.
And I’m not satisfied. And I’m really busy so I don’t have time to cook that much and that’s the need that I need, right? It’s something that like is really versatile but you can also eat it as is if you don’t have time to make something and it fits into all of these like dietary restrictions and it’s super nutrient dense so things people don’t know Tahini has tons of protein, fiber, calcium, good fats, vitamins, minerals, like the surprising number is twelve times more calcium ounce for ounce than milk, whole milk. Yeah. So you landed on Tahini because it’s the one thing that Israelis and Palestinians can agree on? That sort of the marketing story. It is true. Like hummus they fight over there’s like big like hummus wars in the Middle East of like literally in the
Guinness Book of like who found it and who can make the biggest vat of it and like

all but Tahini is like a something that they actually do have

a history of some cooperation. Their making in on both sides, both sides love it so

it is true, that's not why I landed on tahini. I had this sort of theory in framework for peace building business that I'd helped in grad school and

I was looking to build

a business that could implement and test this peace building business framework

sort of in parallel I had this idea for, to bring Tahini to the U.S.

I actually originally thought that I was going to be positioning it as a substitute for mayonnaise because that's how I eat, or that's how I was eating it,
because I don’t like mayonnaise. I think it’s creepy since I’m a kid. Don’t read the ingredients. I know it makes me nauseous and I also like oh why can raw eggs sit on the shelf for endless amounts of years? That, I don’t understand that so I started using I started using teeny as a substitute for mayonnaise and then I was like “Oh, what else could I do with Tahini?” and then I started playing with like a ton of different things and then I was like hummus is trending in America but the hummus here sucks no offense guys, your hummus is horrible. And part of the reason is because in the Middle East they know what makes good hummus is good to Tahini and a lot of it and they don’t put it in here because they don’t have access to and it
is expensive so I thought I identified

a big market opportunity and
so it was like both fortuitous

that Tahini has such

a strong history of rooting in that part
of the world and so much love around it and

also I got presented this market
opportunity to meet this unmet need of

a plant based like whole Food do it all
sauce so I connected the dots

basically. But yeah so all pieces of that
are true. But so like what

came first chicken or the egg. I don’t know.
It was all sort of happening in my brain and

floating around until I connected it. Yeah I
had it when I came up with the idea when I

was working at a tech company and
hated my life and I had
a challenge out to the entire company of
give me something that Tahini doesn't go well

00:45:42.650 --> 00:45:44.080
with and for like

00:45:44.090 --> 00:45:51.240
a year people tried and couldn't find
anything. It goes with everything. Yeah.

00:45:51.250 --> 00:45:58.030
Well, we’re running low on time, but where
can we get Tahini? So

00:45:58.090 --> 00:46:04.630
you can preorder on my crowdfunding
site I’ll give you material about that and

00:46:04.770 --> 00:46:10.670
share with your friends, you know maybe
it's not, it's not over I’m still pushing

00:46:10.680 --> 00:46:16.410
really hard. You know where like twenty
percent in so I could go viral in the next

00:46:16.420 --> 00:46:21.690
couple days, you never know, you never
know, it only takes like once so

00:46:23.760 --> 00:46:29.860
So this is information
on the campaign article. If

00:46:31.210 --> 00:46:37.950
beyond that, definitely can
find us on social so that

00:46:38.060 --> 00:46:42.040
as the company develops and grows I can
like keep you posted about what we're doing

00:46:42.980 --> 00:46:45.440
getting Tahini to San Diego...

00:46:50.510 --> 00:46:57.080
I don't know. Yeah, hopefully soon yeah.

00:46:57.310 --> 00:47:02.330
All those e-mail addresses shoot to me so you could just

00:47:02.340 --> 00:47:08.850
like shoot me an e-mail. And if you're ever in LA you can definitely grab some. I'm hoping

00:47:08.860 --> 00:47:11.510
to, you know, within the year be

00:47:11.790 --> 00:47:16.740
a manufacturer and get into retail these like regionally and Southern California so

00:47:16.740 --> 00:47:22.730
hopefully soon but if you follow us on Instagram and Facebook, all that.

00:47:24.350 --> 00:47:30.480
And if you want to find tahini now, don't

00:47:30.870 --> 00:47:37.200
buy raw Tahini or unhulled Tahini because it's going to taste bad

00:47:37.920 --> 00:47:42.200
don't do that to yourself. If you can, go to like

00:47:42.210 --> 00:47:48.720
a Middle Eastern market or an Israeli market and look for the cheesiest looking

00:47:49.500 --> 00:47:54.420
packaging that’s probably the better off. Like the one that looks like it straight

00:47:54.430 --> 00:47:59.070
out of the ninety’s or something that's the one you want to go with so usually can

00:47:59.080 --> 00:48:03.750
also tell by price, the more expensive. It's worth the extra two dollars or

00:48:03.760 --> 00:48:08.750
whatever so in either Israeli or Middle Eastern markets usually you can also

00:48:08.760 --> 00:48:12.830
check the back and they’ll say where it's made, Israel, Palestine, Turkey makes

00:48:12.840 --> 00:48:19.380
decent Tahini tool. And you wanted to be the roasted, hulled Tahini

00:48:20.070 --> 00:48:26.050
and the yeah. And but then that gives you the paste so in order to make the

00:48:26.060 --> 00:48:30.850
ready make dips like I make, go on my website and you can like see I

00:48:30.860 --> 00:48:34.910
have like recipes for how to do the sauce but it's basically just like liquids so

00:48:35.630 --> 00:48:39.050
makes it... Sounds easy! Sort of. Um alright. Well

00:48:43.800 --> 00:48:45.780
thank you so much!

— End of Transcription —