

the dots

a podcast about connecting.

Bethany Robert Transcript

Announcer: [00:00:04] Welcome to The Dots. A podcast about connecting. The Dots is a series of conversations with artists, community leaders, entrepreneurs, and change makers who talk about how they connect the dots and bring things together for their communities, companies, and themselves for a better life. And now you're host digital strategist, speaker, and entrepreneur Kathleen Buczko.

Kathleen: [00:00:30] Bethany Robert is helping alleviate homelessness in Los Angeles as events manager at the United Way of Los Angeles but she's also a soul singer with the vocal collective, a musician, writer, and painter. Bethany Welcome to the dots.

Bethany: [00:00:44] Thank you so much. I'm happy to be here.

Kathleen: [00:00:46] I'm glad you are too. I love a story of anyone who left Catholic high school in the Midwest and came to California.

Bethany: [00:00:54] [laughs].

Kathleen: [00:00:54] That's one of my personal favorites.

Bethany: [00:00:56] Awesome.

Kathleen: [00:00:56] So close to my own. But tell me about that journey and how did the writer, musician, painter, come across the country?

Bethany: [00:01:07] Well, you know being from Iowa I didn't really know what all existed out there. Thankfully, my aunt, it's funny I actually saw this little excerpt I had written in my stationery when I was home visiting this last couple of weeks ago in Iowa. But I had an aunt and uncle that lived in California. And when we were, I want to say I was about eight at the time, my parents brought me out here, my sister and I to go to Disneyland. As our little family vacation. And that was just an eye opening experience for me. We stayed with my aunt and uncle and I went home and I wrote in my little you know I guess diary you could say, that I want to live in California because my aunt and uncle live there. It starts way back when I was eight or nine. I wanted to live in California and I think you know for me I didn't know how exactly I was going to get a chance to come live here because you know I wanted to live where it was warm and where there was palm trees.

Kathleen: [00:02:12] Yeah there is not a lot of that in Waterloo Iowa.

Bethany: [00:02:16] No. No there certainly isn't. There's a lot of land.

Kathleen: [00:02:19] A lot of land.

Bethany: [00:02:20] That I appreciate now that I've lived here. But you know I was always wanting to you know be a singer. And how do I get out there? How do I get out there where the industry is? You know and you know one of the way that I one of the ways I looked at getting an opportunity

was through sports. So growing up I played pretty much every sport you could think of but I really excelled in basketball. And so I decided to take a scholarship at a junior college there in Iowa with the hopes of gaining some attention by a school out in the Los Angeles area so that I could somehow get out here and then pursue my dream at the same time. So that's kind of in a nutshell you know how I first thought of you know coming to California and then how actually it ended up happening.

Kathleen: [00:03:13] So what position did you play in on the basketball team?

Bethany: [00:03:16] Well if you can believe this, I am tall I'm about 5' 11 but I play point guard and then I play shooting guard. So thankfully, because I was kind of a late sprouter I guess you could say, in high school I was always grade school I was always trained to be a guard. And then when I grew, I sometimes grew past the posts that play you know. So it was good that I learned the ball handling skills but that allowed me to really you know be tough at my position and be taller than most, at that level.

Kathleen: [00:03:51] You had to be a heck of a defender defender.

Bethany: [00:03:54] Yes. Oh yeah definitely. I've long arms so that I always kind of threw people off.

Kathleen: [00:03:59] And there and there is this fine tradition. I'm I'm not as tall as you are but I'm 5'9 and there's a fine tradition of Catholic high schools basically saying "Hey, you're big. You're going to play basketball.

Bethany: [00:04:11] Right and you're going to be a post.

Kathleen: [00:04:14] Exactly. Exactly. And then you know you stay stuck in 5'6, right? But you've got 5'6 posts down.

Bethany: [00:04:22] Yes yes.

Kathleen: [00:04:23] But I think being on a team teaches you a lot. Right?

Bethany: [00:04:27] Oh being on a team has taught me a ton. And you know I was given the opportunity to be a team captain when I played, you know in college and and so forth. And I think it just, it allows you to learn how to not only be a leader but to be able to work with, you know so many different people. Listen to so many different people. And really encourage and motivate people. And so I think having that experience and just knowing that, you know in a big game, you know people are really looking for me to step up and be a confident leader. And I think that that's definitely helped me along the way.

Kathleen: [00:05:08] So you are an artist of various value, as well as a manager and a nonprofit. How do you blend those two roles and lives and make them balance?

Bethany: [00:05:21] That's a good question because I am working on that everyday, as I navigate the process. You know it's it is difficult and it's challenging. Why don't I just say that, because you know it's the way I always look at it as you know you're balancing your daily routine, your daily schedule with you know going home and then working on the other things that you want to do as well. But you know one thing that I found is that there's been a way for me to use a lot of my gifts and combine those. And so I've actually been able to use my gifts here United Way beyond you know managing events. Most recently, I you know the home walk event last year I mentioned to the

whole executive team as we were sitting here in our meetings and they said well who's going to sing the national anthem. And I said well I'll do it. And they looked at me like I was crazy.

Kathleen: [00:06:17] Right.

Bethany: [00:06:17] You know they were like sure, I am sure you will.

Kathleen: [00:06:21] I could do it too but...

Bethany: [00:06:23] Right. right, right.

Kathleen: [00:06:23] We've all been to a baseball game Bethany.

Bethany: [00:06:26] Yes we have. And I said well you know, I said I'm not joking if you know we were all laughing and I said I used to. And when I play basketball because I had to learn how to juggle all these things from back in the day when I started having all these interests. I used to get introduced on a basketball court and then sing the national anthem before we play the game. And so I think I just kind of got into this routine of you know, you're not limited to one you know one thing. So anyways back to the United Way thing, I said Well I would do it and they all kind of laughed and they said well why don't you just send send us a little demo of you singing it. And so I went home later that week, one of the nights and I sent it to one of our board members who was helping us with production and logistics Lisa Clarie Reale. And she goes "You're hired!" She was like "I had no idea". And so you know that gave me an opportunity. I sang in front of you know probably 12000 people at Grand Park for the opening of Home Walks's Ceremonies this last year and it just reminded me that you know you can do more than one thing. It's finding the opportunities to use your gifts and your skill sets at all times because we're not one dimensional individuals. And I think it's just a challenge you know. You have to be very, you have to manage your time very well because if you have other interests as well outside of let's just say your normal schedule you have to make sure that you make time for those things. Otherwise they don't become a priority anymore. So I set goals. I said this is something I'm going to accomplish and this is the day I'm going to do it by and it keeps me keeps me in check.

Kathleen: [00:08:06] So do you write those goals down? Do you have a big chart? How do you do that?

Bethany: [00:08:10] Yeah.

Kathleen: [00:08:10] It sounds silly but I mean I think so many of us kind of internally make promises to ourselves but you never execute.

Bethany: [00:08:18] Yes. I completely agree and that is one thing that I do and I'm always striving to be better at is saying "OK I'm going to have an art show". Let's just say for example I want to make sure I'm prepared for let's say August for a show. I'm just making something up but these are the amount of pieces I need to have done. And this is the time frame I have to work within. And it has to be done at this stage. So a lot of times I'll put myself, I'll set up a deadline. You know and I'll I'll make sure I get a show booked or I will you know solidify something that's a hard goal and then I'll work my way toward that because really then you don't have an excuse. It's like it makes you get things done.

Kathleen: [00:09:02] Right.

Bethany: [00:09:03] So yeah I have to be strategic about my time because you know it's there's not

as many hours in the day as we would like.

Kathleen: [00:09:11] Right.

Bethany: [00:09:11] That's for sure.

Kathleen: [00:09:11] Right. I like that concept of you have to be strategic about your time.

Bethany: [00:09:17] Yes.

Kathleen: [00:09:19] In meaning that you have to put you first in some cases? Right?

Bethany: [00:09:24] Yeah. I mean I definitely think that you know, I notice the difference if I am not taking the time to do the things that I love or enjoy if I'm not taking the time to paint, if I'm not taking the time to work on my craft with my voice, if I'm not taking the time to you know work out ,or play basketball, or go salsa dancing, the other things I enjoy doing. It just feels like I'm not living my life the way that I want to see it lived. You know so it's like you don't want that passion to be on the backburner at all times. So you really have to be strategic about saying - I'm going to set you know these two hours aside to paint, so that I can get them you know much closer to my goal of having three pieces done by the end of the month. You know?

Kathleen: [00:10:12] Yeah.

Bethany: [00:10:12] So it's it's a process it's a process that's for sure.

AD: [00:10:17] This podcast is brought to you by Chapelure Media. Does your Web site need an update? Is Social Media working for your business? Have you been thinking about advertising on Google? Do you need digital media help? Chapelure Media is here for you. Analytics, strategy, graphics, social. They do that. Visit Chapelure Media dot com to find out more.

Kathleen: [00:10:38] So Bethany what advice would you give someone who is really faced with you know challenges? Right. You working in an environment that's you know, the United Way L.A. has taken on this incredible initiative to eliminate homelessness.

Bethany: [00:10:57] Yup.

Kathleen: [00:10:57] And homelessness is a huge issue here in Los Angeles. It's a huge issue all across this country and globally. Places that you didn't see it before it exists now in our kind of post in great recession environment on a global level.

Bethany: [00:11:14] Yes.

Kathleen: [00:11:16] And so people face those challenges. What advice would you give them to kind of look beyond or be strategic with their time and and not limit themselves to a one dimensional life?

Bethany: [00:11:29] Now would you say that or faced with challenges that are the homeless community that face the challenges or just people in general that come out here and live in Los Angeles?

Kathleen: [00:11:39] Certainly people in general of those who come out here and live in Los Angeles. right? It's one thing to be a little kid and be just excited about Disneyland and want to live

here and you know. And it's another thing to have a non to one dimensional life that you're not just grinding every day to you know pay the rent on your studio apartment.

Bethany: [00:11:58] Yeah I think it's an excellent question and there's a few things that stand out for me that I would suggest to others that are facing challenges. You know Los Angeles in and of itself and this could be anywhere where you make a big move. This city specifically is not an easy city. I think a lot of us can relate to that. There are a lot of challenges here. There are a lot of challenges for someone who you know decided to move from you know Minneapolis to Texas. I mean there's own set of challenges.

Kathleen: [00:12:30] Sure.

Bethany: [00:12:30] People come out to Los Angeles with a dream. And you know a dream for change. A dream to you know have be under the sun have incredible weather. A dream to you know have your life change overnight. You know your dream for acting, singing, you know whatever it may be. And I think that there's a few things that I would suggest. One is - find community. Because community is extremely important to me and I know that in Iowa I had a really big community. You know everybody. You walked on the street you know your neighbors. You know it's like I still keep in touch with my grade school teachers. You know it's I go home and I see everybody at the local grocery store. You know here there's not that built in community and so I would say to anybody find a community and for me it was my church community. That is where I really you know started feeling more - OK with more like minded people. I am you know also singing in the church so I'm using my gifts to share. And you know give back and also connect with other like minded individuals who also work in the industry. And I would say you know one thing that somebody told me when I moved here I'm someone very important to me he said. I said "How do I make Los Angeles feel like home? It's such a challenging place. You know not only are is it just the traffic's bad. it's so fast paced, it's so expensive it's hard to connect." And he said you know "I never felt like Los Angeles was home to me until I started giving and not taking." And I said "OK that's a great thought. What do you mean by that?" And he said "Well when I started you know people come out to Los Angeles to take. I've got a dream. I want to take take take. I want to get this opportunity. I'm going to you know, I got to do what I gotta do. But when you really start giving is when you can start to feel like OK, I'm contributing to the society. I'm contributing to this community." And so for me when I started finding more like minded individuals and I was able to use my gifts to give back. You know whether it's in church. Whether it's singing at benefits. Whether it's you know putting on fundraising events with musicians and artists to send people to New Orleans to help with the devastation of Katrina. Whether it's you know donating my art for art auctions for benefits. You know outreach programs serving the homeless community outside of the United Way. I really started to feel like these are, this is a community of people that I want to be around that have like minded you know passions. I would say to anybody when you give back, you give in the community you share your gifts, you share your talents. That's when you really start getting. So I think it's a it's a two way street. And I think that if I could advise anybody I think that would be one of the biggest things. And the other thing is you know you have when you come out to Los Angeles, you have a dream. It's I can't I can't tell you the amount of opportunities. I just said yes to. That we're in alignment with my beliefs of course. So...

Kathleen: [00:15:59] Sure.

Bethany: [00:16:00] You know but for me it was hey can you sing at a homeless shelter where we're you know there's a winter shelter. Can you come and just show up and sing to these individuals who are here for a month and I just. "Sure I'll come!". I'll put together a group of people. We'll come sing. Hey can you you know come sing background? I've had opportunities to sing background for a number of well-known artists at a benefit concert that you know was going

towards that community. And so I think saying yes and not everything is going to be perfectly you know, big-money-off-the-bat but you know what I mean of course you know.

Kathleen: [00:16:40] You're not that Million Dollar Baby sort of an emotion right there but I do love the concept that you give to get.

Bethany: [00:16:49] Yes. Yes.

Kathleen: [00:16:51] And to get that fulfillment in in return. Because I think it is easy in Los Angeles to get isolated.

Bethany: [00:17:00] It is. And I think that when we're faced with challenges it's easy to get isolated and not leave your apartment. And I will tell you that because I've gone through it and I'm sure that other people I've gone through it where you feel like it's such a tough city, That there's times where you just don't even want to leave your apartment. You know you don't feel a sense of community. You don't feel I want to go bear the traffic or how am I going to pay my rent this month or my dreams just aren't coming to fruition the way I imagine them. And you know I think that you have to you have to really build a foundation for yourself. Especially you know in Los Angeles, you really have to know what you stand for. You know and and build the community of individuals around you that you want. You know now it's like when I sort of feel like I'm gonna isolate myself, if I'm going through a tough time I call on my my support system. You know I am. You know what I mean. It's important.

AD: [00:17:56] Do you need a web host? We love blue host. 24/7 U.S. based support. Money back guarantees. WordPress made easy. Head to our website the dots podcast dot com and click on a blue host box to get blue host as your web host. Blue host. Just the help you need.

Kathleen: [00:18:16] So what motivates you at this point Bethany?

Bethany: [00:18:19] There's a lot that motivates me. I think just life in general motivates me. Because you know I see that I would consider myself a driver. I'm a doer. And so I like to see change and growth and I'm a contributor. So, I think what motivates me is just the fact that I'm an innovator. I can come up with opportunities to connect people. To say "hey it sounds like a really neat idea to you know have put this event on" and "let's bring musicians and artists together" and "let's also have a portion of this go to a cause that's important to us." I think the motivation is just life itself and wanting to live it to the fullest and wanting to spread love and light to those around me. So you know if I'm able to continue sharing my gifts and you know continue creating art, continue to bring music that people can enjoy and love and continue to connect people you know that's what really keeps me going and keeps me excited.

Kathleen: [00:19:31] So Bethany. what's next for you?

Bethany: [00:19:33] So there's a few things on the horizon. Of course I've got a ton of events going on here at United Way that are going to be incredible. We have Home Walk coming up this November. November 18th and that's just going to be amazing. It's going to be downtown at Grand Park and I'm going to be...

Kathleen: [00:19:52] Are you singing the National Anthem?

Bethany: [00:19:55] That's yet to be determined. We are talking in talks right now with our production company. So I don't know yet if that's the direction we're going to go. But you know that's that when we're going to be steadily working on, preparing for. I am going to be launching

and this is really exciting for me because I've been out here for almost 10 years and I'm going to be launching my first E.P. in September by doing a Kickstarter campaign. So September 21st it's actually going to be going live and it's been a long time coming that I've been talking about talking about talking about and I'm finally doing. So I've got that on the horizon. It will be a 30 day campaign and then I'm in the process right now of possibly doing a couple upcoming shows. Music shows that I don't have exact dates for but I'm looking into August and September. So that's exciting. And you know the list just goes on with the art. I've been working with a couple of different designers here locally interior designers and I have my work up in their stores. One is in Silver Lake called Clad Home and the designer there is Rosabel Tranch. She's got an incredible style and she keeps my work in stock in her store there. And so it's just exciting. You know we get to work on different color palettes and switch my art in and out of the store and she does a variety of different you know designs and projects around town. So...

Kathleen: [00:21:39] Amazing.

Bethany: [00:21:39] the list goes on but right there is keeping me pretty busy.

Kathleen: [00:21:44] Oh that's that's a very busy not one dimensional life.

Bethany: [00:21:49] Yes.

Kathleen: [00:21:49] I appreciate that Bethany. Thank you so much for sharing your story. Sharing your journey. And sharing your upcoming projects with our listeners. I'm sure they'll be looking for your E.P. launch and see how we can support it.

Bethany: [00:22:03] Excellent. Thank you so much. It was great. It was a pleasure talking to everybody here today.

Kathleen: [00:22:08] Awesome. Thanks Bethany.

Bethany: [00:22:09] Thank you.

AD: [00:22:10] This podcast is brought to you by Chapelure Media. Digital media, analytics, strategy, marketing, creative products, training. They do all that. With these services they always add a serious dose of measurement. Visit Chapelure Media dot com to find out more.

Announcer: [00:22:35] The Dots is produced by Chapelure Media at the Network's Studios followed the Dots podcast on Facebook, Twitter, and on our website at the dots podcast dot com. Please subscribe and review on iTunes, Stitcher, GooglePlay, or wherever you tune in to your favorite shows.