

**EPISODE 51**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:04.1] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to the Creative Empire Podcast. Each week, Reina Pomeroy, the life and biz success coach, and Christina Scalera, the attorney for creatives, are taking you up close and personal with successful influencers in the creative community and tackling your biggest business hurdles. Their mission is to help you, creative entrepreneurs, think beyond your daily biz so you can make the brave decisions that build your Creative Empire.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:00:35.5] RP:** Hi everybody, welcome back to the Creative Empire podcast. We are so excited to have you here again for another episode. So it's Reina, and I have Christina here with me, and we have our very special guest, Bethany Tran that I met at Alt Summit in January of 2016. It has been so cool to watch her grow in her business, and just watch the cool shoes that they've been putting out. If you haven't heard of the Root Collective, I need you to go check it out. We're so excited to have Bethany come on and talk about building good into your business. Bethany, thanks so much for coming on.

**[0:01:09.2] BT:** Thank you so much for having me.

**[0:01:11.2] RP:** Absolutely. Give us the fly-by of your business. How you got here — your story is so fascinating to me — and what kinds of things you're working on now?

**[0:01:22.0] BT:** Our beginnings were almost eight years ago now, believe it or not, that's crazy. Friends of mine started a nonprofit called Lemonade International that is focused on building up the slum community of Lali Menada in Guatemala City. A friend of mine had actually moved down to Guatemala for a year to kind of help get things off the ground. She told me she was going, and completely uncharacteristic of me, I was immediately like, "I'm going to come visit you", which is not something that I would normally do. I'm the processor. Like I have to sit and think about things, and this is like instantaneous, I'm supposed to go.

So I did, I went down, spent a week hanging out in the slum, and had all of my expectations of what poverty looks like completely blasted out of the water. Not really even in just how the people were living, that wasn't really a surprise to me at all, but just how culturally complicated it was.

Like if you live in the slum, you normally have to lie about your address to get a job. Nobody will hire you simply because of where you live. You're really considered a second-class citizen, and that is not something that is specific to this one slum. That is a global problem around the world, where just because of where you live and where you were born, you're just considered a lesser-than human being. I also just really started noticing, there's people here, they've got these amazing talents, and these abilities, and they really want to work, but their culture is just really keeping them pushed down and not allowing them to really grow past where they are. So it was a very eye-opening trip to say the least, and I came home with all of these "now what" feelings.

What do I do with this? I see this massive problem there, and then started also realizing that so many nonprofits were focusing on things like education. Which is great, like we want these kids to have an education, but then if there's no jobs for them afterwards, it's kind of — I don't like saying what's the point, but it's almost like what's the point. That point of there's no opportunities for them to grow out of their environment and where they had lived their whole life.

Just all this need for jobs, and these communities. I ended up going back down a few times afterwards, and every time just kind of came back with that same feeling of somebody needs to do something about this. There's just this really big need for jobs, and I have a marketing background, so I think you just kind of always just do what you know. Pretty early on, I just had this idea like, there needs to be a business created where stuff that these people are making can be put into the global marketplace, because it's all a matter of access, right?

In the slum, there is no internet. You can't get internet if you live there, and a lot of times you can't even really get out of the slum, because it's actually a really dangerous slum, so for some people it's hard to even physically leave to get out. It's not like it's easy for them to be able to take their goods and sell them some place. I had a few things happen all at the same time. I started working for Comcast, and then I turned 30 three weeks later and went through my second quarter life crisis in five years, what am I doing with my life?

I should have felt like I had basically made it at that point. I'm working for one of the biggest corporations in the country, and I was just miserable because I wasn't being fulfilled in what I was doing. I think about two or three months after that, the documentary aired on PBS. If you haven't watched this documentary first, basically put this podcast on pause and watch it and then come back. It's that good.

I think it's about eight women from around the world who live in these cultures where women are often oppressed. In Africa and Asia, and the one story that always sticks with me is that there's this woman in some small African country, I cannot remember which one, where there's like one doctor for two million people or something like that. So women are dying in childbirth all the time, simply because there's no access to medical care. So this woman is going around and training midwives in this small little village communities and the mortality rate of these women in labor is going down tremendously just because they have access to proper care.

At that point it was like alright, I have zero excuse. There is absolutely no reason why I shouldn't be doing what I want to do here. I think it was pretty much the next day I was on the phone with the stateside director of Lemonade International and literally was like hey, I have this idea for this business for a really long time, do you know anybody that makes stuff? Like, I had no product. It was this business idea, there was no product. I had no contacts, no nothing, so I ended up getting connected with a few people that lived in the slums through Lemonade International, including one of our primary shoe makers now, Otto, who had been making shoes for years and years and was still living in the slum, unable really to get out. He had actually been able to start his own little business, because Lemonade International had given him a micro loan.

Then they do a fund raiser around the holidays every year to get kids a new backpack and a new pair of shoes for school. Because their school year down there runs like January, February through like November, so they're on a different schedule. Having this run around the holiday meant that they had new shoes for the new school year, and because of that, I think Lemonade was able to place an order for like 250 pairs of shoes through Otto, and he was able to pay back his loan within a few months, and has been able to sustain a small business since then.

I met him very shortly after they had started working with him, and so decided to get the business up and running and off the ground, and during the process — it took me about a year to get it up and running — and during that year, the Rana factory collapsed in Bangladesh. It was in 2013, and over 1,100 people died in one day because a building that they knew was unsafe just collapsed and these people couldn't get out. Starting a product —based business in fashion — which was not necessarily intentional, it was really just because we knew the shoe maker — there was another big lightbulb moment for me where it was like crap, there's a need for jobs in this industry all around the world, and the problem is that it is actually an extremely unkind industry.

People are being taken advantage of and abused just because they're vulnerable. Because they need a job, they have to be able to feed their kids, and so at that point, it really became a little bit less about that single slum in Guatemala, and more about basically taking on an industry. Like we're going to take on the fashion industry, and we're going to try to change it, because people should not be treated like that for the things that we buy and the things that we wear.

We've been up and running for almost three years; it will be November 9<sup>th</sup>, so I guess right before this podcast airs, we will celebrate our three-year anniversary. It's been quite the ride.

**[0:08:44.7] RP:** Now you make awesome products that are beautiful, and are also sustainable, and get back to the culture? I feel like, if you're listening, and you're feeling really intimidated by what Bethany has taken on, she has not only taken on a small problem, it's a worldwide problem that you've started to take on with this product. Tell me, if somebody is creating a product now, and they're mass-manufacturing or some other way that maybe isn't as sustainable, how would you encourage them to start building good into their business? It's not like, so unattainable. Like they don't have to be in Guatemala, does that make sense?

**[0:09:25.2] BT:** Yeah it does. I think number one, if you're already manufacturing something somewhere, my biggest encouragement is always go to that factory and start asking questions. Start asking some very specific questions about work schedules, and are people living on the factory grounds, because like if you're mass producing in China, a lot of times- or in Asia, just in general where people are just not valued very much, they're working 12, 14, 15, 16 hours a day,

seven days a week. They might get one or two days off a month, and then they're actually sleeping there on the grounds in like a 10x10 room with 8 to 10 other people.

The conditions tend to be really bad, and the thing that is tough when you're doing some mass manufacturing — we face this in Guatemala sometimes too with some of the material vendors that we work with, where they just won't give you a straight answer. If you are mass producing in other countries, start asking questions about how people are being treated, how they're paid and just try to get as specific as possible and if you can, go visit. Don't even tell them you're coming. Show up unannounced. That's like, one of the big things, especially if you're working with large factories is unannounced visits. You can hire a third party auditor also to go in and just kind of check it out, see what's going on, and then another option is perhaps to look at US manufacturing, there's a lot of manufacturing coming back to the US.

We're actually potentially working on some projects that may or may not be produced in the US, and it's been really interesting to see how much industry is still here that you just don't know about because so much of what we buy is not made here. But there is actually a lot of opportunity to produce and manufacture right here in the US. Another way to do that also is that if there's something specific that you are producing, like if you're producing bags, you can connect up with nonprofits, perhaps in countries like Guatemala or Nepal or Peru, Mexico, wherever and ask them, "Hey, you know, I have this project, I'd really like to be able to work with local manufacturers, is there anybody that you know?"

Nonprofits are an excellent resource. If you're really looking to do maybe some smaller batch or more impactful manufacturing, that's another really great option as well.

**[0:11:47.2] RP:** Yeah, I'm hearing you say like, just start asking the question. If you turn a blind eye to it, it's going to continue to go, right? That's what I'm hearing from you. Even if you can't go overseas to China right now, start asking questions, and maybe be more curious about it, and have that kind of compassion to care about the people who are creating the products that you're selling.

Let's see, can I ask you about like if somebody is maybe more like, service-based business, how can people start infusing good into those kinds of businesses?

**[0:12:16.9] BT:** Yeah, I think it's actually- there's so many different opportunities. I mean, you can build a giving back structure, and so have a percentage go back to a nonprofit that might be connected to either something local in your community, or something that you're passionate about. Another way to do things is you know, maybe partner up with the boys and girls club. Bring some kids in to be able to start helping, mentor them, give them internship opportunities to be able to learn, just look within your own community. I think it's — sometimes it's almost a little bit easier to look at places like Guatemala because it's far away. Like it's not in my face every day, so it can almost be easier to think about doing that, but there's always so much need in our communities right around us.

I lived in Philadelphia for a few years, and just seeing the homeless problem there — this is such a big issue here, and you're faced with it every day. It can be easy to almost forget that it exists. If you do have that services side, just start getting creative. Like really think about your business as more than just bringing in your own paycheck, and think about how you can really use it to impact other lives around you.

**[0:13:26.1] CS:** One of the things that, yeah, we've talked about this a lot is bringing in the good to your business, but I think it's — I really feel like it's a small thing. Up until this point, I have consciously made the decision to keep my team based in the US, and I've considered like a VA in the Philippines, or something like that. I've really struggled, because on the one hand, I'm offering an opportunity to someone here in the United States who, let's face it, if they're doing some kind of VA work, that's probably not what they're going to be doing in 10 years, but it does give them the leg up to be what they want to be eventually. So I'm a big believer in supporting people along the way to their own dreams. But then on the other hand, I'm also a business owner who is looking to minimize my expenses.

There's a lot of really great VA's in the Philippines, to be honest, and so they need jobs too. I'm kind of torn because we have this whole like Made in the USA ethically, giving people jobs here, but it's usually more expensive. Versus maybe somebody in the Philippines, they're struggling just like the gals here, and so where do you — I mean, I guess my problem really has been like doing research, because I don't have — right now I don't have the time or the resources to go to the Philippines, and is that somewhere where I would want to employ someone? Is that

somewhere that they need my help? Is that somewhere that would be a good fit for my business?

Is that just me looking to reduce my expenses, and there's not really any kind of humanitarian gain out of that?

[BREAK]

**[0:14:53.1] RP:** Hey everybody, it's Reina here, and we wanted to tell you about something really exciting that's coming up. I have Christina here with me, and we're just going to talk to you about what we've been thinking about. Hey Christina.

**[0:15:04.5] CS:** Hey guys, hey Reina.

**[0:15:07.5] RP:** You guys, we've been doing this podcast thing for a while, and we've been loving it, and you have been responding with reviews, which we love and comments in our Instagram. We just want to ask you a few questions about what's been working for you with the podcast, and how we can support you better. Christina, tell them about our focus group?

**[0:15:28.1] CS:** Yeah, what we have decided is rather than assume you need something, or send you a survey that is hard to pick up the emails and answer them and all that, we get it, we're busy too. What we've done instead is we've created a focus group. It's going to be a live focus group that we're hosting on November 29<sup>th</sup>. That's a Tuesday at 11 AM eastern. I know daylight savings time will have come and gone by that time, so it's going to be Eastern Standard Time so that we are all on the same time zone. 11 AM, November 29<sup>th</sup>. All that you have to do is head on over to [creativeempire.co/focusgroup](http://creativeempire.co/focusgroup), and on that page, you'll have all the details. You can sign up, you can join us, you can know exactly where to go, and you can also sign up for the recording in case you can't make it live and give us your feedback.

We really do want to hear from you. The show isn't for our benefit necessarily, it's for your benefit, and we want to hear what you need, what you're looking for in the future, how we can make this the best experience possible, and of course this is all free. Take advantage of it. Reina and I created this as a resource for you guys, because we didn't have a resource like this

that we felt like we could rely on as we started our businesses. Please take advantage of this, please come to our focus group if you're so inclined, and we will love you forever.

**[0:16:50.0] RP:** Also, who knows, Christina and I love to dispense a lot of information, so if you're there, we might be able to give you some mentoring too. No promises but we might be there long enough to do that.

**[0:17:00.9] CS:** Definitely, it's not just a quick one and done session. This is your time to connect with us and to really interact and have the same kind of experience that our guest do on the podcast. We would love to see you there.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

**[0:17:15.6] CS:** I guess my question is how do you research like, where the need is, and how do you make those tough business calls to say we would really love to help X, Y, Z but we can only do so much in a day and draw the line?

**[0:17:28.4] BT:** That is an excellent and very complicated question.

**[0:17:33.8] CS:** Well, I mean, whatever we can cover, we can cover, but I'm not expecting us to solve the world's problems today. Maybe they give us a glimpse, because like I said, as a business owner, I'm just kind of like, I want to help everybody but at the same time. There's some days when I'm just exhausted and I'm like, I can really put it on myself. To make things easier for me but then also as a service based business to hopefully do some good in this world, and hopefully employ some people that really need the job and they're not just kind of looking for some side income to support whatever, their main job that they still love.

**[0:18:07.8] RP:** Yeah, can I jump in real quick, Bethany? One other thing. I'm a social worker by trade, and one of the things that I struggled with in the social work field was that I want to save everyone. I want to work with the homeless population, and foster care, and people who are abused. I had empathy fatigue, and I had to leave it because I was getting burnt out from all the empathy. If you're feeling that way, or like, you feel like you can do no good because you can't



help all the people, start somewhere. My encouragement is pick something. I turn that back to you, Bethany.

**[0:18:41.7] CS:** No, Reina is a great translator for me, because sometimes I'm like, I think I'm saying this the right way, so yes. Reina's question is a much more concise version of what I'm trying to ask.

**[0:18:52.4] RP:** No, I was just distilling like, for me, that's what I was getting from it, and I just wanted to tell you what my experience has been.

**[0:18:58.3] CS:** Yeah, that's exactly it.

**[0:18:59.7] BT:** Yeah, for sure, that's something that I struggle with also, because I am a highly sensitive person. I feel everything for everyone all the time. For example, we have chickens, and I had a chicken who - we have no idea what happened, we think she got bit by a snake or something like that - and I thought this thing was going to die. Literally brought the chicken into my house, and nurse this thing back to health. My husband thought that I was absolutely insane. She's fine now, but this is the kind of thing that I do, and you know, we've had that happen also in Guatemala, because as soon as you start doing something like I am, you've got other nonprofits down there that hear about it.

We've been contacted by orphanages where — even this orphanage who takes in girls who had gotten pregnant and their families kicked them out and disowned them. They're taking in these girls, and these girls need to be able to care for their babies, and you want to talk about empathy, tear my heart out. So much that I would love to be able to do, but it's one of those things. And in that particular case, where they're basically saying, can you come in and do skills training and hire these girls, and it's like, we can't. That is not in my wheelhouse. I have learned the shoe making process, don't even ask me to do it, but we're starting to branch out into other products by the time that this launches.

We will have like some bags and things like that up on our site as well. This was stuff that they were very specifically asking, like can you give these girls training, and it was one of the hardest things to have to say no, we can't. I think you really have to know your own limitations, because

it can be really difficult to look at all of the problems in the world, all of them, and wanting to be able to do everything for everybody, but you are just one person. But I think the power behind that is that as you, as an individual, start making those decisions where- for me okay, we're going to be focusing, at least for a start, on shoemakers in Guatemala. On that one thing, we're going to focus on that one thing.

I have had friends watch me do that. Then, now they're turning around and doing something. They might be focusing on another group, but it's one of those, if people see you doing something, they're like yeah, I can totally do that too. Because this is — I have learned this business as I go. I had a marketing background, but I had no international business background. I had no product development background. I have no — I mean gosh, budgets and stuff like that, it's not like I had any experience doing any of this, but I figured it out. Because of that, I think it's really been an encouragement for other people to be like, well if Bethany did it, then I can do it too.

I think really just being able to hone in on one thing and acknowledge the fact that you cannot change the world by yourself, but understand that the impact that you can have personally can then be a domino effect into maybe some of these other areas that you're passionate about..

**[0:21:56.6] CS:** Definitely. One thing that you touched on, and it's a little off topic, but I know people out there are going to be like, "How did she do this"? How do you scale a product-based business? I know you're talking about growing to different areas now, and you know, I think product based businesses are so interesting to me because what the service based business obviously, you just kind of put up a shingle, and get some clients, and make money, and there's no overhead or very low overhead to start with. With product - based businesses, you literally cannot sell anything until you've created those products.

For you, with your shoes, and with the different clothing, and now ramping up in the bags, what does that look like practically speaking? What did that look like at the beginning of your journey? Was it like, a couple of items, or just like one item to see if it even worked, and then you built? Or can you just give us a little bit of a background as to what that looks like? And then I would love to eventually hear how you worked the business model that you have now, where we've

just kind of touched upon how you went and found the people to help you and work with you and these different communities. What did that look like when you were just first starting?

**[0:23:04.8] BT:** Yeah. This is my — I love letting people learn from my own mistake product-based. We did way too much, way too soon. When we launched, we actually- we were doing footwear, we were doing bags, we were doing scarfs, we were doing jewelry. We were working in Guatemala, we were also working in Kenya, and that was a massive mistake, huge.

Because you cannot do that many things and do it well. Especially as a new business. I always say that with the caveat of I'm glad that I did do that, because I never would have done footwear otherwise, never. Never would have done just footwear, but the thing that I learned very early on is that in the ethical fashion for your trade world is that everybody is doing jewelry, everybody's doing bags, everybody's doing scarfs, like all of these things are all over the place, and there's companies that are doing it really well. But the footwear for us took off right away, because it was a unique product in the marketplace.

Obviously, there's shoes everywhere, but specifically in this niche market, of ethical production and fair trade, which we don't market ourselves as a fair trade company, but a lot of people within who like to shop fair trade recognize that that's what we're doing. You are absolutely right about overhead cost. I sometimes wish that I had not done product-based, because it's so expensive. I drained our savings account to do this.

I was lucky enough to be — my husband had made some very good business decisions before we met, and basically was like I'm at it. I drained our savings account. Most people don't have that, and so I know a lot of people that will fundraise, do kickstarters, indie go-go campaigns, and things like that. Which is a really great option if you don't have the capital necessary, but scaling this kind of a business is extremely difficult, very difficult because you are constantly putting out money, constantly. I mean, you know I look at my profit and aw statements, probably about once a week and it's like man, I need that bar on the left to keep going higher. Let's get this profits rolling a little bit more, because the expenses are tremendous, and so we are growing. We grew 300% last year, and we have had a little bit slower growth this year than we had hoped, which had been for a lot of reasons not...

The least of which is the election years is really bad for retail. That really hit us pretty hard this year. Right now, as we're hitting Q4, we've got some really big projects in the works right now that are super top secret, so I can't talk about it, but I was actually just doing that today where it's like gosh, looking at that bank account and it's like we have — I know how much we need to order in order to be able to do these things that we're doing, and just trying to figure out how to make that work.

It is definitely difficult, but I think it comes down to you have to know the right risks to take, and sometimes you have to take risks that you're not exactly sure how they're going to play out, but man you cross your fingers and pray and just hope that it's going to pay off in the end. You do really have to be careful, I think my number one piece of advice for product is - especially if you're just starting out, you are probably not going to sell as much as you think you will.

It is always much better to order less and sell out than to order too much and then be sitting on product, because really, you start hitting a profitable level when you're basically running at a zero inventory. Which means that the second you have something come in, it's being sold and going right back out. That's really how you build a profitable business. We are right now basically just starting to hit that point where it's like, as we're ordering, things are just going right back out the door. We had launched a line of boots in August on preorder so that was August, middle of August.

It is now right before November, and we are not even caught up. That's a great place to be for us. It's like, this is awesome, not complaining at all. Kind of sucks for some of our customers who have had to wait a while, but coming from a profitability standpoint and scaling, that's really where you need to be.

**[0:27:14.7] RP:** Yeah, it sounds to me like the client or the people that are buying your products understand why they're on presale, why they're waiting for your products, and so maybe it's just a matter of training those people that like, you're not going to get it as fast as Amazon Prime. It's going to be okay, because I hear a lot of that with product-based businesses, that they're struggling with not getting product out quick enough, and that's the detriment of having something that's sustainable, having something that's custom made. That sort of thing.

**[0:27:42.9] CS:** Yeah, one quick thing. I just want to tell you guys out there that have product-based businesses, if you can build a story behind your craft like Beth has done, I think it's so valuable. I have literally been waiting for a knife that I ordered in for Joe for three years now. It's like a \$400 knife that was featured in Garden and Gun because it's like custom iron work. It's not like a knife that you would use in everyday life, it's almost like a display knife, and it's so cool looking, and handmade and hand forged.

I'm looking at your products right here on the web and the booties, the SP booties, I'm like, my gosh, these are just so high quality-looking that it's something worth waiting for. Like Reina is saying, it's just so different, but there's also that huge story behind it. Sorry Reina, I cut you off.

**[0:28:36.9] RP:** No, it's fine. I think that's spot on. Bethany, were you going to say something?

**[0:28:40.8] BT:** Yeah, I was just going to say, in our experience in the past with doing things like preorders, they normally don't go great for us, because people do want the Amazon Prime experience where they want to be able to buy it and know that they're going to have it within two days to a week. We were actually really surprised at the response to the booties.

Honestly, we put them up for a preorder because we knew August- come August, people are looking for boots, and it was like, we didn't want to wait until we actually had them in hand, because then we're afraid like people are already going to have them. They're going to be like darn, wish I had waited. Literally, we just put them up because we were like, want people to know they're coming, nobody's going to order them.

Within three hours, we were backed up six weeks. I was like well, crap. It's a good problem to have, right? Totally. I wasn't complaining, but I was like hey guys, just get really busy, here we go.

**[0:29:33.4] RP:** I have a question. One of the things that I wanted to highlight, because this is — I've had a lot of conversations with product based business folks recently that their sales are down from last year, and you said something, and I keep telling people as well, election year is hard for retail. If you're seeing your OI numbers like, not matching up to what your numbers are this year, that might be one of the reasons why. Just that, do you want to say anything to that?

**[0:29:59.2] BT:** Yeah, I mean, I think that that's definitely take heart. I mean, we had really aggressive growth plans for this year, and I think it was like March, I was like all right, we've just — we have to drop our sales goal. It sucks and I hate it, but it was a new- especially with this election, because it's been so volatile, like people are just hanging on to their cash because nobody knows what's going to happen. We will- by the time this airs, bless our hearts, we'll know exactly what — as of right this second, you know, it is that scary time, and so consumers are really holding on to their money. If you have not seen the growth that you were hoping for this year, it's not just you.

**[0:30:39.6] RP:** Yup, exactly. Actually this helps me transition into my next question, which is we haven't talked a lot about from the buying perspective. If you are a buyer of products, whether it's for your family, for holiday, if it's for your business for client gifts, or just buying things in general. What advice or suggestions, tips can you give in order to find companies that are doing good so that they're propelling into somebody else's business, somebody else's cause?

**[0:31:06.3] BT:** Yeah, that's a great question. There's a few resources out there, kind of depending on what you're looking for, you can go to like Fair Trade Federation. I'm pretty sure that they have a list of fair trade companies, we're a certified feat.

**[0:31:19.1] CS:** Didn't even know that existed. We'll put that in the show notes.

**[0:31:23.6] BT:** Yeah, I'm pretty sure that it does. I'm pretty sure that you can do research specifically for fair trade businesses.

**[0:31:29.7] RP:** You're B corp., right?

**[0:31:31.0] BT:** Yeah, that's what I was going to say. We're a certified B Corporation, which is- I always like saying that it's kind of like being fair trade certified, even though it's not at all, just so that it gives people frame of reference, but basically what it means is that we've gone through an assessment process on our entire business model, everything that we do. This assessment took like five hours to fill out, and they ask you everything from like, "Do you use solar power, and do you use low impact inks for your printing, or are you paper free? Do you recycle?"

Down to everything, we had to hand over documentation on how much our makers are getting paid in Guatemala, like based off of minimum age requirements in Guatemala, because that's something that you'll always have to think about, is that we love putting everything in terms of US dollar, but economies around the world are completely different. Having the US dollar frame point means absolutely nothing if you are in Nepal, Guatemala, Uganda, it just doesn't equate to the same thing.

B Corp also has a list on their site of all certified B corporations. A lot of really interesting businesses, a lot of services businesses actually are B Corps. You know, you can also just look up — we have on our site, if you sign up for our emails too, like if you're looking for fashion stuff in particular, we actually have an entire list of hundreds of companies that are doing it right. It's a question that we get often is, once people start getting in tuned with ethical production and manufacturing in the fashion industry, they're always like, I had a...

My graphic designer was actually in town this week, she's like, "I need underwear, where do I buy them from?" Don't worry, I can help you with this. Everything down from you know, your unmentionables, to jeans and shirts, and everything else, we have a whole list. Again, it comes back to just asking questions. If you have a brand that you particularly like, I love having people email them and ask questions about how are your workers being treated, what do your factories look like? I actually just did this with a major underwear brand actually, funny enough, and they could not give me an answer. I said, "I will be taking my money elsewhere, and will not be spending it with you."

I think that that's really powerful, because consumers are going to drive change. If we as consumers really start demanding that hey, you know we really want the things that we buy, from our bananas, to our coffee, to our clothing, to our cellphones, we want them manufactured with kindness. If we're letting companies know that hey, if you're not paying attention to your supply chain, I'm taking my money elsewhere. That speaks volumes.

If you can't find what you're looking for, send an email and tell them, you know, I really want to know what you're doing to be making sure that you're producing with kindness, and if they can't give you an answer, consider going somewhere else.

**[0:34:19.2] RP:** Yeah, if it's on your heart as a consumer to do better, to have ethical products in your gifts and anything that you buy personally too, go look for these things. It's not going to be for everybody, so I would say don't feel bad, but it really does make an impact when each person takes responsibility for the things that we're consuming and using. Thank you so much Bethany, I know this can be a really heavy topic and a really loaded topic, but I think that you're just giving us the behind the scenes stuff that you see every single day, and we need to see that. It's our responsibility to kind of confront that, and so we're really grateful that you're here.

Before we sign off, what does your empire look like? Maybe in the future, or maybe, I don't know, six months from now. Whatever the timeframe.

**[0:35:06.8] BT:** Yes ma'am, we're taking on the world. You know, as we started obviously in Guatemala and a single community, and now we are actually working with three other shoe makers, three other shoe making groups, and all of our textiles and their shoes are also hand woven, and we're working with about four different weaving cooperatives now in Guatemala for that. We really want to see that grow. People always ask if we plan on staying in Guatemala, and it's like, "Hey, if the opportunity arises, would love to be able to start expanding outside of that as well."

We would really love — we don't need to be a household name. I think that would be awesome, if everybody knew who the Collective was, but really for me it's — I want my empire to look like impacting lives, and that's impacting the lives of our makers, but also impacting the lives of consumers. Because I just think that there's so much power behind that, and you know, one day personally for me, I would love to be able to be working with new designers, and helping them figure out their supply chain, and things like that, because it's just so important. So much good can be done with that. For me personally, that's where I would love to be one day.

**[0:36:16.3] RP:** I see people emailing you, like right now. There's such a need for that, I know not that you have a ton of time, but I think that's definitely a need, and not a lot of people are talking about it, so thank you. Where can people find you online, on social media and all of those places?



**[0:36:33.8] BT:** Yeah, first off, our website is [therootcollective.com](http://therootcollective.com). You're going to want to go check it out. You know, you might want to do some holiday gifting to yourself, just saying. It's a smart decision, but we also will have some small gifty items that would be great for holidays as well, if you're looking for gifts for other people, so you can find us there. On Instagram, we're at [therootcollective.com](http://therootcollective.com), and Facebook is also [Facebook.com/therootcollective](https://www.facebook.com/therootcollective), and then personally you can find me on Instagram @bethanyltran.

**[0:37:05.6] RP:** Fantastic, thank you so much Bethany for coming on, and sharing your wisdom, and talking us through this really tough process.

**[0:37:12.5] BT:** Absolutely, Thank you for having me.

**[0:37:14.6] RP:** Absolutely. Everyone listening, go build your creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:37:19.0] ANNOUNCER:** Are you ready to build your own empire? For more information, show notes, downloads, and tips on how to do it, head to [www.creativeempire.co](http://www.creativeempire.co), where you can find out more about this week's episode and the two lovely ladies behind it all, encouraging you to build your own creative empire.

If you enjoyed this week's show, it would mean so much to Reina and Christina if you could take two minutes to go to iTunes and leave a review. It's a little thing that makes a big difference for the show.

[END]