

b schooled kaia transcript

All right. But I think Sam's covered the big part of it. So what we're what we're really focused on here is thinking through, you know, and what we've pitched is the idea that what we see in business school levels and what you know, some of the classic like business theory of it is getting rewritten and it's getting redone, you know, and there's many reasons for that.

Some of it might be technology, some of it could just be cultural reasons. Some of it could be the you know, we've been doing things a lot this way, a long way. But why should we? Let's think about how we redirect. And so what this is and and the key audience for the podcast is meant to be business professionals and those interested in building their skills and growing their skills, whether it's, you know, the college student that's just that that's graduated in fashion and wants to start their own business, whether it's somebody that, you know, 30 years into their career and is interested in the executive train and takes on an MBA, whoever they may

be, but supplements their traditional classic business learning with some of these other assets that are going on. And, you know, there's there's things that we can we can offer in terms of I know there's a couple of areas that seem really intriguing when looking at the the Black Farmers Index, but as Sam said it level. So if there are specific areas that you think you know that stand out and, you know, based on in terms of what you're doing with NYU and there in terms of, you know, what you see students knowing if there's certain things that, you know, feel like they're normally it's the you know, it's considered the way that things are done.

But you're saying that, well, either it's completely different or there's a riff on that. Those are the areas that we're really interested in exploring here as we tell the story.

Okay, that's fine. I might in the podcast, like if you throw business theories or concepts, I might say, Hey, you know, the academic in me, I'm going to take these glasses off because there's a clear academic in me. Can you please explain that? Oh, okay. All right. Let's move on. So, yeah, if you don't mind that that that will be like perhaps points of clarification, because I do want to make sure it's catered to the audience, right?

Sure. So, no, that's fine. And then just in terms of like logistically so we've got this 30 minute call will set up another 30 minute call. If it works for you potentially the week after next. We'll work on the scheduling at the end of this call. But so will recorded. The idea is though, so that we're going to record using something like either WebEx or Zoom.

So in this kind of format, you know, we're seeing each other. I think it helps us have a more healthy conversation where actually, you know, can look into each other's eyes. But then what we're actually do is we're just taking out the audio will be the only thing that gets published. It's it's a kind of true audio podcast in that respect, and it will be published.

We're working IBM works with a partner forecasted. And what they do is they make sure this podcast will show up in all popular podcast locations, whether that's, you know, from iPhone through to Spotify through to other locations where you might find podcasts.

Okay, cool. That's super cool now. So we're not taping today.

We are not taping today. This is a prep tool.

This is we're just going over the rough, rugged and raw. Okay. All right. It that's also my sister do my hair. My hair needs to be done for tomorrow. All right? Okay.

It looks great. I think it's going to help us with the prep, though. I think it will help us have it. And then just one other point of clarification, just to be clear. So, yeah, at the moment, you know, myself, Sam, at the main one's involved with with as well. There are a few other people on the edges of the business school podcast for this one.

It'd be great I think if, if you're open today I think Sam and and due to have the discussion my role here is as producer. So for each for each episode there's typically then we do this contacts where there's three of us in the room, you know for these prep calls. But when it comes to the actual podcast, there'll be a discussion between you and Sam.

Yeah. Nope. No problem. Sam, this rock and roll.

All right, well, so do you want to run through the question? I can run through them as well. Either way, if I. If you.

If you. If you have them up by. Yeah, that would be great.

So first one, hopefully softball. Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got to where you are today.

Do you want me to answer now?

Just go ahead.

Okay. Oh, so you all do off a real dry run.

Well, we've got low deltas. We've got some seed questions we can run. And then based from those we can tell, that is the problem.

I don't look, I don't feel like we need to. Yes. So on. If you know whatever you can be concise if you feel like if in terms of like you know what I have.

And I have a question how how long is but is the taping is 30 minutes. So you want the.

Taping will be 30. Well, there will be some editing you'll probably end up with anticipating they'll be around 20 minutes at the end. Okay.

Okay. Got you. All right. I got you all right. Well, yeah. So I was I was born actually in Columbus, Ohio. My mom was in a Ph.D. program. But when I was one, she followed the great

migratory patterns that African-Americans had edged out since the early 1900s. So in 1977, when I was one, my parents, they packed up and they moved to Los Angeles.

So L.A. is all that I know. However, my parents being from the South, not from Ohio, my mother from Louisiana, my father from Mississippi, when we were old enough, we were sent to the south. A lot of people, a lot of African-Americans would who moved out of the South would send their children to the south so they could know their Southern roots in their culture.

And so that was my mother saying, no. One culture. And so this is how I get into my first introduction of agriculture. My grandmother had her own garden, she had a chicken coop, and we were required to pick the strawberries and there was a fig tree and we had to get the feeds and preserve the fields. I hated it, you know, because in the city to be a farmer, to be one of the land in the soil was degraded and as well in my family, I knew that there were some incidents where family was run off of the land.

So this is how I come into to the dirt in the soil of my life. However, I wasn't even thinking about that. I currently am a professor of liberal studies at NYU. My specialty is writing journalism and as well I started teaching a food sustainability class. I used to be at entertainment and actually before I got into the academy, I was a journalist in Los Angeles and I was an entertainment reporter first.

I was a beat reporter, then I got into entertainment and then I became an entertainment editor. So my past is in journalism. And so I take those skills and this is how I'm a professor at NYU.

Nice. Let me ask you then in terms of then what would you say has been most valuable in terms from journalism that you feel that you take into, you know, that that helps you to, you know, especially both with NYU and let's get towards as we start getting towards also the black farmers.

And that's I think the thing that there are a couple of things that thread through all of my careers. One is being creatively researching whatever it is that you're doing. I tell my students and I tell people everything is not Google a book. You have to think about creative avenues in order to grab grasp information. And so that requires not only digging into archives or whatever it is, but also speaking to people.

You've got to be comfortable even in this age of technology, you have to have that skill of speaking and engaging that is so important that threads through. And I would say lastly, just honoring and tapping into your creative side as much as possible. I wrote a 450 page dissertation that was not fun at all, but I tapped a lot into my creativity in order to grab these things out of the ether or these ideas out of the ether.

And so being creative is also very important, especially if you're in business or you're doing you're in these spaces where you've got to think outside of the box and stand out.

Yeah, it's interesting because as I considered the Black Farmers Index and the story and just knowing you a little bit, I really felt like maybe you can agree or disagree, but I felt like a

monster that I've seen in you throughout our different encounters is that you are such a problem solver and you seem you even you see the problem.

And I don't even sometimes see that people sometimes don't even see the problem. They they hear about something and but it doesn't like click that. Like that means we need to come up with a solution. And I'm just trying to like, see if maybe there's a link here, if that you feel this concept of being a creative researcher and, you know, honoring that and tapping into that creative side allows you to see the world in a unique way that, you know, when sometimes when you hear about, yeah, I see and understand the problem, but like it doesn't click sometimes that we can figure out the solution to how to approach it if that makes sense.

No, that's a that's a really excellent question. I would say I am a fixer, but I also I think one of my superpowers is is that because of just the different spaces I've been in, I could connect people who might not think that they have this linkage and they connect. That's that's that's something. And I enjoy doing it.

But I would say being a black woman in the United States, you have to be a problem solver, really. You know, because sometimes when I walk in the room, people automatically think I am the problem, you know? So just just being able to innovatively think outside of the box, to be seen, to be heard in a way that is not stigmatized is something especially if I'm in the academy or I'm in corporate America or I'm in journalism, that in my younger years I was keenly aware of.

Now that I'm older, I'm about to be on the other side of 50. I am, yes. On the other side of 50. I am more comfortable in my skin, but that's because I have skin in the game. So that is something that that threads through. However, in journalism, you get tired of writing about problems all the time. There's, you know, so journalism has this fascination with covering the death of things, the drab of things.

And after a while, you want to be able to cover something that really genuinely makes you smile in journalism, even knows about this. And that's why they created this thing called solutions based journalism, which is a style of journalism, saying if you are going to report about the problem, the other side of the reporting, this issue is what is the remedy to it?

Black Farmers Index came out of me pushing myself to think about a remedy to the food insecurity that I knew was going to happen in the United States from during the pandemic, which right now eggs are off the chain. I know. You know, that's the thing. Now, you know, you had eggs that were like \$4 six months ago are now \$9.

This is just the sign of a lot of things that are are switching. So solutions based journalism is definitely linked. And just my experience as a black person and also I have to give honor to, you know, my father was in activism and my grandmother, my maternal grandmother was one of the first people to secretly join the NAACP in Louisiana and kept it.

A lot of people I didn't even know she was in the ACP until she died at 96 in 2016, because in the thirties where she was, if they found out you belong to that organization, it can mean

death. And then lastly, I also want to say, because these are legacies I think people are becoming more comfortable with talking about, but it's so interwoven in the American identity.

My grandfather, my great grandfather was the first black man in the state of Louisiana to be acquitted for killing a white man. And it was in self-defense and he was defending his farmland because this white man was trying to take his farmland. So when you are faced and put with all these obstacles which affect generations, it just didn't affect my great grandfather, because as a result of that, my family lost.

So much land. You know, I am different. And you what you have that you constantly in my head I'm constantly thinking about how you can write these wrongs.

It's short sighted politics. I know. I like my connection all of a sudden decided to dump me. So thanks, Sam, for keeping it going. But Anna, did you get into much in terms of what is? Because I think one aspect that we would touch on would be what is Black Farmers Index? And if you've touched that already, Lexmark, I don't know.

I think not yet. But I feel like just, you know, kind of off track for a moment. I feel like we can kind of regroup, grow and and rethink the some of this because I feel like there's a really beautiful concept here. If you agree that, like as we start hearing the story, your stories and whatnot, but kind of leaning into that creative work research that I'm looking for, how you said it, the journalism, the solution based solutions.

On, you know, your experiences sort of empowered your approach. I this is how I took it away. That kind of your experiences led you to do these things. And then my, my thought, if I'm getting it correctly, is that this if we, you know, get, you know, I'm rambling, but it won't be like this. I don't know.

We'll get the questioning right so that you'll have the, you know, the ease into it. And then from there, we can kind of segway over to how this innovative thinking and, you know, approach to legacies and whatnot allowed you to see a problem but also want to address a solution for the back end kind of segway into it, although I will note one other thing.

You noted that I said that I thought was really interesting. If there's any more to take away from here is you said you need to feel comfortable in your skin or you feel comfortable in your skin because you have skin in the game. And I, I really, I liked it. So I was way too like, lean into that too.

But anyway, to wrap up my rambles like the first 10 minutes or so or 15 as well, it could be sort of about that story. And then we go into now that these this I mean, just solution based journalism. You were reading the stories not just with a closed mind, but with the opportunity. See? And this led you to create Black Farmers Index.

Right? I actually was reporting so I was in I was in Florence, Italy. I have a very small but I called it with I have a small media firm with the big heart. That's what I call it called Arc

Republic. And I created it during the Trump presidency because news I'm a media studies scholar by trade. That's that's my degree.

And I saw that the news just got very, very divided. And news is main responsibility is to provide information so you can navigate the daily world however it is, you navigate it. It was not that in 2015, 16, 17, and it still is trying to come back to that if it ever will. So equal public was created out of this need.

I saw, especially for communities of color, to have information where they can navigate and negotiate the daily world and have information that they can use in order to have important discussions. So I was in Florence, Italy, but I was in Florence, Italy, not for our republic. I was there because I was teaching at NYU, Florence campus, Italy's campus, and I decided to stay in Italy as opposed to go back to the states.

Now, of course, nobody knew what would happen and I got stuck. Long story short, I got stuck because, as you know, Italy was one of the countries that was banned from coming back. And so I could only go back for an emergency like a life or death emergency. So I was in Italy. I was doing a whole bunch of nothing but drinking great wine, eating good cheese and bread, love it, and just getting fat by the moment.

And so I said, you know what, girl? You a journalist, you got this news firm. Why don't you report locally? What was happening in the the Florence that I saw during the pandemic was radically different than the Florence that I saw before the pandemic. For a lot of people, Florence, the population is about 200,000, but almost 20 million people come to Florence annually for tourism.

So it was a ghost town. It's a very provincial town. It was a ghost town. I could hear people's conversations down the street. And another thing when I was there was most of the people that stayed in the city part of Florence were people, immigrants like myself and older people who did not have family that they could go into the countryside with.

And I began to report and I heard about in the reporting because I also started just kind of tapping it into much as much Italian media as possible, that there I heard that there was rioting in Sicily, in Calabria, because the people who are the farmhands, ironically, these are the people who are picking the tomatoes in Italy, did not have the money to purchase the food in grocery stores.

So they began to to loot the grocery store so they could eat. So knowing America's history and just knowing, beginning to learn about the fraught agricultural system that we have in the U.S., I knew that food insecurity was not if it happens, it was a when it happened. And I and I got very concerned because usually these things happen to people who are farthest from their food sources.

And in the United States, unfortunately, that is the African American community. It wasn't always like that because the African American African American folk built the agricultural systems of the United States. But because of land dispossession and a lot of other things, we are

farthest from our food sources. So we live, you know, we we're living in desert oases and different things like that.

So I wanted to this is one of the journalism solutions, but the journalism kicked in. So what can I do? Well, you know, I kill aloe vera plants and cacti. I can't grow anything. So I want to stay in my lane and that is media. So I created the Black Farmers Index, which is simply an online listing or directory service where consumers can directly contact small to medium sized black farmers and growers throughout the United States and purchase whatever food they can from them.

So it cuts out the middleman. And the reason why I did that, I did that for several reasons. One, black farmers are maligned in agricultural business, and I wanted them to be able to survive the pandemic and the aftereffects of it, too. The farmers that still maintained they must have some solutions about the food systems if they do survive.

All the stuff that I've read about or in know in my personal family history, maybe they can offer the USDA some information. So I wanted to highlight them, their businesses as much as possible. So that's simply what the index is. It has grown to be more than that, but that is its core. And to date, not only are we the largest free public listing of black farmers in the world right now, definitely in the U.S., but we also have a growing database that really carves out the identities and the stories of black farmers because they've been so invisible in not only just agriculture, but American history.

And they're very instrumental in American history.

I love that. So I know we're almost dead.

And that's I think the real challenge with this is going to be there's so many different areas we could go.

Well, my thought, too, is one you know, just most of this is Darrel and I will take most of the ideas, but one little to do I would give you if there's any like strong call to action that we could lean on, especially in terms of like giving like a to do to go to the black for like there's something specific that we could end on.

I think that be great. But I think, you know, if we can if we can kind of cultivate there, I think there's sort of an ending of like lessons learned that kind of wrap around what we've said, you know, the problem solving, especially in terms of that solution based journalism, empowering people to approach a problem, the creative research and consideration.

And then I think even an opportunity to lean into activism. How can you, you know, not only solve a problem, but, you know, you're kind of solving multiple problems, right? Like, how can we ensure that we uplift marginalized voices and kind of consider how we do something that, you know, not just solving the the food the the food challenge of not being able to approach food, but going even further and helping farmers and farmers who, you know, are I don't know, maligned was the word of maligned.

Right. So yeah, yeah. That we're taking care of these these people as well.

I think maybe just picking on what Sam says, if there may maybe something around the idea of networking as well. You know, quite often when you think about business, we think about setting up a business as a subtle thing. We've got a product, you take that to market. But in terms of what you've done, in terms of creating a network and the importance of network that, you know in your case specific to a, you know, particular demographic for a very real reason.

I think that piece of it as well is something that we could really tease out.

Right. So I'll say this and I totally trust your editing in it. And another thing, maybe even after you do your first series and you put it out into the universe, maybe some people have like some follow up questions. Maybe you'll do like a you know, here's our favorite, you know, people with the most questions. And you do like just a Q&A simply from the business students that.

Wants a really good thought. And thank you for bringing that up. It is something that we considered. We thought we'd launch first and then but then we've got.

That's that's a great idea. I love that. Yeah.

Right. So, so keeping it more focused to business. I launched Black Farmers Index in March of 2020 was only 150 farmers on there. And we all know what happened in May 2020. You know, the racial unrest now began to receive a lot of calls from chefs, restaurants, corporations, individuals of how they could support black farmers, because all of these issues in different industries began to emerge.

And the food industry in agriculture was one of the main ones. Since this is how Black Farmers Index expands, especially those who are listening, who want to do more of a social enterprise or hope or like a B core, or they want to do something that kind of merges their philanthropic interests with their corporate interests. There's been a lot of how do I want to say it?

There's been a lot of challenges in the area because you have an IBM or a Xerox or in my case, I might have I was speaking to author. Was it the baking company? You have these multinational or these huge corporations wanting to diversify their food supply and they go to these farmers. But the farmers and the way they farm and how they do business does not fit the business models of the company.

And so a lot of the great intentions are lost because the company says, well, we attempted to help these respective groups and this is just not black, Latino and indigenous farmers fall into this category as well. Well, we try to do business, but, you know, we just can't seem to get it right in the beginning. Right. Is it that these corporations are not flexible enough in order to create something that provides these farmers and growers who have been out of agricultural business to grow as they do business.

And so that's something that I challenge those in business, in coming into business, if you truly want to diversify and if you truly want to do good for communities that have been

underrepresented and on the outside of the businesses that you engage in, you must hold space for them in various ways. Even at Black Farmers Index, we learned the hard way that we do have to hold space.

You know, we have an annual box called the vittles box, which is it's a food item box that highlights all these great foods that farmers make. And we would ask, okay, we're going to start with just 100 units of water. Whatever it is that you do, we're thinking a hundred of whatever they do. That's easy. Not for a lot of farmers.

That's not when you have to consider packing, packaging, packing, shipping, harvesting and processing. So these corporations must, in my opinion, identify either a person or I would suggest like a small committee or department that creates these. It's like affirmative action creates these ways in doing business that meet the needs of these underrepresented folk. And it is going to be out.

This is the thing. This is a template that can be replicated and implemented in just different areas and not just growers. So that's, that's what I'm working on right now. Like that's our number one thing is, is it how you truly and sincerely bring underrepresented people into the fold, you know, and just not give them \$50,000 and like I cleansed my soul, right?

You like, you can't do that. Like, you have got to get them into whatever this system is so they won't come back every year asking for \$50,000. You want them to stand on their own?

Yeah, I feel and I think that if that's like the key takeaway that we put into this, I think that would be a really powerful message to people.

Yeah, I agree. And I mean, we don't have to go into it into the podcast, but in general, the like, like the template or in my mind it's considered like I think I feel like it's developing a programmatic approach to how we can do it on that scale. You know, I would love to consider and help in any way if you ever you know.

We could talk about that all day. You know, I you know what quiet is, Cap. You could totally put this on here. I don't like diversity, equity and inclusion that that term, that phrase because it is it is very performative, as the young folks say, you know, in most areas. That's why I don't like it. If you really want it, then you just be it.

What happens where the whether they say the rubber meets the road, where the blockage happens often you have corporations or entities or people that have not had to exist in these problem solving spaces that I talked about earlier. When they're presented, this is what you need to do in order to really have it. It's very uncomfortable for them because they don't have to because now they have to engage in these areas where they've had complete privilege, complete entitlement.

They've had the ability to make mistakes in areas that are very racialized and they are never held accountable for it. So it creates an uncomfortability. Change is uncomfortable, growth is uncomfortable. But some people are like, Oh, I can grow in this area. But when it comes to that

racial stuff, I don't want to be projected or seen as being a racist or somebody who has participated in racism.

Let me give you a fun fact, though. Two one, racism is quite expensive bubble. All right. That's the first thing. The second thing is, is that everybody, even me, in this black skin can be a tool for racism. So be clear, we all are fighting and working through this in multiple ways. Mm hmm. Right. So if you are confronted with this idea that you've been thinking, acting, saying, speaking, doing these things that propel racism, ideologies, it is not you the person.

You the person can grow and get better. Is the system in the institutions in which you were trained and you were given the what do you call it? You were not held accountable, held accountable to not change those behaviors, actions and thinkings.