

Paul: [00:00:00](#) Ladies and gentlemen, angry Americans around the country and around the world, happy new year, happy new war. I come to you live with a fantastic, inspiring, exceptionally timely guest, the great and powerful Mazdack Rassi is here.

Mazdack: [00:00:18](#) Thank you very much.

Paul: [00:00:19](#) Welcome to the Classic Car Club.

Mazdack: [00:00:21](#) Thank you for having me. Thank you.

Paul: [00:00:23](#) Welcome to 2020.

Mazdack: [00:00:26](#) I know. I'm psyched about it.

Paul: [00:00:28](#) Are you?

Mazdack: [00:00:28](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:00:28](#) Tell us why.

Mazdack: [00:00:29](#) I'm super optimistic.

Paul: [00:00:31](#) Tell us why.

Mazdack: [00:00:33](#) Well, I read this other thing, I read the other day about you look at the last millennia, I mean, the last 100 years, sorry, and you look at it and you go, "Okay, we just entered the '20s," so what was it 100 years ago? It was the 1920s, it was the roaring '20s. It was an incredible time for achievement and progress and architecture, and it was a really monumental time. And I think, I'm thinking the same, I'm kind of attaching it to the '20s. I'm kind of excited.

Paul: [00:01:11](#) That's a good way to start. Because I don't think most people are feeling excited right now.

Mazdack: [00:01:16](#) I know. I know.

Paul: [00:01:16](#) The first couple weeks of the year, wars are potentially being escalated, planes are falling from the sky, people are under stress, but I'm so happy to sit with you for a number of different reasons, in part because I think you were the first guest on this show that has ever had the formal endorsement of Kanye, to the point where Kanye has called you a visionary. You got some interesting friends, man, that I'm excited to get into, but he

called you a visionary, and I really think that you are, and we're going to need visionaries in times like this. We've known each other a long time. Before we get into that, tell everybody what we're drinking today, because I ask everybody, what do you want to drink, what's your drink of choice? And you chose two things, is the message we got. And I figured, shit, after this week, we might need both. So what are we drinking?

Mazdack: [00:02:03](#) Well, what happened was I think that, kind of everybody knows my drink is the 1942 Don Julio. Because when I was growing up in the Midwest, we were so broke, when we were college, used to drink the worst tequila in the world and you'd have these adverse effects the next day, you have to pump your stomach. And so later in life, when you finally can afford a nice drink, you learn about the good stuff, which is 1942 Don Julio. So the minute I had my first sip, which was probably about eight years ago, I was like, "This is it. I can truly say I'm a tequila lover." And so, we're lucky enough to drink this incredible drink.

Paul: [00:02:55](#) Well, yeah. I think you got my wife hooked on that too.

Mazdack: [00:02:56](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:02:57](#) My wife's always been a tequila fan, but I think after she started working with you, she came back asking for the good stuff. And...

Mazdack: [00:03:02](#) Yeah. I get a lot of people hooked on Don Julio 1942.

Paul: [00:03:06](#) You get a lot of people hooked on a lot of things. You get people hooked on music, on makeup, on art. And we also have kind of a more traditional choice, Johnnie Walker black, right. That was in case we don't have the Julio '42, which we do have, you also said Johnny Walker black. So again, I think after the last couple of days, we might need both.

Mazdack: [00:03:23](#) Yeah, I know. Drinking is good.

Paul: [00:03:26](#) What do you think about Johnny Walker black?

Mazdack: [00:03:28](#) I think that's always been my go-to back in the day. And so when you guys first asked, what's funny is that I replied and I didn't want to be rude and ask for 1942 Don Julio. And so I asked for Johnny Walker black and then my assistant was like, "No, he only drinks 19..." So I went to her and I said, "I hope you didn't tell them." I was like, "That's an expensive bottle." So when I showed up, I saw both.

Paul: [00:03:55](#) No. No, no, no. No, no, no. Do not feel... it's a time for good reflection and good drinks. And it's interesting too because I was talking to somebody, we talk about whiskey on the show, we talk about a lot of things on the show, but before single malts became so available around the world, I feel like Johnny Walker black used to be the stuff, right? If you wanted to give somebody a really good gift 20 years ago, 30 years ago, before all the single malts were all over the world, and especially internationally, when I was in the Middle East, a bottle of Johnny Walker black was unique, right? It was kind of the shit at the time. Now we have all these multitude of options, but that used to be one of our limited best options.

Mazdack: [00:04:32](#) Yeah. And it's kind of like you start having the regular Johnny Walker and then at some point, you migrate, you kind of move up to the black, and then when you can really do it, you go to the blue and then you realize you don't need to be in the blue. The black is just as good.

Paul: [00:04:51](#) I think that's true.

Mazdack: [00:04:51](#) Because the blue is a bit too creamy.

Paul: [00:04:54](#) Hmm.

Mazdack: [00:04:54](#) It's a bit too creamy. So you kind of come back down and then you find your spot. Black is good. You don't need to move up.

Paul: [00:05:03](#) See? This is why I'm so excited to have you. You are a connoisseur of many things. Now, folks won't know this but we met, I don't know, man, over a decade ago?

Mazdack: [00:05:13](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:05:13](#) Right? So you, my wife work closely with you and your team when you guys were launching and building and growing this amazing brand and movement of milk that's become so many things. But I kind of first met you because you guys were doing these sick fashion events. You guys were launching the coolest fashion events on the planet and I was basically extra security. I come from talking about the Iraq war and my wife would be doing a fashion event and it was the ultimate escape for me. And I had never been exposed to the world of fashion, and it was fucking awesome. It was some of the best creative energy and music and art that I had ever seen. And I think for the haters in the outside, they're like, "Ah, fashion shows are this," you guys turned it upside down. So, yeah, seeing that,

witnessing that was how I became friends with you and your amazing wife, Zanna, and your whole crew. But it's been incredibly inspiring to see your growth and the dynamism and all the projects you're into.

Paul: [00:06:11](#) But I want to start, part of why I want to talk to you is because of where you come from, where you came from, and the news that's so relevant right now. I can't think of anyone that's better to talk to in some ways because you were born in Iran.

Mazdack: [00:06:24](#) Yep.

Paul: [00:06:25](#) And now you're here and you're this incredible American success story.

Mazdack: [00:06:28](#) yeah

Paul: [00:06:29](#) You are living the American dream, man. And I think with all the news happening in the world, I wanted to bring it down to a personal level. I wanted to talk about people and I wanted people to hear from a person who could kind of shape up these times and all that's going on in the world. And that's you, man. So for folks who don't know your story, can you take us back to how did the Rassi story start?

Mazdack: [00:06:50](#) Yeah, yeah. It's exactly what... it is an American story. And I think that... I was born in Iran in 1970 and my brother is a year older than me, and we were born into a really great family. My father came to America when he was younger and went to Cornell, he went to University of Texas and he kept going back to Iran and moving up and helping build, he was in education, and so he worked his way all the way up into being a chancellor at a university. He built a few universities through Iran. And so we moved around the country in different cities while he was building these universities and really bringing Western education in. And he was working for the king at the time. There was the Shah of Iran. And it was a very prosperous time in Iran. And when you went around the world even as a kid and you said, "We're from Iran," people, it was very prestigious. It was really incredible, and I remember as a kid. And we grew up also in England and we were in Switzerland a lot.

Mazdack: [00:08:07](#) So we traveled a lot and my father always wanted me and my brother to have Western education, as well as learning about where we come from, but it was really about thinking about the world. And he worked his way all the way up in the education division, almost up to becoming a minister of education. And in

1979, no, '78, there was turmoil. And '79, it all ended. I mean, there was a revolution. And the Islamic revolution happened and me, my mom and my brother were actually in England. We were in London at a place that we... our second home. And my dad was in Iran and I'll always remember the night he called and he said, "It's getting really bad here." And then the next day, he was in England, he showed up. And I'll never forget the day, I was about nine years old and my brother was 10, and he just looked at my mom and he said, "It's over. We can't go back." And my mom's like, "What do you mean it's over?" All our relatives are there, our homes, our family.

Mazdack: [00:09:19](#) And we were just, no, it's not safe. And it was like the French revolution. I mean, they burned everything to the ground. It was a major, major change. And so my mom was like, "That's not right." So she grabbed me and my brother and all the phone lines were cut and my dad basically said, "Don't go." But she was like, "What do you mean?" I mean, imagine someone tells you tonight, you're never going home.

Paul: [00:09:44](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:09:46](#) And she said, "I don't know what you're talking..." So she grabbed us, she went back to Iran and our last name, Rassi, which is actually my last name, people knew of my dad. He was pretty high up in the government and working in education. And so me and my brother and my mom landed in Tehran right after the revolution. She's just thinking she's coming home, there's something temporarily. And the minute we landed, we realized, oh my God. My mom realized, this place has completely changed. It was a major revolution. They burned so many things down. We went to our home, somebody was already living in it. So we acted like we went to the wrong address, turned around and stayed with my uncle's. And then we spent the next sort of year trying to figure how to get out.

Mazdack: [00:10:37](#) And my father at the time left England and came to America. He's very good friends with a few chancellors and university presidents that he had met over the years. And he came to Champaign, Illinois, the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. And he kind of came there, and we had no money, everything was gone. And he made his way to America to a political asylum. And we're stuck in Iran. And this is at the height of the craziness. So we're kind of camped out at my uncle's house and my mom decides that she's going to just, we had some storage with some rugs, she sold everything on the black market, sold all her jewelry, and we went straight to the

U.S. embassy to try to get out. And my father had helped and got us political asylum papers to the U.S. embassy in Iran and basically, threw cryptic messages on the phone was like, "Go to the U.S. embassy."

Mazdack: [00:11:41](#) So we go there and the line is like six months long. So we waited in line, me, my mom, my brother. We didn't go to school. We waited in line and we would move up 10 feet at a time every day. And after many, many, many months, I remember the day we got to the gates and it was just covered in black fabric, because the U.S. embassy put black fabric up because it was like this, I remember looking through it, and inside, seeing the Marines. And it was like this heaven, this little block in the middle of craziness that was our freedom, hopefully. We didn't know. So we worked our way in and I remember coming into the vestibule. And it was like Argo, the movie, literally.

Paul: [00:12:33](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, yeah.

Mazdack: [00:12:34](#) And we finally go in and this young lady had to literally and the embassy couldn't find her papers and she basically grabbed my mom. She said, "You need to go straight to the airport. If anybody opens this envelope and the seal is broken, you won't get in the United States." And we went home, we packed, we went straight to the airport and the airport in Tehran was exactly like Argo. It was mayhem. And somehow, through all the craziness, kind of used it the to our advantage to move in, and five, six hours later, we're sitting in Air France and the plane is just silent. And these new revolutionary people coming onboard, pulling people out. It was nuts. And then we finally started getting taxing, finally started getting on the runway and all of the... I remember looking at the Air France flight attendants, they had veils, they had to wear chadors and everyone was like, "Why are we still flying to this place?"

Paul: [00:13:36](#) Right, right. Right.

Mazdack: [00:13:38](#) And the plane started taking off and as soon as it was about 15 feet off the ground, the plane erupted, everyone was crying, women were ripping their veils, and then we landed, they took the whole airplane, because it was all Iranians. Literally, we were in another area, and then we got in a flight, landed in O'Hare, hours, tens of hours later. And then they took the entire Iranian group, put them in a room and then we walked into a room, and then my dad came in on the other side and then we got our new lease on life. They were like, "Welcome to America," they were like. And my mom's like, "So where are we

going?" He's like, "It's this little town called Champaign. It's really lovely." And we started with nothing. And my mom, she borrowed \$3,000 from my cousin, her cousin in Montreal who had already got out. And we started a whole new life. I was nine, my brother was 10. And it was scary. It was this new place with nothing.

Mazdack: [00:14:53](#) We moved into this little one-bedroom apartment that the university gave my dad and hired him. But it was the most incredible thing because we felt safe. My parents were safe. And it was America and I grew up in Iran, looking at the \$6 million man, Steve Austin. America was everything to any kid growing up in America. First on the moon, you have JFK. So within a month, we were on basketball team, the baseball team, the football team, and we're American. And that is what is so incredible about this country. This is why we can never lose and why I feel like it's important for me to tell that story. Today, there are half a million Iranian Americans. But what's funny is growing up, I never called... we don't call ourselves Iranian Americans. We're American. I never called myself. It's not like Italian Americans.

Paul: [00:15:54](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right, right.

Mazdack: [00:15:55](#) It is, we're Americans. Every once in a while, you'll throw the thing, Persian, which throws everybody off. We didn't get into that. But that's what it is. This country assimilates refugees and immigrants. And for me, it's never been about how many should we... I never wanted to get into the argument of how many we should let in, even though this country is completely built on immigration.

Paul: [00:16:21](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:16:22](#) We forget about. But even if one family like ours is allowed in, the fact that they can assimilate, they can become Americans so quickly is the power of this country. This is what Europe doesn't have. You have third, fourth, fifth generation people that are born in Europe, in France, in Britain that never feel French, that never feel English. And this country never had that. And it never does. My job is to make sure that never happens, right? All of us who come from different places. So that's the long version. But that's the beginnings of where we came from. And...

Paul: [00:17:08](#) Thank you. That is a beautiful and important story. And anyone listening now understands why I wanted you to sit with us now in this moment with everything else happening in the world, but

also, your story is timeless. Because you get to the States, you end up on the basketball team and the football team and live in this Ferris Bueller life outside of Chicago, right?

Mazdack: [00:17:34](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:17:34](#) And...

Mazdack: [00:17:35](#) And by the way-

Paul: [00:17:37](#) Yeah.

Mazdack: [00:17:37](#) ... when we were growing up in the Midwest, Chicago, that was the center of the universe.

Paul: [00:17:41](#) Yeah.

Mazdack: [00:17:42](#) I mean, we had John Hughes. This is '85 to... '84 to '88 when...

Paul: [00:17:48](#) You had Michael Jordan and the Bulls.

Mazdack: [00:17:50](#) We had Michael Jordan and the Bulls.

Paul: [00:17:51](#) You had the Bears.

Mazdack: [00:17:52](#) We had the '85 Bears, right? We had house music, B96, Chicago was creating this stuff. We had the best rock bands, like Smashing Pumpkins, all these guys were coming. We'd go to our friend's garages and watch these guys perform. And then you had 16 Candles, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, you had Breakfast Club. There wasn't a kid in Chicago that was thinking about New York or LA or why am I here? We were in the greatest city in the world coming up. And even though we were in Champaign, which was a big suburb of it-

Paul: [00:18:31](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:18:31](#) It was still Chicago.

Paul: [00:18:34](#) I love Chicago and I love your Chicago story. I love Chicago in the summer. I think it's such a special place. And your Chicago story is almost as amazing as your American story, which is as amazing as your New York story, right? So you grew up in Chicago, and take us through how you eventually ended up in New York.

Mazdack: [00:18:58](#) So the New York story, which is all these wonderful American story, right? It's all about America. And I went to University of Champaign, I went to community college, Parkland College, so I couldn't get into University of Illinois growing up. But it was all right. You're still on campus, kind of.

Paul: [00:19:17](#) Yeah.

Mazdack: [00:19:17](#) And then, I don't know, I came home one day, I was kind of a smart ass, and I came home and imagine, both my parents are professors, my brother is a mechanical engineer, he's an amazing, got so many degrees he can't even count. And I'm this smart ass and I'm always like, all I cared about was creative, creative, creative. So I came home one day and I looked at my parents and said, "I have great news." They're like, "You have great news? Because your grades on..." "No, but I have great news. I'm done with school and school is done with me so I drop out."

Paul: [00:19:56](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:19:57](#) My dad was so mad. I don't think he talked to me for a year. I don't know. Somehow, my mom feels bad. She lends me 500 bucks on her credit card and I just moved to New York.

Paul: [00:20:11](#) And this is where the legend of Rassi grows. I got to ask you for a second, everyone calls you Rassi.

Mazdack: [00:20:16](#) Yeah, that's my last name.

Paul: [00:20:17](#) Right. But did they call your brother Rassi too? Does it get confusing or is this like...?

Mazdack: [00:20:21](#) My dad, he was, because he was PhD, so it was always Dr. Rassi. And then, my brother kind of, especially on the football team, it's like Rassi, it was like Rassi,

Paul: [00:20:31](#) Sounds good.

Mazdack: [00:20:35](#) And so when you did call my house and you were like, "Is Rassi there?" My mom would be like, "Which one?"

Paul: [00:20:38](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mazdack: [00:20:41](#) And I think my first name, Mazdack, was really difficult in Central Illinois, so I had many variations of it. So my friends used to call me Mazda, like the car company.

Paul: [00:20:51](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:20:51](#) So when I first came to New York, I made this thing. It was like, it's Rassi. And...

Paul: [00:20:56](#) Was this your entrance into branding?

Mazdack: [00:20:59](#) Yeah. I mean...

Paul: [00:20:59](#) I mean, when you were kind of -

Mazdack: [00:20:59](#)

Paul: [00:21:00](#) ... entire examination,...

Mazdack: [00:21:01](#) Looking back now, it was this stage name, I guess. I was like, "Okay, that's it." But I came here with nothing and I came to New York and I just knew one dude, this guy, he was from Israel, and I met him on a beach in Florida and we started talking. And so I just called him. I said, "I'm landing at LaGuardia." And he picked me up in a white limo. And I came, I was like, "Oh my God, a limo." And he's like, "No, dude. Sit in the front. I'm the limo driver." He was a limo driver. He's like, "No, you don't get to sit in the back. I drive limos for a living." So I lived on [inaudible 00:21:45] couch in Avenue X in Coney Island. I was like, "Is this New York? Because it's so far." But it was the best. And he looked at me and he was Israeli and he said, "Listen, you can sleep on my couch, but you got to get a job. You got to work." And I was like, "Done."

Mazdack: [00:22:06](#) I remember I took the train, got out on Broadway and 8th, and I walked into a Gap and I filled out an application. I lied that I do windows, and I got a job doing windows at the Gap, and that was my first job in New York City.

Paul: [00:22:22](#) Meaning setting up the windows or washing the windows?

Mazdack: [00:22:24](#) Yeah. You tuck in... no, you tuck in the sleeve into the mannequin.

Paul: [00:22:27](#) Yeah.

Mazdack: [00:22:28](#) All of that. Just made it up.

Paul: [00:22:30](#) Entrance into fashion now.

Mazdack: [00:22:31](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:22:32](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:22:32](#) That was my first interest. And then...

Paul: [00:22:34](#) Let me ask, go back to Champaign, Illinois, because before we get into New York where you started riding subways, I got to ask you one of the questions we ask of every guest, Mazdack Rassi, what was your first car?

Mazdack: [00:22:46](#) It was an Audi 5000 S. I bought, it wasn't new. It was super old. I bought from my best friend, Sergio, for 2,000 bucks. I paid him cash. And I think my Alpine system was more expensive than the car. But I've always worked, even when we were kids, me and my brother, we had paper routes, we worked at the Olive Garden, we worked serving Pizza, deep dish. I mean, I've always worked because we had no money.

Paul: [00:23:16](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:23:17](#) So we had to make our own, but always felt comfortable. My parents always made us feel comfortable because if you grew up in a Persian family, it's one thing you always have is food.

Paul: [00:23:27](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:23:27](#) Lots of Persian food, rice, Tahdig. So all my friends would come over to our house, kids that were lot wealthier than us, but coming to our house to eat. And that's the one thing in Iran and also Persian families, your parents, no matter what they have or they don't have, you have this amazing family unit, and that kind of keeps you really...

Paul: [00:23:53](#) And Tahdig is like the comfort food, right?

Mazdack: [00:23:55](#) Yeah. Tahdig is like-

Paul: [00:23:55](#) I mean, it's like...

Mazdack: [00:23:57](#) ... the burnt rice at the bottom.

Paul: [00:23:58](#) Yeah, it's the good stuff.

Mazdack: [00:23:59](#) And if you're a good kid and you got good grades, you get the Tahdig, so you got to fight for it. In the household, you're fighting for the Tahdig.

Paul: [00:24:08](#) What color was the car?

Mazdack: [00:24:09](#) It was silver.

Paul: [00:24:11](#) Of course it was. So you live this life where you've got all these characters, like the dude in the limo and your friend, Sergio, and this cast of characters that are... it's a movie. I hope it will be a movie. I hope you write a book about your life, and maybe this is the first step toward that because it's this incredible journey of starting in Iran, ending up in Chicago, coming to New York and then grinding, right?

Mazdack: [00:24:36](#) [crosstalk 00:24:38], yeah.

Paul: [00:24:37](#) Hustling and grinding. You're working at the Gap. You got a couple of hundred bucks in your pocket, you're living all the way out in Coney Island and was the first business entrance of note the real estate move or...?

Mazdack: [00:24:52](#) No, I had five jobs because you had...

Paul: [00:24:56](#) You're a portfolio kind of guy, right?

Mazdack: [00:24:59](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:25:00](#) Even now, because it's this wonderful ecosystem.

Mazdack: [00:25:03](#) yeah...

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:25:04]

Paul: [00:25:03](#) But now, milk is this wonderful ecosystem of different businesses and brands that are all spectacular and all very different, right?

Mazdack: [00:25:08](#) Yeah. I mean there was this idea like, and I guess a lot of kids who make this trip to New York are like, there's no going home. You got to make it. And especially in an Iranian Persian, like you either a doctor, a lawyer, everyone's educated. The minute I dropped out, you have the loser word on your forehead. And so

you have to prove yourself. And when I got here I was so broke, I remember there was four of us, we're all like... And I remember mustard sandwiches for a week. I remember buying a loaf of bread and a bottle of mustard and eating that for a week because I had no money, I couldn't afford.

Mazdack: [00:25:50](#) And then all of a sudden your friend would get his paycheck and then we'll all have falafel, and then you'd get your paycheck and then you'd take all your friends for hummus, right? And so, but the people... Actually what's funny is the people that I started to meet through my friend Aton, was a lot of these Israeli realistic guys. So I started working showing apartments in New York. I walked the upper East side, I went through 10 pairs of shoes, and he would, Ronan would put... I would work for him and he would put an ad in the New York Times and I was showed the apartment and make 20% of the fee. And then, so I started that, within two years I had his company. It wasn't even a company, we had eight guys and we had a little office.

Mazdack: [00:26:35](#) And then I ended up renting a penthouse to this really wealthy Israeli guy named Moesha Mana, who to this day is my partner. And Moesha's moving and he was like a New York centric guy, everybody knew Moesha's moving. And he got this insane apartment. At the time it was like six grand a month. That would be like a two bedroom now, not even.

Paul: [00:26:57](#) Right.

Mazdack: [00:26:58](#) But I rented him this apartment and he looked at me one day and he goes, he's like, "I'm doing a birthday party." And I was like, Oh. And he invited me and I got to meet him. We kind of became a little bit friends. And then his partner Erez Sternlicht, who was running the company, all of his companies. And he said to me, "Hey, what are you doing?" I was like, "Well, I work as a bartender at night, I work at the gap during the day. I intern at this casting company." I mean I had so many jobs just to pay the bill and try to figure out... And he said, " We bought a building in the meatpacking." And I said, "You guys did?" He goes, "Yeah, we bought a building in the meatpacking."

Mazdack: [00:27:35](#) And I had a friend, this guy named Carl who was a photographer. I didn't know anything about it. And I was like... Oh, and I looked at him and said, oh, maybe... He goes, "Do you want to come up with an idea or something, maybe we can do there?" And that's kind of the first, that was 1995.

- Paul: [00:27:55](#) So at the time, the meatpacking district was still undeveloped, there's no Highline, there's no standard hotel, there's no West side highway-
- Mazdack: [00:28:02](#) Scariest neighborhood in New York. I mean the meatpacking was like... And they bought the building and '95 I started hanging out with those guys, talking to them. '96 January, I gave him a proposal, a little bit of a business plan on a photography studio concept that I had to go to 10 friends to figure out how it works. And I kind of bullshitted, it wasn't all there. And, that was January of '96 I gave it to two Erez, and I didn't hear from them. In April, Erez called me out of the blue and he said, "Hey, where are you?" I said, "Oh, I'm on my fifth job for the day." He goes, "Where?" I said "18th street, you know?" He's like, "I'll pick you up in 15 minutes," I said, "all right." And I remember it was raining and I went downstairs, I sat in his car, he goes, "Great, we start tomorrow."
- Mazdack: [00:28:56](#) Say start what? He goes, "You know, that studio thing you wanted to do." And that was Milk, that was the beginning of Milk. And April '96, I was 24, sorry I was 25. And we started Milk studios and it just... We opened about a year later and it just went, I mean there was no stopping us. And I was just this kid who is like, nothing is going to get in my way. And I remember it was really quick because we kind of thrust us into this industry, which was fashion and media and models and photographers. And I remember a few months later standing in all this construction and the guy's walked up to me. I was like, [inaudible 00:29:46] hey, I want you to meet someone. And they're like, "Who?" I'm like, "This is Calvin Klein, he's going to do all the shows here."
- Mazdack: [00:29:51](#) And there were like, "Like the jean?" I was like, no, this is the real dude. And we just took off, our first booking was American Vogue and it just went. And I think everyone was like, who are these kids? We were like kids, you know? And I remember the first time at a Win Tour and I met all these people and I rolled up on my skateboard to Conde Nast and we were just these kids, and we had nothing to lose. And it was our turn, the one thing I remember is I would meet all these big people in the industry and they didn't know what I'd been through, that I'd been through a revolution. There was no stopping. This is the thing about refugees and immigrants, right? There's no stopping them. This is why America thrives, because it's ours to take, right?

Mazdack: [00:30:46](#) And I remember looking at someone in the industry, a big name, and I was like 25. I said, "You're going to have to step aside, it's our turn." And they were like, "Who's this kid" And that's how we built it, and that's how Milk became what it was. And then once we became a little bit more established, that's when we decided we got to give back to the young ones. That's why we made Fashion Week, which was really a fashion program that was free of charge for young designers to show at Milk.

Paul: [00:31:14](#) This is when I met you and my wife came into the picture and started working with you guys. Because that's the inflection point where I saw, I walk into this place, it's like a beehive of cool. I don't know, I couldn't describe it to people except now as a community organizer, I realize what it was, you were organizing people.

Paul: [00:31:33](#) It was a home, it was a safe place. And it maybe kind of cuts back to that feeling that you expressed earlier about going into your home, right? I felt like when I walked into Milk, everybody was welcome. And it was random as fuck. People from all over, right? You had these fashion people and then you'd have snowboarders and then you had me and you had just a random, this beautiful collection. Kind of like a studio 54 type thing, but for the people, brought down and a lot of young people, right? And this creative energy in a place where it was celebrated, but it was also a business. I mean you guys were humming and we could see this stuff starting to develop and the Milk brand kind of became an anchor in the meatpacking district. And that building became an anchor for this expanding ecosystem throughout that part of the city. There's the story, I think, that Kanye says about Alexander Wang was sitting on your doorstep or something, right?

Mazdack: [00:32:27](#) Yeah. I mean, I remember when we put-

Paul: [00:32:31](#) And you gave him a shot, I think that's important, Rassi, right? Like you're the guy who gave other guys, like you and gals like you, a shot, right? These up and comers who were hustling.

Mazdack: [00:32:40](#) I remember going to all the big bands and saying, "Look, you don't know these guys yet. They're all young designers and they're all young creatives. But one day, everyone's going to know them. But this is our roster and it was like Alexander Wang and Prinzes Schooler, Joseph Altuzarra, [inaudible 00:32:56] It was even Virgil Ablo and all of the beginning, this was all their home. And of course Kanye was kind of the established, but he... Milk has always been about emerging and

establish coming together and this curation. And so we did that in fashion, we did in music, we did it in, creative art. We built a gallery, which we do exhibitions and shows in, and that was the moment where Milk went from a rental photography fashion studio, to a cultural center like Warhol's Factory, like PS1, and that's when everything changed.

Mazdack: [00:33:33](#) And that was at the cusp of digital. That's like when pre Instagram, pre all this stuff. We were kind of there, all of those platforms were coming to us.

Paul: [00:33:40](#) You were the insurgence in some levels, right? And at a time when Fashion Week used to be centered up in Bryant Park, right?

Mazdack: [00:33:48](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:33:48](#) And you guys were like the alternative fashion, the downtown fashion-

Mazdack: [00:33:51](#) We were downtown, and the idea-

Paul: [00:33:53](#) And a lot more young people, people of color, people who were taking bigger risks, right? For me, bouncing back as kind of a tourist among this world, that was the establish, kind of the corporate, you were the up and comers, right? You were the hustlers.

Mazdack: [00:34:09](#) We were and we knew that street wear and that vision was going to take over fashion. It was going to take over all the Tommy Hilfiger's all the Calvin Klein's. It was going to take over Louis Vuitton, it was going to take over all that. And it has today, because all their creative directors, all their collaborations are with those kids now. And so luxury became cool and relative. A lot of people be like, Oh you guys are cool. It's not cool, we were relative. We knew what music, what it all meant. Like the art, the photography, the architecture, everything came together. And it's always been that, it's a clan, it's a group and now it's just gotten bigger and bigger and bigger. And so that's what Milk Studios were with its nine divisions today in New York, we have about 150 employees in the meatpacking, just in Milk Studios in its group. In LA we have about 100 and we have a big studio there and they do the same.

Mazdack: [00:35:16](#) And then about four or five years ago, we decided we're going to build our own consumer product line, which we, kind of as a side project, we created Milk makeup. And the makeup was

like, okay, we're not going to build a makeup for professional makeup artists, we're just going to do it for our community, this amazing community we built around Milk. And so put a small team together at Milk, and then we started ideating and I remember walking into a studio and we were shooting Sephora's campaign, you know, it's a big retailer, beauty. I walked in and I was like, I went to the creative director, I'm like, "Listen, we've been working for awhile together, but what if we have an idea for a makeup line? Who do we talk to?" And they're like, "They're called merchants."

- Mazdack: [00:36:04](#) So I was like, "Oh, what does that mean?" So we flew to San Francisco, pitched him this idea for Milk makeup, and it was about our community, it was about... The whole concept was it wasn't what you put on and what kind of makeup you do, it's like what you do in it that matters. So the idea was that we're going to tell the story of everybody who loves their shit, but we're going to tell the story what they do for them, the people.
- Paul: [00:36:26](#) Right.
- Mazdack: [00:36:27](#) And we're never going to talk about how you do your makeup or whatever. So we kind of did this concept and it blew up.
- Paul: [00:36:33](#) And it has blown up, right? I mean you've had a lot of successful ventures out of the milk mothership, but this one, the visibility, revenue, impact standpoint is-
- Mazdack: [00:36:44](#) Yeah, impact as well. Big business but impact, because-
- Paul: [00:36:49](#) I was coming here today.
- Mazdack: [00:36:50](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [00:36:50](#) The babysitter was with my kid and I was like, "Oh going to interview this guy." so I say the Milk makeup. She goes, "I know Milk makeup" and she grew up in Venezuela. We were walking in here, one of the women who work in the car clubs said "I'm wearing Milk makeup right now." And this has gone global on a very-
- Mazdack: [00:37:07](#) It's gone really... I mean, it will be four years old in February.
- Paul: [00:37:10](#) Yeah.

Mazdack: [00:37:11](#) So it took off. But it's really... The idea is that we're not a beauty company, we're not a makeup company. We're community builders and we're content creators and we're creatives. And we found the concept of beauty really fucked up, because you can't just talk about the beauty without talking about the ugly. And so what we did is we decided we are going to be a platform that a million kids, boys and girls, are going to talk about the concept of beautiful, because 99.999% of people don't think they're beautiful, you know?

Mazdack: [00:37:54](#) And for 20 years at Milk, we've shot every campaign of the biggest cosmetic companies. It's usually a huge supermodel that looks so incredible that 99.99% of the world will never look like her. Or a makeup artist that does an amazing eye or lip, that not anyone back home can ever reproduce that, right? So it's the whole thing... And we called that aspirational marketing, but it's really like, look at it, you'll never be it, but buy the products, you know? So our theory was, we're not going to do that. We're never going to tell you how to do your makeup, we're not going to work with big makeup artists. What we're going to do is just talk about our community and what people feel inside. And that could be beauty, that could be one day I feel powerful and another day I feel ugly.

Mazdack: [00:38:45](#) And that's why I think it's resonated with this generation. So we are a Gen Z brand. We're the fourth fastest growing brand at Sephora and we launched in the UK, we launched in Europe last year, and now it's going global and we're working on it. It's been my full time job, for the last three years I've been working mostly on that. But there's very few companies in the world that are B2B, business to business, that switch to B2C, which is business to consumer. The world is littered with companies failing at that and we somehow were able to do it, and I think it's because we were really true to what we believe in.

Paul: [00:39:25](#) And there's a real sense of that value set in everything that you do. You also got to do with your wife, right?

Mazdack: [00:39:32](#) Yeah, which is amazing.

Paul: [00:39:33](#) Who is also amazingly talented, has her own story from coming from the UK here, and you guys have this amazing dynamic, glamorous couple and you're traveling the world, working together. You're this a super power team, man, on another level.

Mazdack: [00:39:52](#) Yeah, Xena is incredible.

- Paul: [00:39:54](#) For folks who don't know your wife, explain to them.
- Mazdack: [00:39:57](#) So, Xena Roberts Rassi, you've probably seen, she does a lot of television. She works with E! News and E! Television, does all the red carpet stuff. She's also Editor-at-Large Marie Claire. She used to be a beauty editor, so when we first kicked off beauty, I went to her, I was like "I don't know anything about this, I'm just a burley dude, talk to me about this."
- Paul: [00:40:23](#) She's also wonderful. She's so kind and brilliant and thoughtful. And when I kind of got exposed to that world of fashion, she was one of the nicest, most authentic people, and someone who would stop and look you in the eye and ask you how you're doing. We would talk about kids, we'd talk about other things.
- Mazdack: [00:40:38](#) You know, she's born in Manchester, England and she's a Northern girl, they call it, so they're amazing. And we have an amazing team because our other two founders that I brought in were also Georgie Carvel, who is our filmmaker at Milk that became a creative director of makeup, and Diana Ruth, who also is an amazing... She's the wizard, she's the one that makes all the... We have a vegan line we're cruelty-free, we're clean, we don't use any silicone and parabens and all that stuff you see other makeup. So we are this forward dynamic duo.
- Mazdack: [00:41:12](#) And then me and Xena, being husband and wife, you always hear horror stories about working with family. None here, it was one of the greatest moves and to work together, we try not to bring it home but when you look at our kids, it's like, I look at them, I'm like... We have two daughters, they're twins and five and a half years old and I'm like they're half Iranian, Persian descent, half Manchester, England, you know? Hardcore Northern, born and raised in New York city. At NYU born at 31st and 1st, these are going to be two of the toughest girls you've ever met.
- Paul: [00:41:58](#) They're coming, right? Juno and Rumi, they're five and a half now, right?
- Mazdack: [00:42:02](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [00:42:02](#) You guys were about a year ahead of Lauren and I when my son was born and we looked to you guys kind of as a bit of a parenting role model because you've kept family center, and you're in this world that sometimes can be so celebrity driven and so image based, but you guys are bringing it down with the kids and keeping it... We went to your birthday party, your girls,

which is like the most fun thing ever. But how do you... I feel like they're superheroes being cultivated in this magic place and I can't wait to see what they're going to do, but it's also, again, like a great American success story, right?

Paul: [00:42:36](#) Like where you two can come together, that you're starting a real estate company, an Iranian guy with an Israeli guy, given what's going on in the world right now, that's what we need more of is collaboration and understanding and the idea that we can meet in a central place and do something really special if we have a common goal. And that's what you've done throughout your journey. But I got to ask you, you have so much inspiration, but you're also very deeply involved. You're tracking on what's going on in the world, and I asked this of all our guests, Mazdack Rassi, what makes you angry?

Mazdack: [00:43:08](#) What makes me angry is the, hate, you know? The hate that I read about and the hate that's pecculating in this country. Just being almost invited up. And we all know and everybody knows racism and a lot of this hate has always been there. I grew up in the Midwest and grew up with central Illinois and all and it's always been there. But you always knew that every generation was going to correct it and bury it, not under the ground but kill it, you know? And I think what really makes me angry, some people say it makes me sad, it actually pisses me off, is that there is an allowance for it to kind of come back. And that is the part that I hate. And I remember being 10 years old on a playground in Illinois playing with this young kid, and we were running around. And we were one year in this country and this parent came and grabbed the kid and looked at me in the face, it was a dad, and said, go back to your country. I was crushed. I was so scared. Imagine what I just came through, a revolution and hatred and I... But I knew that was one person that didn't... Years later I forgave them and I was like, they're ignorant. And you hear more and more, and of course we're in social media so it comes up more. But that narrative, we have to crush, we have to fight. And that's what, when I read about citizens, Americans that just happened to be born in Iran, being held up at... It's going to happen to me tomorrow and that's why I wanted to, when you said, hey, come on the show, I wanted to come. I just flew in, I travel a lot.

Mazdack: [00:45:16](#) I know that's probably going to happen to me. Maybe not next week or week, if this is still going on that at JFK, they're going to pull me aside and put me in a room for eight hours, just like it's happening. It's not happening in a few people, it's happening to hundreds of Americans who love this country, who grew up

here, who played basketball, football, who's assimilated, never thought they were ever going to be pulled aside. Go, you know what? Your passport, your US American passport says you were born in Iran. That can't happen, you know? Because we are... If I got called tomorrow to serve this country, I would do it in a minute. I am American, and it's like that's going to be devastating and we need to be really... We have to fight that and it's not okay.

Paul: [00:46:07](#) I love you, man. One of the many reasons I love you, man. But I think that I was excited to have you on this show so that you could expand upon those ideas because you are such a powerful story and a powerful leader and a powerful voice. And an ambassador for this country. I mean, you're going around the world as a positive example of what this country can do and what this country's all about.

Paul: [00:46:33](#) When we were on our way in, we were talking about the events of the last couple of days. I was on CNN until one in the morning last night with Chris Como covering the bombings. And as we record this, thankfully, there were no American casualties, no Iraqi casualties, things are settled for now. But I think we all know that we're in a new normal now, and our president, we hope, can control himself. But if he can't, he can continue to instigate challenges around the world. And there's one issue in particular that I wanted to talk to you about, given your background and your focus on the arts, is talk to me, Rassi, about your reaction to hearing Trump say we would bomb Iranian cultural sites.

Mazdack: [00:47:18](#) Yeah, it just shows you also, there's no one reviewing or helping him with what he tweets, you know? This is the most asinine thing I've ever heard. And if you would've just took that part out, it would have been another tweet. But it would be like us bombing the pyramids. I mean, this is not about Iran, this is about civilization. There are over 20 UNESCO heritage sites in Iran that go back thousands of years. And it just makes no sense, I mean you could just tell this is like, unfortunately it's the president saying it so, there's a lot of weight to it. But it's so elementary in trying to evoke something. But the repercussions, on top of being illegal and America, going from being good guys to being evil people, it would be like blowing up Persepolis, which is the cradle of civilization. Would be like us going and blowing up the top of the pyramids just to prove to the Egyptians that we can. It makes no sense.

Mazdack: [00:48:32](#) And if this is the thing... If you really look at cultural sites in Iran, they're divided into two groups, right? There's really ancient stuff. Maybe in America we can't grasp fact of... I was reading this great article about... From another Iranian that says, we get up in the morning and walk across a bridge that's 3000 years old. Maybe Americans don't realize that, but it would be like someone blowing up Mount Rushmore or like-

Paul: [00:48:58](#) And the Brooklyn bridge.

Mazdack: [00:48:59](#) And the Brooklyn bridge.

Paul: [00:49:00](#) And the Statue of Liberty and the Hollywood sign and Lambeau Field and the Grand Canyon, right? It's not just about killing people, it's about erasing your culture.

Mazdack: [00:49:10](#) Erasing culture. And that's not going to go... That I think makes no sense. There's no strategy to-

Paul: [00:49:17](#) And it's not what Americans do. It's what ISIS does, it's what the Nazis do, right?

Mazdack: [00:49:22](#) 100% percent.

Paul: [00:49:23](#) We lose our moral high ground so quickly.

Mazdack: [00:49:25](#) Immediately.

Paul: [00:49:26](#) And we become the bad guys, right?

Mazdack: [00:49:28](#) And then there's the other part, which is where it's that they're religious sites, right? So one, is their cultural sites and they're ancient, they're historic and they belong to the world. They don't belong to Iran, they belong to the world. It's our civilization where we all came from, you know? And then the other side is the religious, right? They're the religious, cultural places, like you want to hit a 700 year old mosque? That's going to unite, that's not going to make us any safer. Then you have the entire Islamic world that's going to be up in arms.

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Mazdack: [00:50:03](#) .. or Islamic world that's going to be up in arms. None of this makes sense. This is all escalation and I think everything going forward needs to hopefully be about deescalation. I think the one thing with the Iranians, hopefully back home and the

people... I don't have a lot of connection there and a lot of our relatives, we have been talked to for years, but they're people too and it's like... I think it's all about trying to deescalate and there are children there, there are people there. I hope, I hope that it starts to come back down and all this rhetoric stops. But the cultural thing was just like in a way you want to just go, "Oh, this was a blunder."

Paul: [00:50:49](#) I had to talk to you about that. And I also wonder if it's people like you and this ecosystem of your friends that are artists and creators, and business people that may be our most effective strategy in combating this. They can hate Trump and have a Kanye album and some milk makeup, and consume your media. You can kind of get around some of that in a way that only culture can.

Mazdack: [00:51:21](#) There 81 million people in Iran today. It's big. 60% of the 81 million are under the age of 30. People that are young, they're not American haters, and they're not Western. Most of them they have relatives here. There's 500,000 Iranian-Americans in this country. There's 300,000 in Los Angeles. They call it Tehrangeles. And they're all vibrant Americans.

Paul: [00:51:55](#) You would be a great, if we had an ambassador to Iran. In another world, in another president, and maybe in the future.

Mazdack: [00:52:03](#) I don't know.

Paul: [00:52:03](#) No, you're exactly the kind of cultural ambassador we... I mean that because we've got to appeal to those young people. We've got to appeal to something that is personal and not political and something that's aspirational and something that's uniting. And so much of what you've done has been that ambassadorship. You're an ambassador right now for makeup. I did not expect-

Mazdack: [00:52:24](#) Neither did I.

Paul: [00:52:25](#) ... you to be this ambassador for makeup, right? But you could equally be an ambassador for American culture and for Chicago. Would you ever run for office? I've told you I want you to run for mayor.

Mazdack: [00:52:35](#) I told you I wanted you to run for mayor.

Paul: [00:52:37](#) I know. But would you ever run for office or serve if they called you? There's a really important need for cultural ambassadors.

Mazdack: [00:52:45](#) I think my best place...

Paul: [00:52:47](#) And you've met many of the candidates over the years?

Mazdack: [00:52:52](#) Yeah, I have.

Paul: [00:52:52](#) You've hosted many of them, right?

Mazdack: [00:52:53](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:52:54](#) Would you be involved?

Mazdack: [00:52:55](#) I think it's important to be involved. I did a fundraiser for Hillary Clinton a while ago when she was just a Senator. I remember she was in the milk gallery and she said to me, she goes, "You're really, really into this. You're really involve like why?" And I said, "Well, I lost one country. I don't want to lose another one." I'm one of the few people in this world that saw... You see a government and you see... People take what we have for granted and they think it can never end, and it can. And it doesn't happen in one shot. It erodes over a period of time.

Mazdack: [00:53:32](#) I think we're in that period and we have to fight to keep it going. And so I don't think my job... I don't think I am in a place to be in the forefront. I think I've always been the more effective being in the background in helping and shaping. I think that even with the businesses we've built and the communities we built, and the collaborations we've done it's never been based on politics.

Mazdack: [00:54:02](#) I heard a great thing a long time ago. I think I love policy. I hate politics. I mean, if we can help create great policy, just like we do in our businesses every day and processes, and what we stand for and our values, fine. But politics? I mean, look at Washington DC? It's basically like one million lawyers in one city. That's not a place I want to be.

Paul: [00:54:29](#) Rassi, what do you think of the candidates? Have you met a lot of them?

Mazdack: [00:54:34](#) Yeah. I mean, I'll be honest, I'm for Biden. I met him and I know the family, and I think he has the best shot. I think he's getting better and better. And this bootcamp. The most important thing as a Democrat, and I want... Obviously, I care about a lot of the... I don't like to use the word liberal. I think when you say you want women to have choice, you're not liberal. Choice means you can be pro-life or not.

Mazdack: [00:55:06](#) So I look at it as just like... I'm definitely think that... I do think that the best way for Trump to move on is for us to pick somebody else. And I think that the people need to speak and I think they will. I'm optimistic. I think that when it's going to finally come down to choice, people are going to make the right choice because we can do better than this.

Paul: [00:55:32](#) You saw Bloomberg up close a lot and I think it's important for people outside of New York to better understand the perspective. You are a business owner, right? You were in one of these economic development areas that has now exploded during... You blew up while Bloomberg was mayor, right?

Mazdack: [00:55:48](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:55:49](#) They're kind of parallel. What are your thoughts on Bloomberg as a leader and then him entering this race right now?

Mazdack: [00:55:57](#) Yeah, I was on a few committees that he had set up and got to meet him, and he's amazing. I do think that going back to where we are today, I think he got a late start. I'm not a political expert, but I think that it's... I do want to see him on stage with the rest of the group debating and that really hasn't happened yet. So it's a little bit of a sideshow for me. Even though I think the world of him, I think he's an incredible person. I think he's done amazing for New York. I think he could be very good. It just like, I think the whole thing unfortunately a little bit on the democratic side, it's a little bit unorganized and maybe-

Paul: [00:56:46](#) A little bit?

Mazdack: [00:56:46](#) Yeah, a little bit. So we're all sitting back like trying to figure out when is the star going to start aligning?

Paul: [00:56:53](#) Yeah, I've talked about it a lot on the show.

Mazdack: [00:56:55](#) We need that.

Paul: [00:56:55](#) When are they going to have their Game of Thrones moment? When are they going to all unite? And I think Bloomberg did get a late start. I ran into Mayor Nutter last night at New York One, and he's now, I think one of the leaders for the Bloomberg campaign. He used to be the Philadelphian mayor and I think a very effective mayor and an effective voice. I've been asking them. Bloomberg said his goal is to defeat Trump and he wants to be president. Right. But if you take him personally out of the mix and recognize that if the goal that most of us hope will

happen is to defeat Trump not because it's partisan, but because it's in our strategic best interest.

Paul: [00:57:35](#) Bloomberg is like bringing a guy with a million guns to the fight because beyond him, he's going to run two Superbowl ads at \$10 million a piece. If he can take shots at Trump that we can Trump for whoever is the eventual nominee, then I'm all in. I think that's something people have been forgetting about Bloomberg is he is strategic. He is incredibly calculating. He's run the numbers. He knows it's probably like 4% chance he gets the nomination, but there's probably a 95% chance that he can make an impact.

Mazdack: [00:58:04](#) A hundred percent.

Paul: [00:58:04](#) And that's what he's done throughout his career, whether it's in philanthropy or the economic development of New York city or the smoking ban or guns. So if he can throw a lot of rounds, heat rounds into this fight that weaken Trump that distract Trump. He's rolling out Judge Judy this week, which I think is brilliant because she's been very effective. And the idea of Judge Judy coming after Trump for the next year is going to hit him hard in his base, right?

Mazdack: [00:58:29](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:58:29](#) Among the people that really can be swayed. So I welcome Bloomberg. I admire Bloomberg. I don't think he's going to be the nominee, but I think people need to take a step back, especially Democrats who are just constantly eating their own. And look at the larger strategic goal and the strategic goal should be to improve America, move America forward. And we can only do that, I think if Trump's out of the way. Right now, the biggest danger is what Trump might do. He could've had the press conference today and gone off the handle, and started saying more fiery shit and set things back instead of forward.

Paul: [00:59:01](#) I'm rooting right now for the best possible Donald Trump, but I'm preparing for the worst. And I think that's what we should all prepare for in having a Bloomberg in the fight will help that. And I think having you in any capacity will help that. But I'm glad to hear you're optimistic, Rassi. And I want to ask you another question as we come toward the end of this and we've been enjoying this... You drank all the tequila.

Mazdack: [00:59:24](#) I finished.

- Paul: [00:59:25](#) I drank all the tequila too. At times like this we got... And now we're moving over to the Johnny Walker. You bring positivity and you bring energy, and you bring this sense of welcoming that I think is really important. I think it's American too. Having traveled the world myself, I feel like people underestimate how nice Americans are. Sometimes they're annoyingly nice, but they're welcoming. I think there's good reason to be optimistic and there's always reason to be happy. So Mazdack Rassi, what makes you happy?
- Mazdack: [00:59:56](#) What makes me happy is really like this concept of health, right? Health in my family, health in my kids, health in my wife, health in my country. We can have material objects all we want, but when everyone does a toast, "To health," it's the most important thing. But that also means for our country, it means for our businesses, it means for... You can take it to the stock market, you could take it to all of these things. Health should be the barometer of everything. I think we finished the year and we've bought nine different businesses and sat down with all the teams. We had a board meeting.
- Mazdack: [01:00:48](#) Even from a business point of view it was like at the end of the board meetings, we're like, "Man, everything's healthy. We're very lucky. There's a lot of volatility out there." You really want to go through all of these indicators in life like business, and family and children, and parents, and just be able to say one thing like it's healthy. It's healthy. It's not... It's devastating. You go in and you have a great support system to help it.
- Mazdack: [01:01:26](#) I think like that's really the approach people should have on this country is like really looking at it. Are we healthy? Do we feel good and safe? When you read like countries in the world, like we're reading with the quality of life, like the happiest places on Earth. It's like you may think we can have all the money in the world. They're winning. It's like they're winning when people are like living longer and they're enjoying themselves. Here we're doubling our defense spending and... To a point where it's like everyone's fighting about health.
- Mazdack: [01:02:09](#) If you just took a fraction of that money and put it in there, you resolved it. So I don't know. I just think a country is just like antibodies. The country is just like a human body. When it starts to build so much defense systems, there's a reason. There's bacteria. It's not healthy. And I think that we just have to... That's the part that I care about. I mean, it's crazy right now. So we have to be optimistic because if everyone joins the

bandwagon and starts talking this way, then we're going to go down a slippery slope, which we're kind of on.

Paul: [01:02:52](#) Yeah. I was on a TV show recently and before the show began some of the folks on air were saying, "I'm panicked. We should be panicking." I said, "No, you should not be panicking. You should be angry. You should be involved. You should be concerned, but panic is not going to help. And especially if you're on television, especially if you're in the media, you have to be clear-headed and thoughtful and focused, but you also in times like this, have to take a breath. So I've been encouraging people to breathe, but also find the things that do make you happy.

Paul: [01:03:24](#) And as a seer of the future in terms of culture, my wife from the moment she met you and met Milk was like, these guys are going to be huge. They're going to be huge. They're going to be big. And my wife has a beautiful talent for spotting that and picking that, but so do you. So take a step back. Culture, music, art. You did an amazing activation with Scott Campbell, I think at Milk we had on the show a couple months ago.

Mazdack: [01:03:47](#) Oh, great.

Paul: [01:03:48](#) Where they went into Milk. I read about this and they stuck their arm. People stuck their arm into a hole and got a tattoo from Scott Campbell. They didn't know what it was going to be until they pulled their arm out, right?

Mazdack: [01:03:57](#) Yeah. It was a social experiment. I remember sitting with Scott and he's such an amazing man and he was like, "There's a social experiment, it was called Hole Glory." And the idea was that we just had a hole in the wall and you stick your hand through it and...

Paul: [01:04:19](#) And they didn't know Scott Campbell was behind it.

Mazdack: [01:04:20](#) No, they knew Scott.

Paul: [01:04:22](#) Did know Scott, okay.

Mazdack: [01:04:22](#) But you can't talk to him. You can't say anything. For one hour your hand is through this hole and he does whatever he wants on the other side and then you pull your arm out after an hour and you live with it for the rest of your life. And his concept was so crazy. So first I was like-

- Paul: [01:04:42](#) The video is really cool. If you're listening and you haven't seen it, you can Google it, check out some of the video and go back and listen to Scott Campbell, brilliant artists. Amazing.
- Mazdack: [01:04:50](#) And trailblazer.
- Mazdack: [01:04:52](#) We did that in our gallery and then we did in LA and did in Miami. We toured it all over. But it was incredible how many... There would be like waiting lists and people were flying in from all over the world. People were coming in from Russia.
- Paul: [01:05:07](#) It's not like Drunk Johnny on the corner with a big pan doing jailhouse tattoos.
- Mazdack: [01:05:11](#) Granted, he's one of the top tattooers in the world, and he is. But I was so like, "Oh my God, these people, they're going to live... You can't pull it and go, "Nah."
- Paul: [01:05:23](#) But you see what's coming. So talk to me. Music or art, what's got you excited? For people who might not be in your world, is there anything that's got you excited that you want to share with people that you should tell them to check out?
- Mazdack: [01:05:36](#) There is this new generation coming up. They call them Gen Z, whatever. And what is really exciting about them is that they're kind of Renaissance. They don't want to be an architect, or a filmmaker, or a designer, or a musician. It's like all. Dude, this is like why I'm up to visit about where the world is going, because they're a little bit of everything. And they can they can make a song, they can make a film, they can design a building. And so this Renaissance generation is coming up and they care about sustainability, they care about cruelty-free, with the animal. It's funny you interview a lot of them. We do it at Milk a lot and everything starts with like, "I care about this, I'm going to make an impact. I'm going to change." I mean, Greta is in that group.
- Paul: [01:06:35](#) Right. Greta Thunberg, the environmentalist.
- Mazdack: [01:06:38](#) Greta Thunberg. They're all over, and they have really thick skin, and they're the post social generation. So instead of thinking they're going to shy away from it, they're realizing how they can use it, not just for their own self promotion but issues. So we're raising a generation that I'm really, really happy about, and they're giving us hope and I think parents of those kids or the ones that are now being 14, 15, coming into the workforce are going to find them like revolutionary.

Paul: [01:07:15](#) I don't want to pressure you because I remember like ASAP Rocky, all these guys, we come in through your shop. Any musicians or creatives in particular you want to shout out or tell people to check out?

Mazdack: [01:07:27](#) Yeah. There's actually this young girl, we just worked with her, her name is Leyla Blue. She's this young... I think she's like 16. 16, 17, I'm not sure. She's going to blow up. A few years ago when she was 15, I met with Billie Eilish. Billie came to see us at Milk. She just rolled in with her mom and her brother and spent some time with her. I remember walking out of the office telling the whole crew, I'm like, "That girl's going to take it over." And I think Leyla Blue is one of them. So if you haven't heard her, just go on YouTube and download her stuff, and she's the next one I think coming up. There's a bunch of them.

Mazdack: [01:08:11](#) What I love is there's a lot of young photographers and filmmakers coming up too. On Milk, on our Instagram we have about a million followers on Milk. If you go to Milk and follow it, we just released the top 10 next gen kids that we think are... And they're all over the world. They're from Tokyo. They're from all over that we think are the next ones that are going to blow up. And they're all revolutionary kids in their own way. I mean that's the best place to see them, and every year we release our like top 10 and it's cool.

Paul: [01:08:43](#) And that's the reason to be hopeful going into 2020, man. We're going to be happy and optimistic and you are reason to be happy and optimistic before we end. We have a ceremony that has reason to be hopeful and optimistic. And so I have the giving of the gifts.

Mazdack: [01:08:56](#) Yes.

Paul: [01:08:58](#) I know you've been on the road a lot, so we have three pieces of this. I'll hold your mic. For folks back home, you know this. This is starting to become a thing now, but as we go into 2020, so we have Peeps.

Mazdack: [01:09:12](#) We got Peeps.

Paul: [01:09:13](#) We started the show around Easter. We've kept this theme going. Folks, if you liked this or don't like it, let me know. Hashtag Angry Americans. But Peeps is not yet an official sponsor. Hold on. Before you get to that.

Mazdack: [01:09:22](#) Oh, I got to hold on.

Paul: [01:09:22](#) So here's the question, Rassi. Three colors of Peeps, blue, pink, and yellow. Which color do you pick and why?

Mazdack: [01:09:29](#) Pink.

Paul: [01:09:30](#) Why?

Mazdack: [01:09:32](#) Pink is just like female empowerment. I don't know.

Paul: [01:09:36](#) As the father of girls, right?

Mazdack: [01:09:38](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:09:38](#) You got two girls.

Mazdack: [01:09:40](#) You know what, we did a project where we worked on a new football team in Miami, the Miami team down there. And one of the colors I wore-

Paul: [01:09:53](#) To the XFL, or was it-

Mazdack: [01:09:55](#) For the MLS.

Paul: [01:09:56](#) Oh, for the MLS.

Mazdack: [01:09:56](#) Yeah. our creative agency.

Paul: [01:09:58](#) By the way, you're also just doing the branding for a soccer team [crosstalk 00:20:01]. This is the kind of shit that you drop along the way while we're hanging out.

Mazdack: [01:10:05](#) We were crazy about men wearing pink. We wanted like the Berlioz soccer dudes to wear pink and now it's like the hottest thing.

Paul: [01:10:14](#) I love that.

Mazdack: [01:10:14](#) And I think that's where you start breaking down all those norms and what not.

Paul: [01:10:18](#) I think that has not been picked off and I love the reason you hold this mic for me, Rassi. So that's phase one. So we're going to come to the bottle last. But next you got to note in there... But then we got a American made swag. You are the master of merchandise so we might need your help kind of taking our merge to the next level. But I'll hold your mic for you. You got

some angry Americans merch made by the guys from Oscar Mike who are in Illinois, just outside of Chicago.

- Mazdack: [01:10:45](#) Oh, they did.
- Paul: [01:10:45](#) So these guys make this in Chicago. Veteran owned business out there.
- Mazdack: [01:10:49](#) Oh, this is great.
- Paul: [01:10:49](#) So some righteous and angry Americans merch, super comfortable. You can wear them.
- Mazdack: [01:10:52](#) So I'm going to wear this next time I go to JFK in case I get pulled over.
- Paul: [01:10:56](#) Yes. You might not be.
- Mazdack: [01:10:57](#) It just say Angry American. If they hold me in the back for eight hours, they were like, "You were born in Iran." They'll be like-
- Paul: [01:11:03](#) You better call... You better bring... You sometimes travel with Shawn White, you better bring fucking Shawn White with you.
- Mazdack: [01:11:06](#) Yeah. I will bring Shawn White.
- Paul: [01:11:08](#) All right and then lastly, hold the mic for me, Rassi. We always pick an American whiskey that inspires you and inspires me, and I try to find something out. Now, this is brand new and it's from the folks at High West Whiskey out in Utah and it's called Yippee Ki-Yay.
- Mazdack: [01:11:24](#) Yeah, I love it.
- Paul: [01:11:26](#) It's a blend of whiskeys, but they do it in a Surat barrel. They do it in wine barrels, and I think it's about this kind of... Yippee Ki-Yay was an expression popular with the Cowboys in the 19th century in the West. And you've been kind of a cowboy, man. You rode out of Iran and then rode into Chicago and you've been a trailblazer, and you have this amazingly adventurous spirit. You're on a ride that's incredible for us to witness and us to watch. I've been so grateful to have you as a friend. Anybody who's never heard about Rassi before, they can find you on Instagram, check out Milk and where else you want to point them to?

Mazdack: [01:12:11](#) You can follow us and on Milk, on Instagram. Milk Makeup as well. But I'm around. I'm always in the background.

Paul: [01:12:21](#) You're a fascinating guy to watch. If you want to watch a guy living an amazing life and doing some cool shit, follow Rassi. He's definitely a person that I am honored and privileged to know. I'm honored to know your family, and to know Zanna, and to know the girls. I'm so grateful that you joined us now given what's going on in the world. I think people who are like...Maybe they weren't familiar with you. Now, that you've heard Rassi, you understand why he's such an important, iconic and inspiring American. We'd just been grateful to have you on the show and grateful for all you do for this country and all you're going to do for this country, man.

Mazdack: [01:12:51](#) Thank you.

Paul: [01:12:52](#) It's an honor to have you on the show and to be your friend, man.

Mazdack: [01:12:54](#) Absolutely. What you do and what you've created here in your podcast is... We've been talking a long time about this. I'm very proud of you.

Paul: [01:13:02](#) Yeah. I'm psyched to get it going, man. I'm following your lead. Ladies and gentlemen, the great Mazdack Rassi here from the Classic Car Club in New York. Happy new year. Cheers, man.

Mazdack: [01:13:11](#) Cheers, brother.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [01:13:12]