

Kahina Giving Beauty skincare products are made in Morocco from argan nut oil. They're rich and amazing on the skin, but the story about the company and the Berber women who cultivate the oil is even better. We interviewed founder Katharine L'Heureux about her work.

What's your company? [Kahina Giving Beauty](#) skincare.

What inspired you to create it? I was searching for truly natural skincare that really worked when I discovered argan oil on a trip to Morocco. I was amazed by the effects of the oil on my own skin and was taken by the story of the women behind its production.

What did you do before this? Before starting Kahina, I was working at raising my three children. My background is in marketing and public relations.

Who benefits from your work? The work of extracting the oil is done by the Berber women of Morocco and provides them their only means of economic independence. In addition to providing a fair wage to the women, we donate a percentage of our profits to initiatives that support them and their families.

Did you have any prior personal connections to the place or the people? No. I was visiting Morocco for the first time on a family trip in 2007 when I was introduced to argan oil after losing my toiletries to the TSA.

What's challenging about working with Berber women? They feed me so much food! Every time I turn around, I'm being poured another cup of sweet mint tea or someone is insisting I eat something. I'm not used to eating that much, but it would be rude to refuse their generosity. And besides, it is so delicious.

Tell us a lost-in-translation moment. When I was developing the brand, I was spending a lot of time with the Berber women in the cooperatives. I decided to try to bring these wonderful women to life by telling their stories and collecting their signatures for our packaging. I conducted interviews with the women, but since they only speak Berber, these interviews required a three-way translation — from my French to Arabic and then to Berber — and then back again. I was getting personal with these women. Often, a question I asked would go down

the chain of translators and be met with peals of laughter and lots of chatter from all the women, but the response that came back was a simple yes or no. Literally, their answers were lost in translation!

How often do you go to Morocco? About twice a year.

What are your three favorite things in Morocco? My favorite hotel is set in the middle of the argan reserve outside of Agadir called [Atlas Kasbah](#), a sustainable ecoresort with strong Berber influences. My favorite place to be is in the medina of Fez, especially in the madrassa. It is so spiritual. My favorite thing to do is to spend time in the cooperatives with the women. It is always a celebration with lots of singing and dancing.

Describe a Kodak moment. The last time I was there, I was presented with a beautiful rug as a gift from the Berber women of a remote village in the Middle Atlas mountains. I was incredibly moved by their generous gesture.

Has your work changed the way you think about charity and helping others? The most important thing you can provide is an opportunity at economic freedom. As the old saying goes, "teach a man to fish, and he'll have food for a lifetime."

What's your advice for entrepreneurs who want their businesses to have a positive global impact? The most important thing I've learned is not to presume to know how to help. It is important to listen to those you are helping to make sure you are providing goods they truly need, and/or services they can implement when you are gone. Little did I think I would be buying goats for the women, but that is what they have indicated they really need right now.

Where do you want your company to be in five years? I would like to see my company Giving Beauty expand to help women in additional countries, whether through another line of beauty products or other beautifully crafted artisanal products made by women.

Where are you traveling next? I'll be traveling throughout Australia in two weeks to launch Kahina at the Mecca chain of beauty boutiques.