

Black Cooperative Development Curriculum

Detroit



Cooperativism as a political philosophy has been used by Africans in the building of U.S. agriculture since we were forcibly brought to the Americas from Africa. Realizing that our survival depended on working together and sharing resources, we pulled from the collective traditions from the African nations and civilizations we came from. For example, enslaved Black people might share a small kitchen garden to provide more variety of food than what the master would give. Those that had opportunities to earn money would pool those earnings to buy each other's freedom – when there was a “master” willing to sell their “property.”

Cooperativism is also precolonial and extends back to African antiquity, prior to the origin of the English word “cooperative” being widely used to describe the social movement based on economic democracy, regeneration, resistance to capitalism and the other intersecting systems of oppression that it depends on (white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, etc.). While ancient and powerful, cooperatives can also be significantly challenging to develop. Everything from fundraising, community buy-in or engagement, legal and financial filings, and building truly accountable and cooperative work cultures are huge hurdles from many people and communities embarking on cooperative development. Even more so, Blackness presents different dynamics that aren't readily addressed in many cooperative resource offerings.

This website aims to change that by serving as a platform for Black cooperative education, grounded in a place-based pedagogy of Detroit. As Detroit poet, jessica Care moore, says, in her poem, “We Wear the Working Day:”

There is love inside of large movements
A migration toward dreams and prosperity manufactured
By a wish, and a promise of something greater.
Detroiters stitch and sew & blend ideas into change.
Our legacy built on the the strength of our history

We, the epitome of cool

This is how we lace, and walk and breathe through adversity
How we raise our children, wrap them in passed down
Prayers...

Detroit is all things love, fire and beauty. The local cooperative movement is deeply rooted in the history of the Black Power movement, the worker unions resisting industrial exploitation and the overall self-determination that people produce daily through sheer

alchemy, grit and unapologetic ancestral avengement. These are our stories, lessons and offerings to the world we are building.

Curriculum Development Committee

B Anthony



B Anthony is a co-founder of the Detroit Community Wealth Fund (DCWF) and the Conscious Community Collective (C3).

Piper Carter



Piper Carter is an Arts and Culture Organizer and Hip Hop Activist with focus on Environmental and Climate Justice, Food Sovereignty, Black Liberation, Racial Equity, Gender Justice, Education Justice, Entertainment Justice communities and the Maker Space movement. She is the Environmental Justice Coordinator for Detroit Black Community Food Security Network Midwest Convener and founding member of the Black Caucus for Climate Justice Alliance, a Leadership Team member of National Black Food and Justice Alliance, Cultural Trainer for Detroit Action, Cohort Member of Detroit Equity Action Lab (for Racial Equity), Founding Member of the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition.

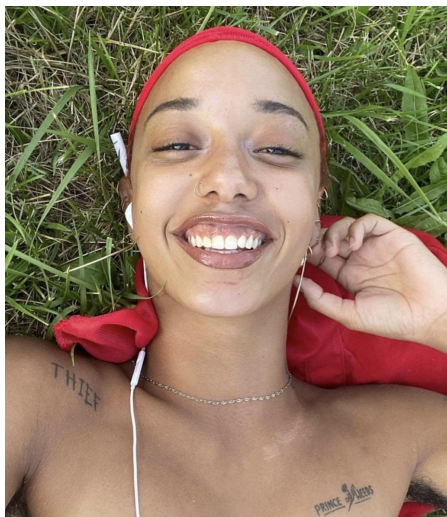
Rukiya Colvin



Rukiya (they/them) is a queer abolitionist, organizer, and activist. As an agent of change, they believe in the importance of centering the voices of those who often go unheard or misrepresented. Rukiya practices this belief through journalism and can be found in numerous publications. As a recent graduate of Wayne State's urban planning program, they actively work toward finding intersections between organizing, journalism, and urban

planning in their general work. They also lead a grassroots effort, The Solutionaries Collective, whose work is rooted in creating and sustaining ecosystems of care through fostering critical connections for interconnectivity with others who are "Solutionaries". When joy + pleasure is centered, they can be found enjoying the beauties of nature, spending time with their son and other loved ones, or simply resting.

Rosie DeSantis



Rosie DeSantis (they/them) is a poet with work featured in local, national, and international poetry publications, as well as an abolitionist community event curator, audience-integrated theater-maker, swing dance instructor & eastsider, deeply involved in the local movement for cooperative & solidarity economics as the director of community programming at Detroit Community Wealth Fund.

Detra Iverson



Love N' Labor Farm is committed to serving others through the cultivation, preparation, and sales of locally grown produce and value added products. As a member of the Detroit Food Policy Council, I am passionate about building a more equitable and self sustaining food system for the city of Detroit (Hamtramck & Highland Park) and its occupants through organizational programs and legislation. I am an advocate towards a food sovereign region. As an aspiring BIPOC farmer and small business owner, my ties to the community through urban agriculture and maternal infant health allow me to educate and spread awareness to issues that are currently impacting the successful development of our youth and financial independence of its adults.

Tepfirah Rusdan



Tepfirah Rusdan is a student of Nature and Life. She focuses her life work on solutions that are healthy for people and the planet. To this end has organized with various organizations in Detroit guided by an equity lens toward the liberation of historically oppressed peoples. She currently serves as Co-Director of Keep Growing Detroit, is a Co-Founder of the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund , Treasurer of Detroit People's Food Coop , Organizer with Black to the Land Coalition and owner of Detroit Mobile Kayak. She has also served as a board advisor to several other community projects. In addition to her work in the community, she is a proud mother to four children.

shakara tyler



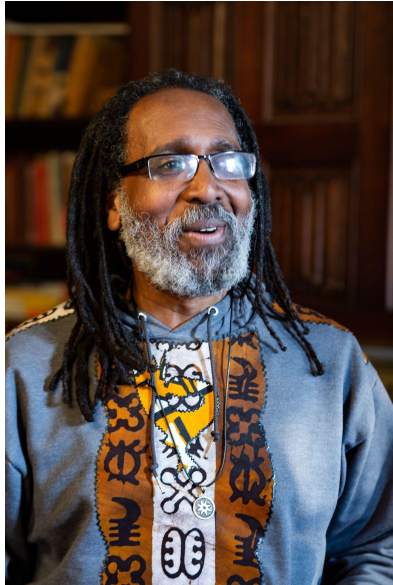
shakara tyler is a returning-generation farmer, educator and organizer who engages in Black agrarianism, agroecology, food sovereignty and environmental justice as commitments of abolition and decolonization. She obtained her PhD at Michigan State University in Community Sustainability (CSUS) and works with Black farming communities in Michigan and the Mid-Atlantic. She is currently a Lecturer at the University of Michigan in School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS). She explores participatory and decolonial research methodologies and community-centered pedagogies in the food justice, food sovereignty and environmental justice movements. She also serves as board president at the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), board member of the Detroit People's Food Co-op (DPFC) and co-founder of the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund (DBFLF) and a member of the Black Dirt Farm Collective (BDFC).

Paul Willis



Paul Willis is a lifelong resident of the state of Michigan. Born in Jackson, Michigan and raised in Detroit while attending the Detroit public school system K-12. He attended Eastern Michigan University and graduated with a bachelor of science degree in history and a minor in writing in 1981. From 1991 to 1992 he attended graduate school at the University of Michigan in the school of information. He is a licensed Realtor in the State of Michigan since 1987. He received his broker's license in 2001 and formed Willis Realty L.L.C. He specializes in handling properties for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, southern district of Michigan. He is a member of the Ann Arbor Peoples Food Co-op (1991), Detroit Peoples Food Co-op (2018), Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (2018) and Ypsilanti Peoples Food Co-op (2020). He was a co-owner of Goodwell's Natural Foods, a small natural foods grocery and deli in midtown Detroit from 2006-2013.

Malik Yakini



Malik Kenyatta Yakini is co-founder and Executive Director of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN). DBCFSN operates the seven-acre D-Town Farm and is spearheading the opening of, the Detroit Food Commons, in Detroit's North End that will house the Detroit People's Food Co-op. He serves as a board member of the co-op. Yakini, a longtime Pan-Africanist, views the work of DBCFSN as part of the larger movement for building power, self-determination, and justice for African people. He is adamantly opposed to the systems of white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy. He has an intense interest in contributing to the development of an international Black Food Sovereignty movement that embraces Black communities in the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa. He is a co-founder of the National Black Food and Justice

Alliance.

WHAT ARE COOPERATIVES?

WHY CHOOSE COOPERATIVES?

What is a Co-op?

“A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”

- The International Cooperative Alliance

In other words, a co-op is any entity made up of a group of people coming together to meet a need they all have, owned and operated by members collectively and democratically.

Co-ops have over a century of (known) history among Black & brown communities around the world as a tool for survival, community care, worker empowerment, wealth-building, keeping wealth within the hands of their community, and challenging the inherent racism & inequality of our current economic system.

There are many different types of co-ops, such as:

- Worker Co-ops (what this workbook focuses on)
 - A business collectively owned & democratically managed by its workers.
- Producer Co-ops (also known as “marketing cooperatives”)
 - An entity collectively owned & democratically managed by producers of a similar product who market their products together. They may also purchase raw materials together, or distribute their products together.
- Consumer Co-ops
 - A business or entity collectively owned & democratically managed by the consumers who use it so that the consumers have ownership, bargaining power, and influence over the goods and services provided by the co-op.
- Housing Co-ops
 - A form of homeownership in which residents share the cost of ownership of the home or building, which cannot then be sold for profit.

No matter what kind it is, ALL co-ops are:

- **Member owned**

A cooperative is jointly owned and governed by its members.

- **Member controlled**

Cooperatives are run by the democratic principle of “one member, one vote.”

- **Member benefitting**

Cooperatives are operated for the benefit of their members. In a cooperative, profit is redistributed back to the members based on an equitable system.

All co-ops also share the following principles. These are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice, written by the *International Cooperative Alliance*.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Cooperatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Cooperatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3. Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

5. Education, Training, and Information

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6. Cooperation among Cooperatives

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Source: Detroit Community Wealth Fund Cooperative Toolkit Handbook

COOPERATIVES



UJAMA



CHALLENGES



WHY?

"We can't do anything alone that's worth it. Everything worthwhile is done with other people."

- Mariame Kaba

Detroit Community Wealth Fund's Cooperative Assessment

The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to help you and your group cultivate a sense of your capacities and needs in terms of training, development, and starting up your cooperative. By answering the checklists, fill in the blanks, and short questions, you will come to a better understanding of what you know, what information you may still need to determine, and how you might start seeking out solutions.

Assessment Questions:

1. I _____ understand cooperatives, cooperative history, and the current cooperative landscape:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

Briefly, what do you feel you understand the most about cooperatives?

Briefly, what are some of the top questions you have about cooperatives? How might you go about finding the answers to these questions?

2. My cooperative's sector/membership structure is:

☐ Worker ☐ Consumer ☐ Producer ☐ Housing ☐ Hybrid ☐ Other:_____ ☐ Not Sure

A) Why does this sector/membership structure make the most sense for your co-op? B) How does it benefit the membership?

C) Is there any reason to consider a different sector/membership structure? (Or, if you're not sure which sector/membership category you fall under, how can you begin to find out?)

A)_____

B)_____

C)_____

3. I have _____ identified how my co-op will serve its membership, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the members:

☐ Completely ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Roughly ☐ Barely

Briefly, how will the co-op serve its members, and what roles will the members play in the co-op?

What remains unclear in terms of membership responsibilities/roles?

4. I feel as if the general concept of my co-op is:

☐ Completely clear ☐ Defined ☐ Getting There ☐ An Outline ☐ Uncertain

When you imagine your cooperative, what is the clearest aspect? And/or what do you feel confident about?

When you imagine your cooperative, what seems the most uncertain? And/or what questions/concerns do you have about your co-op?

5. I ____ comprehend what the primary function of my co-op will be – what products it is selling, distributing, or manufacturing; what services it is rendering; etc.: ☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

In a short pitch (three to four sentences), describe the primary function and/or purpose of your cooperative:

6. I ____ know what the mission of my cooperative is:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

Briefly describe your co-op's mission:

7. What industry will your co-op be operating in?: _____

What is a brief description of and outlook for your industry?:

8. I ____ understand who constitutes my primary market:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

How do you know who your market is? How have you identified them?

9. I have ____ identified what kind of demand exists for my products/services within my market:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

How have you identified the demand within your market? What questions remain for you in regards to this? If you haven't identified demand within your market, how might you begin? Who might you ask to figure out where to start?

10. I am ____ aware of what distribution and marketing channels I will utilize to move my co-op's products/services to my primary market:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

What methods will you utilize? Are these tested and evaluated methods? How do you know they will work?

11. I have identified and contacted potential founding members for my co-op:

☐ Yes – we're all set ☐ In communication with potential members ☐ Just starting to contact ☐ Not at all

What role will these founding members play in beginning the cooperative?:

12. My co-op has developed clear goals for retaining membership and limiting member turnover:

☐ Completely True ☐ Mostly True ☐ Somewhat True ☐ Not at all

Why is membership retention important for your co-op? What does your co-op plan to do to maintain membership?

13. I am ____ aware of how much start-up capital I will realistically need to found my co-op:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

How do you plan to go about acquiring this start-up capital? If you don't know the amount of start-up capital you'll need, how might you begin finding out?

14. I have ____ identified my cooperative's first year goals:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

What are your co-op's first year goals? Why are these important to fulfilling your co-op's mission, business operations, and dedication to serving the membership?

15. I have ____ identified my co-op's first year financial projections, including what we will need to make in order to break even, survive, or thrive:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

Most businesses do not make a surplus in their first year. Do you have a contingency plan for this possibility? Do you have an idea in regards to how you will distribute funds in the case that you do make a surplus in the first year?:

16. My co-op group has a strong conflict resolution process, and we understand the importance conflict resolution plays in maintaining a healthy, successful cooperative – and a happy membership:

☐ Completely True ☐ Mostly True ☐ Somewhat True ☐ Not at all

Why is an established conflict resolution process an important part of maintaining your cooperative? What does your co-op group need to do to create such a process?

17. I have _____ considered the advantages and disadvantages the co-op model presents in terms of organizational structure, marketing, community outreach, membership benefits, and dealing with financial issues:

☐ Fully ☐ Mostly ☐ Generally ☐ Somewhat ☐ Barely

What are some of these advantages and disadvantages?

Advantages: _____

Disadvantages: _____

18. I am aware of practitioners of my cooperative sector who I could meet with to discuss establishing my cooperative and other various questions I have: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

Who do you know in your cooperative sector that you could potentially meet with? What would you want to discuss with them? If you don't know of anyone or any cooperatives, who might you speak with to help you determine individuals or groups that you could get in touch with?

19. My cooperative will be _____ dedicated to fostering relationships with other co-ops and/or building the cooperative economy:

☐ Completely ☐ In large part ☐ Somewhat ☐ Minimally ☐ Not at all ☐ I do not understand what "the cooperative economy" means.

Why or why not is it important for your co-op to work with other co-ops and/or strive to build the cooperative economy? Or, if you don't understand the term "the cooperative economy," how might you begin investigating its meaning?

20. Going forward, I feel:

☐ Completely Confident ☐ Pretty Good ☐ Okay ☐ Could be better ☐ Nervous/uncertain

Why do you feel this way? What challenges might you have to face and what advantages do you have going for your co-op?

Checklist:

Please use your best judgment to indicate your level of knowledge about the following subjects and issues. Circle one (1) to indicate "I know very little" up to four (4) to indicate "I know quite a bit."

1. The seven cooperative principles and cooperative legal structures

1 2 3 4

2. History and examples of coops, either domestic or in other countries

1 2 3 4

3. How to develop a "work plan" to get the planning process underway

1 2 3 4

4. How to create a database of interested stakeholders

1 2 3 4

5. How to facilitate meetings

1 2 3 4

6. How to ensure accountability between meetings

1 2 3 4

7. How to ensure transparency in record keeping

1 2 3 4

8. Democratic decision-making methods and processes

1 2 3 4

9. Where to obtain funds for planning

1 2 3 4

10. How to determine a business idea's feasibility

1 2 3 4

11. How to construct a business plan

1 2 3 4

12. How to incorporate our cooperative

1 2 3 4

13. How to write bylaws, and what goes into them

1 2 3 4

14. What financial documents are necessary for start up

1 2 3 4

15. What financial software and reports are necessary for operation

1 2 3 4

16. Where to obtain funding for operations

1 2 3 4

17. How income will be allocated

1 2 3 4

18. Marketing and communications: how to best get the word out about our co-op

1 2 3 4

19. How to engage members in the life of the co-op

1 2 3 4

20. Long-term growth and planning of the co-op

1 2 3 4

Ten Steps to Starting Black Co-ops

① Building trust among people involved

② Naming shared values

③ Crafting mission and vision statements

④ Developing governance and management structures

⑤ Internal operating agreements and policy settings

⑥ Developing internal operating procedures

- Accountability structures
- Work culture policies
- Meeting schedules and facilitation

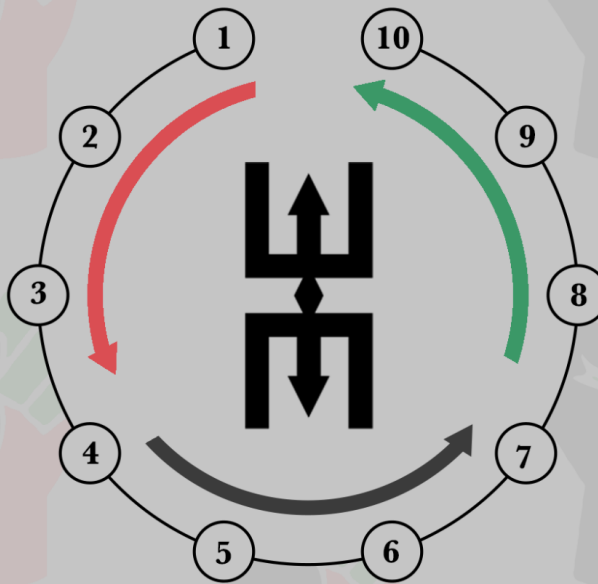
⑦ Ownership structures and incorporation

⑧ Business modelling

⑨ Marketing and branding

⑩ Raising financial capital

- Agregating community wealth
- Philanthropic grants
- Corporate donations



BLACK AGRARIAN COOPERATIVES AND GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS

"The Negro question in the U.S. is agrarian in origin."

- **Harry Haywood**

"Instead of letting the conquerors tell the story, let the people who have been doing these collective survival strategies tell the story."

- **Jessica Gordon Nembhard**

Syllabus Values, Goals, Process and Outcomes

This syllabus explores Black Agrarian Cooperatives and the connections to grassroots movements from historical and contemporary lenses. The goal of this course is to develop an analysis of Blackness as praxis, food, farm, land and environmental cooperatives as anti-capitalist strategies and practical implementations of justice. The course will examine philosophies of Blackness, historical and current case studies of Black cooperativism and how they operate in grassroots movement settings. Students will also develop an understanding of (anti-)blackness from axiological, cosmological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives. This syllabus facilitates an understanding of the historical and contemporary factors that shape the emergence of Black agrarian cooperatives as acts of sociopolitical and socioeconomic resistance, community self-determination and empowerment.

Some questions explored include:

- What is (anti-)blackness in text, media, and real life?
- What is Black Agrarianism?
- What are (Black Agrarian) cooperatives?
- How do cooperatives operate from theories to practices?
- How can academic spaces become cooperatives?
- How do cooperatives operate in grassroots movements?
- What can we all do to support Black agrarian cooperatives in grassroots movements?

Primary Objectives:

- Develop a deeper understanding of (anti-)blackness from axiological, cosmological, epistemological, and methodological lenses
- Develop an understanding of the historical and contemporary factors that shape the emergence of Black agrarian cooperatives as acts of sociopolitical and socioeconomic resistance

- Gain insight into food, farm, land and environmental cooperatives as anti-capitalist strategies and practical implementations of justice

Course Goals:

- Analyze grassroots case studies, policy landscapes, and community discourses connected to Black agrarian cooperative formations from an Afro-diasporic lens
- Identify meaningful contributions to the movement building centered on anti-Blackness and affirmative Black agrarian cooperative formations
- Practice skill sets needed to contribute to grassroots movement building (deep listening, sharing power, etc.)

Thematic Guide

White Supremacy Culture and Anti-Blackness

What is white supremacy culture?

Readings:

- [WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE](#). Website by Tema Okun.
- Smith, A. (2015). Heteropatriarchy and the three pillars of white supremacy: Rethinking women of color organizing. *Transformations: Feminist pathways to global change*, 264, 66-73.
- Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard law review*, 1707-1791.

What is anti-blackness?

Readings:

- Walcott, R. (2014). The problem of the human: Black ontologies and 'the coloniality of our being'. In S. Broeck & C. Junker (Eds.), *Postcoloniality—Decoloniality—Black Critique: Joints and Fissures* (pp. 93–108). New York: Campus Verlag.
- Sexton, J. (2015). Unbearable blackness. In *Black men, Black feminism* (pp. 75-105). Palgrave Pivot, Cham.
- Sexton, J. (2017). On black negativity, or the affirmation of nothing. Interview with D. Colucciello Barber. *Society & Space* [open journal]. Retrieved from <http://societyandspace.org/2017/09/18/on-black-negativity-or-the-affirmation-of-nothing/>

Additional Suggestions:

- Sharpe, C. (2016). *In the wake: On blackness and being*. Durham: Duke University Press. Entire book available for download at <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1215/9780822373452>

- Sexton, J. (2011). The social life of social death: On afro-pessimism and black optimism. *InTensions*, 5, 1–47.

Blackness and Capitalism

What has been the relationship between Black people (Blackness overall) and capitalism?

Readings:

- Fanon, F. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1961. *Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press*. - Chapter 1 “On Violence”
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks*. Grove press. - Chapter 4 “The So-called Dependency Complex of the Colonized”
- Robinson, C. J. (2020). *Black Marxism, revised and updated third edition: The making of the black radical tradition*. UNC press Books.
 - Chapter 1 - Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development.
 - Chapter 5 - The Atlantic Slave Trade and African Labor
- Marable, M. (1983). *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America. Cambridge, MA*.
 - *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: A Critical Reassessment AND Introduction to the First Edition: Inequality and the Burden of Capitalist Democracy: A Point of View on Black History*
 - Chapter 1 - The Crisis of the Black Working Class
 - Chapter 2 - The Black Poor: Highest Stage of Underdevelopment
 - Chapter 3 - Groundings with My Sisters: Patriarchy and the Exploitation of Black Women
 - Chapter 5 - Black Capitalism: Entrepreneurs, Consumers, and the Historical Evolution of the Black Market
- Hosbey, J., & Roane, J. T. (2021). A totally different form of living: On the legacies of displacement and marronage as Black ecologies. *Southern Cultures*, 27(1), 68-73.

Additional Suggestions:

- Marable, M. (1983). *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America. Cambridge, MA*.
 - Chapter 9 - The Meaning of Racist Violence in Late Stage Capitalism
- Eudell, D. L. (2016). From Mode of Production to Mode of Auto-Institution: Sylvia Wynter's Black Metamorphosis of the Labor Question. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 20(1), 47-61.
- [What A Time to Be Alive](#)
- [There are two kinds of antiracism. Only one world, and it has nothing to do with 'diversity training' by Arun Kundnani](#)

What are Black people doing to break free from capitalism?

Readings:

- Whitfield, E. (2018). What must we do to be free? On the building of Liberated Zones. *Prabuddha: Journal of Social Equality*, 2(1), 45-58.
- Eudell, D. L. (2015). Come on Kid, Let's Go Get the Thing: The Sociogenic Principle and the *Being* of Being Black/Human. In Wynter, S., & McKittrick, K. Sylvia Wynter: On being human as praxis.
- [Millennials are Killing Capitalism Part 1](#)
- [Millennials are Killing Capitalism Part 2](#)

Additional Suggestions:

- Goffe, R. (2022). Reproducing the Plot: Making Life in the Shadow of Premature Death. *Antipode*.
- Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). The undercommons: Fugitive planning and black study. Chapter 1 - Politics Surrounded

Blackness as Resistance

How does Blackness operate as resistance?

Readings:

- Fanon, F. (2004). The Wretched of the Earth. 1961. *Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press.* - Chapter 4 "On National Culture"
- Reese, A. (2021). "A (Food) Future in Delight." In Black Food, Terry, B. 4 Color Books, Ten Speed Press. New York.
- [Pro-Black is Pro-Everybody: A Conversation with Cyndi Suarez and Isabelle Moses](#)

Additional Suggestions:

- Lux, W. R. (1972). Black power in the Caribbean. *Journal of Black Studies*, 3(2), 207-226.
- Bolling, G. (2016). Commitment, love, and responsibility are key. In *Black Participatory Research* (pp. 87-103). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Gaymon-Jones, L. (2021). "To Act Beyond Circumstance." In Black Food, Terry, B. 4 Color Books, Ten Speed Press. New York.

What is Black Diasporic resistance?

Readings

- Gallego, M. (2020). 'Cultures of healing': spirituality, interdependence and resistance in the African diaspora. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 13(1), 68-79.
- Butler, K. D. (2001). Defining diaspora, refining a discourse. *Diaspora: a journal of transnational studies*, 10(2), 189-219.
- Makalani, M. (2009). Introduction: Diaspora and the localities of race. *Social text*, 27(1), 1-9.

- Patterson, T. R., & Kelley, R. D. (2000). Unfinished migrations: reflections on the African diaspora and the making of the modern world. *African Studies Review*, 43(1), 11-45.
- Zeleza, P. T. (2010). African diasporas: toward a global history. *African studies review*, 53(1), 1-19.
- Okpewho, I., Davies, C. B., & Mazrui, A. A. (Eds.). *The African diaspora: African origins and new world identities*. Indiana University Press.
 - Introduction - Okpewho (2001)
 - An African Diaspora: An Ontological Project - Echeruo (2001)

Additional Suggestions:

- Rahier, J. (2001). Blackness as a Process of Creolization: The Afro-Esmeraldian Decimas (Ecuador). In Okpewho, I., Davies, C. B., & Mazrui, A. A. (Eds.). *The African diaspora: African origins and new world identities*. Indiana University Press.
- Elliot Fox, R. (2001). Diasporacentricism and Black Aural Text. In Okpewho, I., Davies, C. B., & Mazrui, A. A. (Eds.). *The African diaspora: African origins and new world identities*. Indiana University Press.
- Halberstam, J. (2013). The wild beyond: With and for the undercommons. *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and Black study*, 2-13.

Black Marxism, Socialism, and Communism

What are Black Marxism, Black Socialism and Black Communism?

Readings:

- Robinson, C. J. (2020). *Black Marxism, revised and updated third edition: The making of the black radical tradition*. UNC press Books.
 - Chapter 3 - Socialist Theory and Nationalism.
 - Chapter 9 - Historiography and the Black Radical Tradition.
 - Chapter 10 - C.L.R. James and the Black Radical Tradition.
 - Chapter 11 - Richard Wright and the Critique of Class Theory
- Dawson, M. C. (2001). *Black visions: The roots of contemporary African-American political ideologies*. University of Chicago Press.
 - Chapter 5 - Black and Red: Black Marxism and Black Liberation
- Chapman, F. (2021). Marxist-Leninist perspectives on Black Liberation and socialism. Minneapolis, MN : Freedom Road Socialist Organization.
 - Introduction
 - Chapter 7 - The Contributions of Black Revolutionaries to Communist International Are Deeply Rooted in the Historic Struggle for Black Liberation

Additional Suggestions:

- Wilderson III, F. (2003). Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?. *Social Identities*, 9(2), 225-240.

What are direct examples, implications, consequences of Black Marxism, Black Socialism and Black Communism?

Readings:

- Marable, M. (1983). How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America. *Cambridge, MA*. Chapter 10 - Towards a Socialist America
- Nembhard, J. G. (2014). Collective courage: A History of African American Cooperative Thought and Practice. Penn State University Press.
 - Introduction: A Continuous and Hidden History of Economic Defense and Collective Well-Being
- Proposal for a "Black Commons" by Schumacher Center for a New Economics
- [Why Black Marxism? Why Now?](#)

Additional Suggestions:

- [The Cult of Cedric Robinson's Black Marxism: A Proletarian Critique](#)
- [Resistance From Elsewhere](#)

Studies and Reflections on (Agrarian) Blackness

What is the Black agrarian landscape?

Readings/media:

- Smith, K. (2004). Black agrarianism and the foundations of black environmental thought. *Environmental ethics*, 26(3), 267-286.
- [RESTORATION: A Concert Film \(Directed by the SC Lowcountry Hip Hop Group Native Son\)](#)
- [Black Farms Stolen: The Legacy of the Pigford Lawsuit Series with Legacy Farmers](#)
- [Return of the Bees Multimedia Project](#)
- [Land Justice Community Archives](#)
- [Forced Off Their Land \(The Nation Magazine\) by Kali Holloway](#)
- [This American Life \(479\): Little War on the Prairie](#)
- [How the Government Helped White Americans Steal Black Farmland \(The New Republic\) by Dania Francis, Darrick Hamilton, Nate Rosenberg, Bryce Wilson Stucki, and Thomas Mitchell](#)
- [How the USDA Distorted Data to Conceal Decades of Discrimination Against Black Farmers \(The Counter\) by Nate Rosenberg and Bryce Wilson Stucki](#)

Additional Suggestions:

- [This Far By Faith: The Great Migration by Fiber Artist April Anue Shipp \(Detroit, Michigan\)](#)
- [The Radical Quilting of Rosa Lee Tompkins](#)
- [Eddie Slaughter, Carl Parker, and Lucious Abrams](#)

Histories of Black Agrarian Cooperatives

What are the histories of Black agrarian cooperatives?

Readings:

- Reynolds, B. J. (2002). *Black farmers in America, 1865-2000: the pursuit of independent farming and the role of cooperatives* (Vol. 194). US Department of Agriculture, Rural Business-Cooperative Service.
- White, M. M. (2018). *Freedom farmers: Agricultural resistance and the Black freedom movement*. UNC Press Books.
 - Chapter 2. A Pig and a Garden: Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm Cooperative.
 - Chapter 3. Bypass the Middlemen and Feed the Community: North Bolivar County Farm Cooperative.
 - Chapter 4. Agricultural Self-Determination on a Regional Scale: The Federation of Southern Cooperatives.
- Nembhard, J. G. (2013). *Black Cooperatives in the United States: An Excerpted History from Research by Jessica Gordon Nembhard*.
- Nembhard, J. G. (2014). *Collective courage: A History of African American Cooperative Thought and Practice*. Penn State University Press.
 - Part I: Early African American Cooperative Roots
 - Part II: Deliberative Cooperative Economic Development

How have these histories built foundations for grassroots movements?

Readings:

- Williams, J. M., & Holt-Giménez, E. (Eds.). (2017). *Land justice: Re-imagining land, food, and the commons*. Food First Books.
 - Chapter 2 - Black Agrarianism: Resistance. By Dãnia C. Davy, Savonala Horne, Tracy Lloyd McCurty, and Edward "Jerry" Pennick (Equal Authorship).
- Nembhard, J. G. (2021). *Collective courage: A History of African American Cooperative Thought and Practice*. Penn State University Press.
 - Part III - Twentieth Century Practices, Twenty-First Century Solutions.
- Akuno, K., & Nangwaya, A. (2017). *Jackson rising: The struggle for economic democracy and black self-determination in Jackson, Mississippi*.
- Penniman, L. (2018). *Farming while black: Soul fire farm's practical guide to liberation on the land*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
 - Chapter 15 - Movement Building]
- [How Co-ops Helped Produce Foot Soldiers for Civil Rights](#)

Additional Suggestions:

- Jackson, J. (2021). "Creating Sacred Space as Part of the Black Food Ritual." In *Black Food*, Terry, B. 4 Color Books, Ten Speed Press. New York.

Black Co-ops, Governance and Mutual Aid

What is Black governance?

Readings:

- Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). The undercommons: Fugitive planning and black study. Chapter 3 - Blackness and Governance
- brown, a.m (2017). Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds.
- brown, a.m. (2021). Holding change: the way of emergent strategy facilitation and mediation. Emergent strategy series ; no. 4. Chico, CA : AK Press.
- Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators (Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan)
- [Psychology of Blacks: Centering Our Perspectives in the African Consciousness \(visual\)](#)

Additional Suggestions:

- Purifoy, D. M., & Seamster, L. (2021). Creative extraction: Black towns in white space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 39(1), 47-66.

What are some purposes and values of Black collective care and mutual aid?

Readings:

- brown, a.m. (2021). "Caring For the Whole Through This Black Body." In Black Food, Terry, B. 4 Color Books, Ten Speed Press. New York.
- Alabanza, Z. (2021). "Radical Practices of Care." In Black Food, Terry, B. 4 Color Books, Ten Speed Press. New York.
- Carruthers, C. (2021). "Nourishing Ourselves, And Each Other, is Not An Indulgence." In Black Food, Terry, B. 4 Color Books, Ten Speed Press. New York.

What are some histories of Black cooperative mutual aid?

Readings:

- Hassberg, A. H. (2020). Nurturing the revolution: The Black Panther Party and the early seeds of the food justice movement. *Black food matters: Racial justice in the wake of food justice*, 82-106.
- Callahan, N. (2005). *The Freedom Quilting Bee: Folk Art and the Civil Rights Movement*. University of Alabama Press.
 - Chapter 1 - From Civil Rights to Patchwork Quilts
 - Chapter 3 - Gee's Bend: The Culture that Shaped the Quilting Bee
 - Chapter 8 - Church Groups Aid the Quilting Bee
- Revisit White (2018) and Nembhard (2014) readings listed above
- Potorti, M. (2014). Feeding revolution: The Black Panther Party and the politics of food. *Radical Teacher*, 98, 43-51.

What are some critiques of Black Agrarian Cooperatives?

Readings:

- Hayat, N. (2021). A Critique of the Black Commons as Reparations. *NYU Rev. L. & Soc. Change*, 45, 370.
- Wolff, R. D. (2023). *JACKSON RISING REDUX: Lessons on Building the Future in the Present*. PM Press.
- [Cooperatives as Ancestral Technology](#)
- [Why Co-ops and Community Farms Can't Close the Racial Wealth Gap](#)

This syllabus was created by shakara tyler, phd. Contact styler7788@gmail.com for more information.

BUILDING ANEW

You familiar with that feeling of newness - of renewedness that
comes with the smell + feel of Spring?
Me?

I begin to shed the old, dry skin that
is no more.
New visions; some revised.
But again,
I am alive.

Clearer vision for me has me seeing
who truly sees me for me.
Who's there to protect me
and build new worlds that are
rooted in power for all people.

You see, there's power within
holding space for mutual respect,
vulnerability,
acknowledgement
and understanding -
but also hard conversations.

It's the root of providing for our needs..
Besides, we can't build anew without it.

Pick a struggle or all the struggles; however you see them within
you. But make sure you see others for theirs too. Where's your
community? How are y'all building worlds anew?

-Rukiya "AreSee" Colvin

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Photo Credit: Radical Play

BLACK COOPERATIVE HISTORY

Participatory Historical Timeline

Written by: shakara tyler

Overview: Explore Black cooperative history to become aware, deepen understanding or transform lens on specific topic(s) and participatory contribute to the ongoing interpretation of history

Materials:

- Paper
- Rope (optional)
- Clothes pins (optional)
- Sheet protectors (optional)
- Tape (optional)
- Post-it or sticky notes (optional)

Approximate Time: 1 – 2 hours (Generally)

*Depends on how in-depth the timeline is and how much exploration and discussion desired by participants and facilitator

Process:

1. Create an ancestral altar (maybe in the center of the room). Begin with libations to the ancestors as you are in the presence of ancestors through the timeline. Invite them into the space beyond the paper. Commune with them beyond the paper.
2. Record Black cooperative historical information on paper. This could be PowerPoint slides, Canva slides (or another presentation platform), or hand-written on paper.
3. Arrange papers or slides in chronological order. String along rope or tape along a wall.
4. Ask participants to walk the timeline. Suggested reflective prompts:
 - a. What strikes you?
 - b. Are you seeing something for the first time?
 - c. How does this event make you feel? Where do you feel it in your body?
 - d. How does your story/your family's story interact with the timeline?
 - e. If you were already familiar with many of the timeline events, how did you obtain that knowledge? How did your identity impact your access to this knowledge?
5. Gather in large group to discuss the timeline. Suggested reflective prompts:
 - a. How does this depiction of history relate to what you already knew?
 - b. Where do you see yourself, your community or your culture on this timeline?

- c. How does this impact your worldview (if at all)?
6. Ask participants to add to the timeline with stickies. Suggested process prompts:
 - a. What's missing (context, events, etc.)?
 - b. What were the acts of resistance (or oppression), beyond the specific realm of Black cooperatives, occurring at the same time?

Alternative process inserts or replacements:

- Small group breakouts for timeline review and discussion
- Ask participants to arrange events in chronological order rather than presenting them in order
- Follow up this activity with a small group theatrical presentations of each time period or event
- Small group breakouts create group narratives to tell a story about a particular theme through history. Some example themes could be: 1) Women and Black Co-ops, 2) Educational methods in Building Black Co-ops, 3) Black Co-ops Responding to External Co-optation. Groups have the freedom to use whatever they need to tell the story (words, pictures, voices, etc.). After each presentation, some suggested guiding questions for everyone are:
 1. What are your reactions?
 2. Anyone have anything to add?
 3. Any questions for this group?

History Walk with Ancestors

BLACK AGRARIAN COOPERATIVES

A WALK-THROUGH HISTORY

Thousands

Of Years

Black

Self-Determination

Sovereignty

Kinship

“Buying Freedom” and Other Acts of Self-Emancipation

16th-20th Century

Black people have been buying their freedom, often, collectively to escape enslavement. Pooling economic and non-economic resources together to solve personal, family, social, political and economic challenges. Racial solidarity became a major resource for these and future Black organizations and businesses. Collective economics activities such as pooling resources together to purchase freedom from plantation “masters” often led to political activity such as public policy advocacy to counteract White Blocs and racist policies and racially discriminatory legislation. These interconnected strategies were used to maintain the independence needed to assert wholistic autonomy as human beings. Abolitionist organizing was used to deliberately establish Negro-organized communities and communes to house and teach Black people how to live as “free people” and run independent communities.

Other self-emancipation strategies include buying their freedom, work slowdowns, creation of escape paths, and the formation of separate communities. These kinds of collective resistance measures proved necessary for Black liberation from all angles. The Underground Railroad was one of most prominent examples of high-level social and economic cooperation and collaboration among Black, white and Indigenous peoples. It linked independent Black communities to one another and connected fugitives from enslavement to Black-operated, racially integrated and other kinds of support systems. Maroon communities, mutual aid societies, Black churches are all part of the foundation of economic, and inevitably social and political cooperation, among Black communities.

Black Women's Societies in Philadelphia

1793

Women's Mutual Aid Societies in Philadelphia

Although men only or dominated by men societies were the first, women began to form their own that were sometimes more numerous than the all-male and male-oriented ones. Benevolent Daughters, the Daughters of Africa, and the American Female Bond Benevolent Society in Philadelphia represented the many women's societies were often the vanguard to improve social conditions in the community. Day nurseries, orphanages, homes for the aged and infirm, hospitals, cemeteries, night schools and scholarship funds became influential in the Black community throughout the 1800s and the 1900s.

African Methodist Episcopal Church

1816

Leaders of the second Black mutual aid society in the U.S. established the first independent Black church in the country in Philadelphia. The city was home to over 100 mutual aid societies by 1830 in part due to the Negro Convention Movement. Beneficial societies were a group of people who knew each other through their neighborhood or church or other organization to provide a service or set of services. They agree to pay an initial fee to join and a weekly or monthly fee to keep the common fund operating. A specified portion is paid to any member who needs the service and sometimes members donate their services instead of funds to the organization's treasury.



Wilberforce Colony (Ontario)

1831

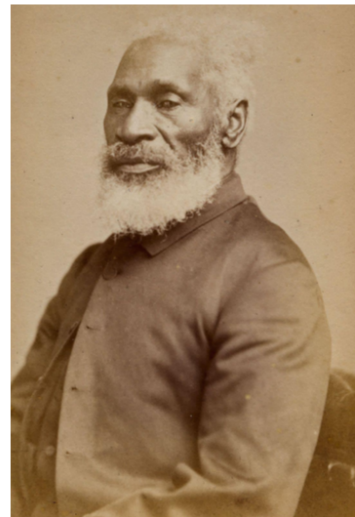
Nearly self-sustaining, Black inhabitants owned their own sawmill and 100 head of cattle, as well as pigs and horses. They had a system of schools for their children so successful that neighboring white communities sent their children there. The families remained poor and had to spend money on lawsuits with U.S. agents.



Dawn Settlement (Ontario)

1837

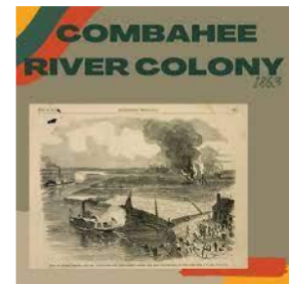
Founded by Josiah Henson, a fugitive from enslavement in the U.S., the Black community developed around the British-American Institute and operated to serve the school as a cooperative unit. They purchased their first tract of land of 200 acres in 1841 and opened a manual labor school in 1842. By the 1850s, about 500 Black Americans and Canadians owned about 1500 acres, separate from the 300 acres belonging to the institute. They operated a farm, sawmill, gristmill, rope factory and brickyard.



Combahee River Colony

1861

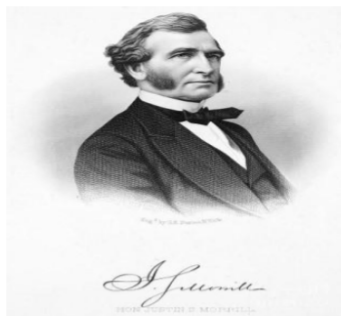
Located in the remote Gullah/Geechee communities in the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands, this relatively self-sufficient community consisted of Black women during the Civil War whose men had gone to join the Union Army. They occupied abandoned farmland where they grew crops, made handicrafts and cared for one another. They refused to work for white people and became proud of their independence. This community became an example of Black women's independence, perseverance and collective spirit as genuinely Black led and largely autonomous of White oversight.



1862 Morill Act

1862

Each state sold up to 30,000 acres of stolen Indigenous lands and used the funds to establish colleges, hence the name "land grant" universities which aimed to facilitate a vision of true democracy in higher education.



1862 Homestead Act

1862

Congress passes the Homestead Act accelerating Western migration by providing white settlers with 160 acres of stolen land (land taken from the Indigenous people). The Act led to the distribution of 80 million acres of stolen land by 1900.



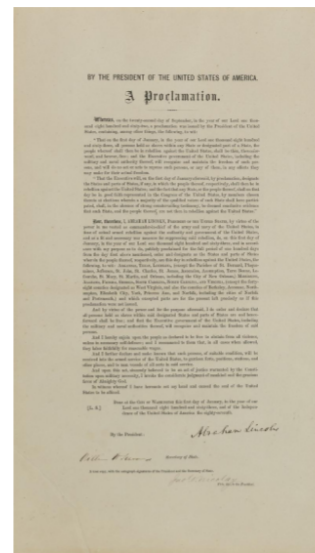
Emancipation Proclamation

1863

In September of 1862, after the Union's victory at Antietam, Lincoln issued a preliminary decree stating that, unless the rebellious states returned to the Union by January 1, freedom would be granted to enslaved within those states. The decree also left room for a plan of compensated emancipation. No Confederate states took the offer, and on January 1 Lincoln presented the Emancipation Proclamation.

The proclamation declared, "all persons held as slaves within any States, or designated part of the State, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

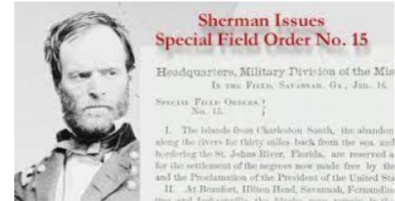
Eventually, the Emancipation Proclamation led to the proposal and ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which formally abolished enslavement throughout the land.



Special Field Order 15 “40 Acres and a Mule”

1865

Congress established the Freedman’s Bureau providing for the redistribution of abandoned or confiscated lands to freedmen (up to 40 acres). The Freedman’s Bureau never had much control of the land in the South and President Johnson’s amnesty proclamation forced restoration of much of that land. Congress shut the Bureau in 1872. Unlike white settlers who were given free land in the west, thanks to the 1862 Homestead Act, Black people needed to “purchase” their land. In fact, with the Homestead Act, white settlers received some of the most massive welfare subsidies of any people in the world in the 19th century.



The Black Codes

1865

The Black Codes were created after the Civil War to limit the rights of Black people.

The laws included requiring a special permit for Black people who wanted to work in anything other than agricultural labor, prohibiting them from raising their own crops and requiring that they seek permission to travel.

Although these laws were repealed, they continued to be practiced.



Southern Homestead Act

1866

The Southern Homestead Act opened 46 million acres of public land in the states of AL, AR, FL, LA, and MS. Within 10 years, in June 1876 the Act was repealed by Congress.

Despite neglect, hostility, and government sanctioned racial violence, by 1910 Black people in southern states, had acquired over 15 million acres of farmland and controlled 218,000 farms. Through the various Homestead Acts, 270 million acres of Indigenous land was granted to white settlers between 1862 and 1934. Another more than 230 million acres went to white privately-owned businesses.



Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company

1865 – 1870

Newly emancipated Africans deposited over \$16M with the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, a private financial institution established by Congress, of which approximately 70% of the monies withdrawn were used to purchase real estate. Outside of Georgetown, South Carolina, 160 African families acquired a former plantation and held the land together in a joint stock company — this demonstrative act of solidarity economics and collective landownership was commonly used by African agrarian communities throughout South Carolina. With the intention of building an autonomous community, 300 African families purchased 10–15-acre farms at a tax sale on St. Helena Island.



Constitutional Amendments

Late 1860s-1870s

During the Reconstruction era, the U.S. government passed the following constitutional amendments:

- **13th Amendment:** to prohibit enslavement and involuntary servitude
- **14th Amendment:** to give all men born in the U.S., including Black people, citizenship rights
- **15th Amendment:** to give all men born in the U.S., including Black people, the right to vote

Despite passing these amendments, the rights of Black people were often not defended by the Federal government especially in the Southern states.



Independent Order of Saint Luke

1867

It began as a women's sickness and death mutual-benefit association in Maryland and began accepting men in 1880s. Maggie Lena Walker insisted that women's roles were economically and politically essential ingredients for the community, and even Black men to achieve their full potential. She institutionalized a notion of family that encompasses everyone who worked within the organization which helped to solidify community ties. The Richmond, Virginia branch became the organization's headquarters and operated as a department store and a bank. The bank bought all the Black-owned banks in Richmond and became the Consolidated Bank and Trust Company which provided loans to the community. By 1924, the institution had 50,000 members, 1500 local chapters, a staff of 50 working in the headquarters and assets of almost \$400,000.



Grand United Order of True Reformers

1881

Organized in Richmond, Virginia, one of the largest mutual insurance companies that provided burial insurance, and later added death insurance so that families would have something to live on after the death of a family member, especially a breadwinner. It began with 100 members and capital of \$150. By 1901, with more than 50,000 members, the society paid out \$606,000 in death claims and \$1,500,000 in sick claims. They held more than \$223,500 in assets, obtained 2,678 lodges (totaling 100,000 members) and ultimately paid out \$979,440.55 in claims.

Colored Agricultural Wheel

Mid-1880s

As Black Populists, they developed out of the experiences of the early unions addressing rising costs, falling prices and rural isolation. The Colored Wheels were non-partisan agrarian groups that focused on economic cooperation while pressing for economic and political reforms. Depressed economic conditions for poor farmers instigated solidarity for white and Black farmers. Black Populism spearheaded plantation strikes and pushed their agenda by building schools, establishing new towns, buying land and protesting the denial of civil and human rights, even as voteless and segregated people. State organizations began to address specific needs of the local populace. The Colored Farmers Association of Texas (mid-1880s), Colored Grange of Tennessee (1880) and Negro Alliance of Arkansas (1882) all held important pieces in the national struggle for Black land workers and owners.

Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Company

1865

Black caulkers and stevedores in Baltimore, Maryland was organized, in part, to combat the growing demand among white laborers that free Blacks be fired from the shipyards and leave the state or “get a master.” Shipyard owners weren’t willing to reduce their Black workforce until white mobs attacked Black caulkers and stevedores on their way home and white carpenters boycotted shipyards that hired Black caulkers. A group of Black men decided that they needed to own their own shipyard, to protect and secure jobs for Black people. The company bought a shipyard, raised \$40,000 by selling \$8,000 shares at \$5 per share and paid off their \$30,000 mortgage in five years. The company was profitable enough to pay dividends for at least six years that ranged between 4% and 10%. The company went out of business in its 8th year due to repair problems, changes in industry and management issues. The ground rent was doubled because of the refusal of the owners of the grounds to release the yard to the colored company except at an enormous rate increase.

Mound Bayou Mississippi

1887

Mound Bayou was an all-black town in the Yazoo Delta in Northwest Mississippi. It was founded by twelve pioneers from Davis Bend, a fledgling black colony impacted by falling agricultural prices, natural disasters, and hostile race relations. This migration movement was led by Isaiah Montgomery, former patriarch of Davis Bend. Purchased from the Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas Railroad (L, NO & T), Mound Bayou bordered a new rail line between Memphis, Tennessee and Vicksburg. From 1890 to 1915, Mound Bayou was a land of promise for African Americans. Encapsulated in this “promise” were self-help, race pride, economic opportunity, and social justice, in a self-segregated community designed for blacks to have minimum contact with whites until integration was a viable option to black freedom. The North Bolivar Farmers Association grew out of this fortified independent black town.



Colored Farmers Alliance National Alliance and Cooperative Union (CFANACU)

1889

Texas black farmers founded the CFANACU when the Southern Farmers' Alliance did not allow black farmers to join.

They pooled their resources toward the goal of acquiring land to support their families and communities because preserving the land meant preserving the people. They used collective action, cooperative economics, economic solidarity and political strategies for sustainable farming and advocating for economic and political rights.

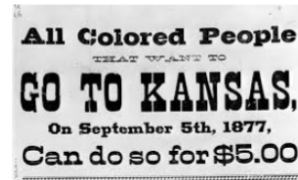
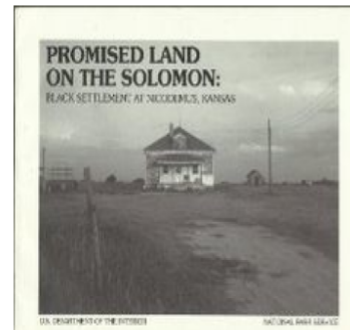


Nicodemus Kansas

1877

The Kansas Black Farmers Association (KBFA) was founded in 1999 by farmers of Nicodemus Kansas for mutual support and cooperative agricultural market development. Nicodemus, located in northwest Kansas is the only remaining western town established by African Americans during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. Today, Nicodemus, a National Historic Site since 1996, represents the unique and valuable legacy of Black homesteaders' determination and ability to sustain themselves despite all the economic, environmental, social and political odds.

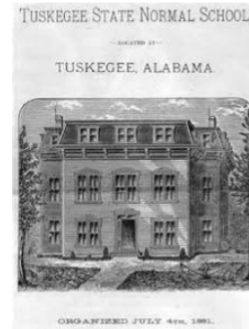
The mission of the Kansas Black Farmers Association is to preserve the Kansas black farmer legacy through education, promotion of the agricultural lifestyle and collective niche product development.



Tuskegee Institute

1881

Founded as the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, rose to national prominence under the leadership of its founder, Dr. Washington, who headed the institution from 1881 until his death at age 59 in 1915. During his tenure, institutional independence was gained in 1892, through legislation, when Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute was granted authority to act independent of the state of Alabama. Students traveled from all around the world to study agriculture-related fields and many went on to create other educational institutions based on the Tuskegee pedagogical model of experiential agricultural education rooted in economic sustainability and black community development.



1890 Morill Act

1890

The Second Morrill Act affirmed that Black people were to be included in the United States Land-Grant University Higher Education System without discrimination. It required states with separate colleges for Black and White "citizens," to designate or establish a college to train Black students in agriculture, mechanical arts, and architecture as well. These Southern and Border States became known as the Negro Land-Grant Institutions and today as the 1890 Land-Grant Universities. The "cooperative movement" and "consumer problems" comprised a huge part of the curriculum at many 1890s institutions.



Lexington Savings Bank

1895

Incorporated in Baltimore with \$10,000 of capital stock. Prominent Black people in Baltimore – businessmen, lawyers, ministers, elected officials – were charter members and stockholders. Depositors came mostly from the Black working class. While this bank is an example of pooling Black resources together to jointly own a business to provide needed services to the community, it is also an example of mismanagement and apparent lack of transparency. Black bank failures feed the collective Black memory of distrust of and aversion to business ownership which continues to limit the willingness of Black people to become involved in Black-owned business ventures.



LEXINGTON SAVINGS BANK BUILDING.

Cooperative Society of Bluefield Colored Institute

1895

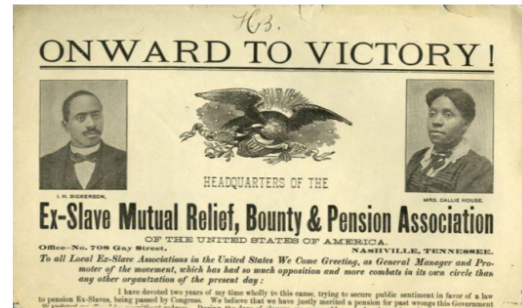
A student cooperative store formed in Bluefield, West Virginia to sell needed supplies to students and to teach cooperative economics to students and to be a commercial laboratory for the application of business theory and practice. A share of stock sold for less than \$1 and the store paid dividends of 10% on purchases made. After 2 years in business, the co-op had paid all its debts and owned its own equipment and inventories. Students voted to use profits to pay for scholarships.



Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association

1896

Founded in 1896 in Tennessee, the purposes was to pressure legislators to enact legislation to establish pensions for former enslaved people to compensate for years of unpaid labor and to provide aid and relief to members in need. After giving up the pension legislation mission by 1916, the association remained a mutual-aid society with many chapters until 1931. Members paid an initial fee of \$.25 plus \$.20 per month in dues. Services such as medical and burial insurance was provided along with democratic structures in which local people had control and a voice. In the spirit of self-help, local chapters were required to use part of their dues for sick benefits and the burial of members.



Coleman Manufacturing Company

1897

The cooperative stock company of colored men incorporated who proposed to operate a cotton mill in the interest of the race. With \$50,000 of capital stock successfully raised, they offered a second allotment of \$50,000 at \$100 a share payable in installments of 10%). They produced between 40,000 and 50,000 bricks a day and planned to begin bricklaying for the mill that would employ 300 to 400 people. They planned to establish a boardinghouse, truck farm, livery stable and dairy.



Mercantile Cooperative Company

1901

The Odd Fellows Lodge helped to establish the Mercantile Cooperative Company, a Black-run cooperative store chartered by the state in Rushville, Virginia. It is the earliest urban Rochdale cooperative. Shares were sold at five dollars each (no one member could hold more than 20) and could be bought in installments. Members bought a store outside of town and moved it to the main crossroads across from the County Training School. They raised \$1,300 to buy supplies in Richmond. By 1923, there were 28 shareholders of the store, and the cooperative bought trucks and hired three employees.

Charles City County Virginia where Rushville is located is a relatively prosperous county for African Americans. Community cooperation during the early years of the twentieth century helped move local farmers away from economic dependence on whites. Between 1900 and 1930, collective efforts in Rushville revealed how black farms achieved a level of economic independence that later aided in the struggle for political rights and racial justice.

North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company

1903

As the largest, state-based, locally owned insurance companies until World War I and the largest "Negro" insurance company in the world, it employed racial cooperation and solidarity. It became so strong it qualified as a legal reserve company in 1912-1913 with loans from Fidelity Bank (white bank) in Duke. Purchasing a policy meant "double protection" of life insurance and "Negro" employment. When Black people were rejected from white companies, they had business and thrived on Black economic marginalization. It formed the heart of the Black political economy in Durham and beyond.



The Great Migrations

1914-1960s

From 1914 through the Depression, Black land ownership was severely threatened. White violence against Black people, coupled with decreased cotton prices forced many Black tenant farmers and landowners to seek relief in Northern cities.

When factory workers went off to fight in World War I and the war decreased European immigration, there was a shortage of factory workers in the North. Badly in need of laborers, Northern industrialists set aside their racial prejudices and recruited Black people from the South. By 1930, an estimated 1 million Black people had left the South, in what is known as the Great Migrations. This continued throughout the 1960s.



Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

1914

Incorporated in Jamaica in 1914, and then in New York in 1918, UNIA served as the largest Black political organization in the early 20th century. Garvey's philosophy was successful political action required an independent economic base so Black people were independent producers and not just consumers. UNIA's Negro Factories Corporation was a joint-stock holding company for 2 uniform assemblies, a laundry, a printing plant, 3 restaurants and 3 grocery stores. The Black Star Line was a joint-stock company that handled international shipping. Stock certificates for Black Star Line and Negro Factories Corporation sold for \$5 a share. Garvey had a grand design to link all the UNIA businesses into a world-wide system of Pan-African economic cooperation. Garvey was indicted for mail fraud for soliciting through mail and the businesses went bankrupt.



Citizens' Co-operative Stores

1918

Citizens' Co-operative Stores of Memphis was established in direct response to the Negro Cooperative Guild meeting called by Du Bois in August 1918. In February 1919, the Memphis group incorporated as the Citizens' Co-operative Stores to operate cooperative meat markets. According to the article in the *Crisis Magazine*, the cooperative sold double the amount of the original shares they offered (limit per person was 10 shares), and members could buy shares in installments. By August 1919, five stores were in operation in Memphis, serving about 75,000 people. The members of the local guilds associated with each store met monthly to study cooperatives and discuss issues. The cooperative planned to own its own buildings and a cooperative warehouse. The good results of co-operation among colored people do not lie alone in the return of savings. They show, also, new opportunities for the earning of a livelihood and in the chance offered colored youth to become acquainted with business methods. Colored people are furnishing their own with work and money for services received and the recipients are handing the money back for re-distribution to the original-colored sources.

Negro Cooperative Guild

1918

W.E.B. DuBois asked the NAACP to support a program to teach the value of forming buyers' clubs operating on the principles of economic cooperation. He invited 12 Black men from 7 different states to a meeting to form the organization. The goal was to encourage groups and individuals to study consumer cooperation, host annual meetings to support the establishment of cooperative stores and to form a central committee to provide technical assistance. It is believed that no other meetings occurred after the first and DuBois shared in his autobiography "Dusk of Dawn" that cooperatives were a difficult model to implement without sufficient education and training.



Pioneer Cooperative Society

1919

The cooperative in Harlem began because it was difficult for Black people to buy food at affordable prices. They started a small co-op grocery store with 120 members, mostly of West Indian descent. Each member was required to buy at least 2 of the \$5 shares and each member had one vote. Members were charged the same prices as other retail stores and yearly profits were divided in proportion to number of purchases. Membership increased to 200 by 1920 and capital accumulation stood at \$4000.



National Federation of Colored Farmers, Inc. (NFCF)

1922

Several prominent Black men – among them James P. Davis, Gilchrist Stewart, Cornelius R. Richardson and Leon R. Harris – formed to attract Black people and stabilize Black farm ownership and better farm living using cooperative buying, production and marketing. They helped members purchase farms or secure better legal sharecropping contracts. At the height, membership spanned 12 states. Since wholesale prices were much lower than what white landowners charged, more tenants and sharecroppers joined the organization. White planters and merchants attempted to run the purchasing cooperative out of the country due to economic competition. Since NFCF was legally registered with the state, their rights were upheld by the state's attorney general.



Colored Merchants Association

1927

Founded by the National Negro Business League (NNBL), in Montgomery, AL, in 1927. The CMA was an association of independent grocers organized into a buying and advertising cooperative. The creation of the CMA was a way to support independent Black grocery stores with mutual support and collective marketing - in a harsh market during difficult times. Chapters were organized in cities with ten or more stores. Dues were \$5 per month per store. By 1930 253 stores were part of the CMA network, including 32 stores in Tulsa, OK; 25 in Dallas, TX; 25 in New York City (Manhattan) and 10 in Omaha, NB, in addition to the associations already in existence in Montgomery Alabama and Winston- Salem North Carolina. The National Negro Business League also included a couple of credit unions.



Young Negroes' Co-operative League (YNCL)

1930

A cooperative federation was founded by about 25-30 African American youth in response to a call by George Schuyler. Its goal was to form a coalition of local cooperatives and buying clubs loosely affiliated in a network of affiliate councils. Thirty official delegates from member organizations and 600 participants attended. George Schuyler was elected President and Ella J. Baker, National Director. League leaders promoted education and the study of Rochdale consumers' cooperation. The YNCL's goal was to form a coalition of local cooperatives and buying clubs loosely affiliated in a network of affiliate regional councils that would be members of the League. It planned to start with 5,000 charter members, paying a \$1 initiation fee. By 1932 the League had formed councils in New York, Philadelphia, Monessen (PA), Pittsburgh, Columbus (OH), Cleveland, Cincinnati, Phoenix, New Orleans, Columbia (SC), Portsmouth (VA), and Washington, DC, with a total membership of 400. The Harlem Council of the Young Negroes' Co-operative League, headed by Ella Baker, was particularly active. The League did not achieve all its plans but did establish several co-op stores and credit unions around the country during its 3 years of existence and held two national conferences on cooperative economics.



Eastern Carolina Council federation of North Carolinian Cooperatives

1932

The Eastern Carolina Council worked with the Credit Union Division of the State Department of Agriculture and of the Extension Service of the North Carolina state vocational program to develop credit unions and cooperatives. In 1936 it had helped to establish three Black credit unions. In 1945, the Eastern Carolina Council helped to form the North Carolina Council for Credit Unions and Associates (shortened to the North Carolina Council). By 1948, the North Carolina Council had established 98 Black-owned credit unions, and 48 additional co-op enterprises (9 consumer stores, 32 machinery co-ops, 4 curb markets, 2 health associations and 1 housing project) owned by African Americans in the state of North Carolina.

Tyrrell County Training School

1934

A Black federation for the development of cooperatives, was established by two Black independent schools (Bricks and Tyrrell County) that taught cooperative economics to Black farm families, and established farmer's cooperatives, credit unions, buyer's clubs, and health insurance. The principal of the Tyrrell County Training School, and members of his staff held study groups on cooperative economics. By 1939, 25 neighbors established a credit union. In the first-year membership increased to 187, and the credit union started a student savings account program. Members of the Tyrrell group started a co-op store in 1940. In 1941, they established a cooperative health insurance program that guaranteed a member up to \$100 for hospitalization for a membership fee of \$1.00, monthly assessments of ten cents, and a twenty-five cent "co-payment" for each hospital visit. They had plans to raise money to hire a doctor, but never proceeded with those plans. The credit union helped several families save their farms from foreclosure and/or to purchase a farm; and financed group purchases of farm equipment. Buying clubs and machinery cooperatives (purchasing coops) were established through 1945.

Freedom Quilting Bee

1966

A handicraft cooperative in Alberta, Alabama was founded by womxn in share- cropping families, looking to increase and stabilize their incomes. The women began selling quilts to supplement their families' farm incomes. The seed money for the cooperative came from an initial sale of 100 quilts, sold for them in New York by an Episcopalian minister (Rev. Francis Walters) who wanted to support the effort. Co-founder Estelle Witherspoon was FQB's first President. In 1968, the cooperative bought 23 acres of land. This was an important acquisition because it allowed them to build the sewing factory, and to increase Black land ownership. They sold eight lots to families who had been evicted from their homes for registering to vote, and/or attending Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech. The quilters also began using other entrepreneurial strategies to increase the economic activity under their control such as making potholders and conference canvass bags.



Black Panther Party & Free Breakfast Program

Late 1960s

In Oakland, California The Black Panther Party was founded to fight for real economic, social and political equality. At the street level, the Party began to develop a series of social programs to provide needed services to black and poor people.

One of the first was the Free Breakfast Program, serving over 20,000 children. The program was not only providing breakfast but used to "raise public consciousness about hunger and poverty in America, and the importance of nutrition for learning...and to teach children the philosophies and practices black liberation and class struggle."

The Free Breakfast Program rapidly spread to other Party chapters around the US and soon the federal government felt pressured to adopt similar programs for public schools across the country, some of which still exist today.



Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

1967

22 cooperatives with deep roots in the civil rights movement convened at Atlanta University to form the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC), an umbrella nonprofit cooperative membership organization to address the survival of Black agrarian communities in the rural South through the proliferation of cooperatives as an alternative, democratic economic system.

Member cooperatives engage in organic farming, marketing, agricultural processing, fishing, sewing, handicrafts, land buying, grocery cooperatives, and credit unions. The organization established 6 state offices and a rural training and research center. It also is an advocacy group and technical assistance provider to protect Black-owned land and maintain Black land ownership, as well as to promote sustainable family farming and cooperative development among Black communities and provides emergency services to its members during times of natural disaster. It later merged with the Land Emergency Fund to become the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.



Southwest Alabama Farmer's Cooperative Association (SWAFCA)

1967

Formed in 1967 by a group of Black farmers whose families had farmed the same land for more than two centuries. The goal of keeping former sharecroppers in the region and on their land drove their work to expand beyond farming. Voter registration and other activities. The organization brought together 1800 Black farmers through outreach, voter registration drives and other mutual-assistance activities. The federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) provided SWAFCA with a grant of \$399,967 as part of its new mandate to fund rural programs that would counter the trend of migration out of the South. In 1968, the OEO granted \$595,751 in more money and the Economic Development Administration gave them a planning grant of \$87,000 to study the viability of expansion. The project served 800 families in 10 Black Belt counties. In its first year, it saved its members an average of \$2 per ton on fertilizer and enabled members to sell their crops for a total of \$52,000. They worked with the Farmer's Home Administration to help members qualify for mortgages and loans. They used political gains as well as economic resources to social problems around out-migration. Overall, the cooperative increased members' economic security by working with them to reduce their operating costs, diversify their crops and raise their incomes.

Republic of New Afrika (RNA)

1968

When founded here in Detroit it sought social independence through purchasing land in Mississippi to build an independent black state along the Mississippi River from Memphis to New Orleans. In the name of black nationalism, it was a priority to establish a land base for the black community. RNA demanded reparations from the U.S. government for the perpetual economic and violent crimes against African descendants. Upon successful negotiations with the U.S. government, the RNA planned to use reparations to build an “Ujamaa” economy guided by the African socialism principles.



Southern Cooperative Development Fund (SCDF)

1969

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC), founded in 1967, worked with the Ford Foundation to establish the Southern Cooperative Development Fund (SCDF) as a developmental loan/equity fund. It served as a subsidiary of FSC with partially overlapping board of directors. By 1971, the political climate of the federal government changed significantly with the Nixon administration that didn't prioritize antipoverty programs. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) began to require external evaluations of the cooperative development program it had funded as a way to reduce or defund them. Due to disagreements between FSC and the Ford Foundation, political requirements imposed on FSC and other factors, the SCDF board split and the SCDF eventually was forcibly separated from FSC. The creation of the Southern Development Fund, the new not-for-profit arm of the SCDF created a serious split in the Black cooperative movement in the South.

Soul City, North Carolina

1969

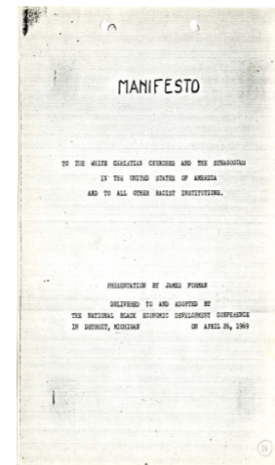
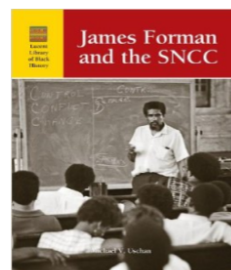
Floyd McKissick, former national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), captured the hopes of marginalized communities of color with the establishment of Soul City in the predominantly black, poor, and rural Warren County, North Carolina in 1969. McKissick's vision was to situate Soul City amongst the shining examples of triumphant Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction Black town developments, such as Nicodemus, Kansas; Mound Bayou, Mississippi; Boley, Oklahoma, and Promised Land, South Carolina. Rooted in the twin goals of eradicating racial economic inequity through community-controlled industries and reversing the Black rural-to-urban migration, the plans for Soul City were audacious and inspiring; the 20-to-30-year development plans included a population of 50,000; creation of 24,000 jobs, eight residential clusters, primary schools, community facilities, shopping plaza, municipal structures, a tourist complex, an "Afro-American Trading Center", and an industrial park.



Fredrick Douglas and James Forman's Black Manifesto

1969

Over a hundred years before Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activist James Forman released the *Black Manifesto* calling for a \$200 million capitalized southern land bank to acquire land and establish farm cooperatives, the celebrated abolitionist and scholar Frederick Douglass put forth a proposal to establish a \$100 million capitalized national land bank to acquire and resell land on equitable terms to Africans.



Freedom Farm Cooperative

1969

Freedom Farm Corporation acquired over 600 acres of land in Ruleville, Mississippi within its first two years of operation. The Freedom Farm created a shared ownership model allowing cooperative members to feed themselves, own their own homes, farm cooperatively, and create small businesses together in order to support a sustainable food system, land ownership, and economic development. Families participated in pig banking as a collective survival and wealth building tool. It provided small business incubation services and substantial amounts of food to over 200 financially insecure families locally and in Chicago, Illinois.



Emergency Land Fund

1973

The Emergency Land Fund (ELF) was created out of the same rebellious spirit as the Freedom Farm and FSC, that is, the desire to realize autonomous, self-sufficiency for the Black rural community. ELF's history can be traced back to the Black economic development conference held in Detroit, Michigan in 1969, where James Forman released his impassioned *Black Manifesto* calling for a southern land bank to stimulate cooperative development and economic autonomy for Black rural communities. ELF launched a three-pronged resistance strategy to stymie the sweeping tide of Black land loss — a regional attorney network to provide legal representation to Black landowners; a revolving loan fund to assist Black landowners in various land loss proceedings; and a local grassroots advocacy and political education network to defend the rights of Black landowners.



North Bolivar County Farm Cooperative (NBCFC)

1973

In response to the massive post-World War II migration, 64 Rosedale, Mississippi organized the NBCFC to feed their community by sharing agricultural skills and strategies as well as resources and a means to create jobs in the impoverished area plagued by pressures to move North. NBCFC drew upon the rich history of resistance in the region, particularly Mound Bayou, Mississippi. NBCFC restricted membership to those who lived in North Bolivar County and to families whose earnings were less than \$1,000 per year. They set dues on a sliding scale and allocated jobs according to need, giving preference to unemployed. While nobody received pay the first year of operations, 953 families had joined. By the next year, they were growing food on 120 acres of leased and borrowed land from regional Black landowners. That year, the cooperative distributed over 1 million pounds of produce. They began to process their own food to remove the middleman from the operations increasing the profits and other benefits for the cooperative. They established other businesses and developed a cooperative network on a regional level that expanded to clothing and other accessories as well as marketing southern grown Soul Food in the North.



National Association of Landowners (NAL)

1977

In order to strengthen the grassroots land retention efforts of ELF, Black farmers and rural landowners formed the National Association of Landowners (NAL), an African American led and controlled movement to build power and resist the takeover of Black-owned land. Through the leadership of Fred Bennett, a farmer whose family owned a 400-acre farm in Greeneville, Alabama, NAL negotiated a low interest loan of \$1M with Equitable Life & Casualty Insurance Company (ELCIC) to save Black-owned land in Alabama. NAL saved hundreds of acres of Black-owned land by thwarting tax sales and forced, below market value partition sales. At its zenith, NAL had a paid membership of over 4,000 mostly Black farmers and landowners but also a significant number of "Up South" members.



“Food from the Hood”

1992

The student cooperative began after students from Crenshaw High School (South Central Los Angeles) revitalized the school garden to help rebuild their community after the 1992 uprising. They began by donating the food they grew to the homeless. After turning a profit selling in a farmer's market, they decided to go into business and developed a business plan. “Food From the Hood” began selling salad dressing made from the produce they grew in their school garden. Managed by the students and run similarly to a cooperative business, the students voted to save at least 50% of the profits for scholarships to college for their graduating members. During its first ten years, over \$180,000 was awarded in college scholarships to 77 graduated student managers.



Dawson Workers-Owned Cooperative

1997

It was formed by workers from the abandoned Almark Mills fabric cutting and sewing plant, with help from a local business developer. Marcus Lemacks, the President and General Manager of Almark Mills, worked with the mayor of Dawson and former employees of the Mill to create a worker-owned sewing factory. The majority (76 percent) of the mill's work force was womxn; a third of them, single mothers; and most were Black. Almark Mills had been the largest employer of women in Terrell County, and there were no other textile jobs within 50 miles. The worker-owners used their union fund (from years of paying union dues, now available because the union had been dissolved with the closing of Almark Mills) as their equity investment in the new cooperative. Ownership shares were also paid in installments of weekly payroll deductions of \$7.16 over four years.

The co-op was fortunate to be able to access targeted government funds. The Clinton Administration's Community Adjustment and Investment Program (CAIP) authorized (and funded) USDA to make loans to businesses in up to 50 rural communities adversely impacted by NAFTA - through the Business and Industry loan guarantee program operated by the Rural Business Cooperative Service of the USDA. Their county qualified. This enabled the co-op to pay off the bank debts, expand and hire one hundred more workers (total of 169 employees). DWOC sales in 1998 were almost \$5million and they expected to sell \$7.5million in 1999

Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) Ujamaa Food Buying Club

2006

DBCFSN works to build self-reliance, food security and justice in Detroit's Black community by influencing public policy, engaging in urban agriculture, promoting healthy eating, encouraging cooperative buying and directing youth towards careers in food-related fields. DBCFSN's vision is to advance movement towards food sovereignty while advocating for justice in the food system that ensures access to healthy foods with dignity and respect for all of Detroit's residents.

The Ujamaa Food Buying Club began as a way to help DBCFSN members attain wholesale discounts on food items that would eventually transition to a cooperative grocery store model.



Mandela Foods Cooperative

2009

Worker-owned and community- owned full-service grocery store and nutritional education center in West Oakland, California. It is incorporated under California law as a for-profit cooperative. The co-op started in June 2009 with a group of local activist working on food security issues in Oakland (Mandela Foods Cooperative No Date). The store opened with eight worker-owners who operate in a non-hierarchical management structure, by committee. The co-op partners with local farmers to increase the financial sustainability of family farms, and access to fresh foods; and with its incubator Mandela Marketplace to support cooperative development in West Oakland (Mandela Foods Cooperative 2010). The co-op targets low- income residents in the neighborhood both to provide services, and to involve in the cooperative as worker owners.



Detroit People's Food Co-op

2016

The Detroit People's Food Co-op is a Black led, community-owned grocery cooperative. The co-op's purpose is to provide improved access to healthy food and food education to Detroit residents. It began with the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) Ujamaa Food Buying Club in 2006. DBCFSN hosted a series of community engagement sessions around the city of Detroit to inquire about people's needs, vision and other factors about what a community-owned grocery store could look like. DBCFSN also surveyed and traveled to other cooperative grocery stores around the U.S. to inquire about best practices for planning and operations. Meeting the needs of the community is achieved through the democratic control of the co-op by its member/owners. Membership is open to individuals who are residents of Michigan and over 21 years of age. The price to purchase a share in the co-op is currently \$200 per person (one person per share please). The share price can be paid in one lump sum or spread out over ten monthly installment payments.



Detroit Play Care

2018

Detroit Playcare (2018) is a Black-mommy owned childcare cooperative founded in Detroit. The groundwork was laid by beloved ancestor, Samoy Smith (1988-2020). Samoy was a winner of Motor City Match and Detroit SOUP to support her vision of creating childcare spaces at community events. Samoy added Erin Johnson (Bevel), a fellow homeschooler and her neighbor, Sylvia Isang, in early 2019 to complete the group. The three completed the Detroit Community Wealth Fund Co-op Academy in June 2019. Until COVID lockdown and Samoy's untimely death on April 14, 2020, they provided high-level childcare services at events with a variety of community partners and childcare providers, family, friends and supporters.



DETROIT PLAYCARE

Black Bottom Garden Center

2021

The Black Bottom Garden Center is a for-profit co-op founded and led by six Black women in Detroit's North End. The center operates as an LLC at Oakland Avenue Urban Farm. The group participated in the Detroit Community Wealth Fund's (DCWF) North End Co-op Academy and Incubator, a 16-week program and launched during COVID in 2021. The garden center grew out of existing friendships and community and arose out of the brainstorming of what businesses residents wanted to see in their community. The name, Black Bottom, references the fertile Black soil that so easily grew things [in the former Black Bottom community], but also in reference to the thriving Black businesses that existed there before the freeway was built through it and took them away. As they navigate inequities for Black-women owned businesses and struggle to attain resources, they affirm a common co-op principles of monetary investment and sweat equity carrying the same weight. They are on the journey of growing the businesses according to their vision of making all customers "Black Bottom Happy."



Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund Grow-Up

2022

The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), Keep Growing Detroit (KGD), and Oakland Avenue Urban Farm (OAUF) - are 3 long standing Detroit urban farming organizations. On Juneteenth 2020, the collective food sovereignty and land security work culminated in the creation of the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund (DBFLF). The coalition works to rebuild Black intergenerational wealth for Black Detroiters through land acquisition, infrastructure and equipment readiness, shared resource systems and community support networks. The DBFLF piloted a grower cooperative in 2022 as a way to build capacity, relationships and power within Detroit's food system. All 9 growers in the pilot were DBFLF awardees from 2020 and 2021. Within the spirit of starting small, the group selected 2 crops to begin aggregating for 2 main buyers. Keep Growing Detroit's (KGD) Grown in Detroit (GID) program and Eastern Market bought tomatoes and collard greens from the group at retail prices. The 2023 season opened with 8 growers with majority of them serving in paid structural roles of developing the work of the co-op.

**DETROIT
BLACK
FARMER
LAND
FUND**

Learning from the Inside: Oral Histories of Black Collectivity, Cooperativism and Culture

THEATRICAL SCRIPT



Scene 1 – Sankofa staging

David Abduli (1995):

How can we know what we don't know,
If what we don't know, we ought to know,
And what we now know is "his-story"
But what we should know is "our-story."

How can we tell “the-story” of our-story, when “his-story”
Is now “our-story?” How can we even begin to tell “our-story,” When we are ignorant of
“our-story,” or have forgotten “our-story?”

No, we cannot, and should not, ought not Accept “his-story” as “our-story.”

Then to revisit our past we must.

To reclaim “our story” for posterity is our task. So “abibiman *Sankofa*.”

“Se wo yirefi na se wo *Sankofa*, yen kyi.”

It’s not a shame to revisit the past when you have forgotten. Neither is it forbidden to learn
from the past.

It’s not a crime to borrow from the past.

Neither is it a taboo to emulate aspects of the past.

So “abibiman *Sankofa*.”

“Se wo yirefi na se wo *Sankofa*, yen kyi.” (p. 49)

*Imagine sitting around a fire, after a hearty village dinner, allowing the tantalizing drum to
penetrate the body, causing your skin to ring in rhythm of the vibrations. The drum calls more
people to gather around the fire. The drum beat dances between the spoken words and subtle
laughter of circle gatherers. The men gather more wood to feed the sultry fire while the
women pass out blankets and shepherd the children into the circle. Children huddle together
on the ground, sharing blankets, inching closer to the fire for greater warmth. Mama
Hatsheput burns frankincense and myrrh to energetically cleanse the space. The elders place
sacred offerings in the center of the circle near the fire to honor the ancestral presence – okra
and sorghum seeds, water from the local river and soil under the tree soaked in the blood of*

past generational lynchings. Conversations progressively fade as the drum rhythm shifts and escalates in sound. All eyes turn inward to the spirited fire with the crescent moon and winking stars hanging above. The village begins to listen to the sound of itself. The memory is remembering.

The ceremony has begun.

Creative muse: Culture as TEACHER

Wendell Paris: "...see the lessons of life were learned for us shelling peas when we were with our aunts and uncles and our mothers and our aunts and our grandmother because everybody on the porch shelling peas so all of the family history comes up. Who did what? Why did they move to Detroit? Why did they move to New Jersey? What precipitated that? Usually it was some white people messing with them in some kind of way and they had to slip out of town. And so you sit there and you first learn your individual family history. What is it about your family that's unique, who in your family had the backbone to stand up? Who in your family had the business acumen to establish, to break away from the economic cycles that kept people tied? Who in your family got the education, why and what did they do with the education that they got?... And you know so that's where you learn to appreciate your religion and stuff to because inevitably somebody will start singing a hymn and not only do you start singing the hymn but eventually they call on you to sing some of those hymns... SO those are the lessons you learned while you were shelling peas on the front porch with your folks... you learned a sense of morality there."

Creative muse: shelling peas... like storytelling with hands

Wendell Paris: "I have canned and cooked with my mother and aunts... Every summer we had to shell peas we had to pick the blackberries, we had to pick the pears so those were jobs that we as children did and all children that grew up on the farm understood that they had a role to play. If you were making watermelon rind preserves, pear preserves, plum preserves... whatever was in season you picked you prepared it you processed it and you preserved it... Largely it was the work of the women in the community... we had to help out with the hogs, with the animals that we killed every year that we ate. If you killed a hog, everybody had a job that they had to get out there and do... was a part of the social fabric of our community... Not only did we kill and eat the wild game but we gave fresh meat to other people in the community. Just like when we kill a hog we give other people in the community other pieces of the hog. When we milk the cow, we give some of the people in the community some of the milk."

Creative muse: Sharing was ritual

Wendell Paris: "So that's the type of lessons you get when you sitting on the porch talking with the old folks. And that's how you get the engrained experience of not only history but knowing you have a part to play."

Wendell Paris: "You right there with everybody. You shelling peas right along with everybody else and you know sometimes those lessons get so hot and so heavy you be saying well my goodness I'll be glad when I finish shelling these peas so I can get up and go."

You just finish shelling peas and somebody throw some more peas in your lap, say naahh you got some other stuff to learn here... that served more than anything to ground you and give you a sense of who you are and to know that you are a human being more than anything else and as a human being and as a person and member of this particular family there were some things you could do and some things that you could not do. Those things were morally or socially acceptable to us to our family so you couldn't do that. And... some things were socially acceptable that weren't necessarily legal. We had three uncles involved in bootlegging but they used that money to send our mother to school. I'm saying you learn all of those things by being in those types of environments."

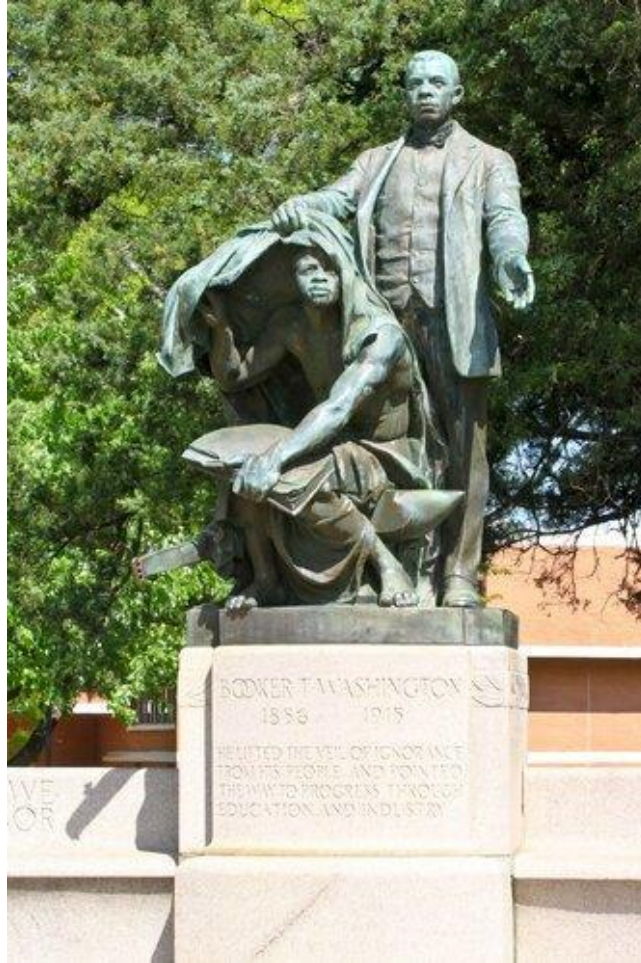
Creative muse: Learning in the womb of the culture – from the inside

Wendell Paris: "One discussion we used to always have was...my father was working in Tuskegee and we were living in Sumter county but we had an aunt that lived in Montgomery so whenever daddy would drive back to see us on the weekend, he would stop in Montgomery to find out what's going on with the Montgomery bus boycott. So when he come on Friday and we sit down for dinner that was our discussion around the dinner table. What was happening with the Montgomery bus boycott. We had an uncle over there who was engaged in it. The UAW had sent down I think it's like 10 station wagons, brand new station wagons to help with the boycott. They had people driving all around the community to pick up folks and take them different places and everything, just giving them a ride so they didn't have to ride the buses. My uncle said, they tried to give him a car and he said no I don't want that UAW car, I'll drive my own car and that's what he did. So when

he got off work at the VA hospital he would pick up people take them back and forth to help to support the boycott. We heard all of those things with people helping to support the boycott... our daddy gave us first-hand knowledge of it.”

Creative muse: Lessons that cannot be learned anywhere and everywhere... home

Wendell Paris: “But you know I also had other folks to help with my mentoring. James Foreman who was the executive director of SNCC. He would just come spend the week with us sometimes and you know just to talk about stuff and walk up and down the streets in our fields or in the woods... Not in particular about any political stuff but just hanging out having fun and establishing relations with folks that had an appreciation for the movement that you did. And so you know you relate to folks based on that level. My SNCC brothers... you don't forget those folks... because you know people that you had to ride the roads with and sometimes they were responsible for saving your life or concealing you or helping you to ward off these attacks coming from these racist white people... so Tuskegee offered me that because Tuskegee also served as a refuge point for the civil rights worker. They would come there and rest. So they could come to the library and do their research. Tuskegee has more extensive collection on black legends than does any other school in this country.”



Scene 2 – Tuskegee model

“One of Dr. Carver’s Favorite Poems” (n.d.)

Figure it out for yourself, my lad,
You’ve all that greatest men have had;
Two arms, two hands, two legs, two eyes,
And a brain to use if you would be wise,
With this equipment they all began.

So start from the top and say, "I can."

Look them over, the wise and the great,
They take their food from a common plate,
And similar knives and forks they use,
With similar laces they tie their shoes,
The world considers them brave and smart,
But you've all they had when they made their start.

You can triumph and come to skill,
You can be great if you only will. You're well equipped for what fight you choose; You have
arms and legs and a brain to use,
And the man who had risen great deeds to do
Began his life with no more than you.

YOU are handicap you must face,
You are the one who must choose your place; You have say where you want to go,
How much say where you want to go,
How much you will study the truth to know;
God had equipped you for life, but He
Lets you decide what you want to be.

Courage must from the soul within

The man must furnish the will to win.
So figure it out for yourself, my lad,
You were born with all that the great have had,
With your equipment they all began,
Get hold of yourself and say: "I can."

- Anon

Blistered toes slowly trample the dirt roads riddled with stones – sharp and round, dark and light, above and beneath the surface. One by one, two by two, the feet trudge in diametric unison with blankets, water, food, clothing and family ornaments in tow. The hearts carry a yearning to feel what it is like to be seen, loved and respected as a whole human being. The head, in psychological prison, thirst to learn all there is to know about the world beyond the plantation. From the roots up, a physical, mental and emotional load is carried – miles upon miles – by young men and women to the Mecca of what is known as dignity and purpose dressed in meaningful labor of self-reliance and self-help. The journey to the Tuskegee model is a long and self-determining one.

They walk with their dreams tightly clenched between the liminal spaces of where they are and where they are going.

Carver: “[E]ducation is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom to our people... mighty campaign of education... will lead the masses to be students of nature.”¹

Booker T. Washington: “No race can prosper til it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top.”²

Carver: “This old notion of swallowing down other peoples’ ideas and problems just as they have worked them out without putting our brains and originality into it and making them applicable to our specific needs must go, and the sooner we let them go, sooner we will be a free and independent people.”³

Creative muse: Valuing our own genius... being the love we need in the world

Carver: “Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. Not only have I found that when I talk to the little flower or to the little peanut they will give up their secrets, but I have found that when I silently commune with people they give up their secrets also – if you love them enough.”⁴

¹ Ferrell, J. S. (1995). *Fruits of creation: a look at global sustainability as seen through the eyes of George Washington Carver*. Macalester Park Publishing Co., pg. 98.

² Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 107.

³ Kremer, G. R. (Ed.). (1987). *George Washington Carver: in his own words*. University of Missouri Press, pg. 84.

⁴ Clark, G. (1939). *The Man Who Talks with the Flowers: The Life Story of Dr. George Washington Carver*. Macalester Park, Shakopee, Minnesota.

Wendell Paris: "...he made that whole lab, his laboratory he went to the trash pile and picked up stuff. That's where he got stuff to set up his laboratory. You know he locked himself in that laboratory for 6 weeks fasting and praying and that's when God gave him the 300 products he would get from the peanut."

Booker T. Washington: "Of one thing I felt more strongly convinced than ever, after spending this month in seeing the actual life of the coloured people, and that was that, in order to lift them up, something must be done more than merely to imitate New England education as it then existed... To take the children of such people as I had been among for a month, and each day give them a few hours of mere book education, I felt would be almost a waste of time."⁵

Wendell Paris: "That's kind of what Dr. Washington said when he came to Tuskegee you know he was met at the train station by about 13 ministers. And these 13 ministers were the folks who were engaged in Alabama politics during the Reconstruction period so they got him early on to understand that they wanted that institution to be able to educate people in every fashion. So that's where a lot of Dr. Washington's statements on work and the type of curriculum that would be established at Tuskegee would be around what those needs were in those local communities. Like my daddy graduated from Tuskegee and his minor was in mattress making... People learned carpentry, they learned masonry, they learned veterinary medicine and nursing, architecture. All of those schools that were

⁵ Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 57.

established at Tuskegee were in direct response to the needs of the people in the community and what have you. Not just in terms of liberal arts but what are the trades that are required.... But there were things that we could do to empower everybody... It was that you understand the culture you are involved in and how do you make changes to the culture you are involved in..."

Carver: "...God has blessed you with as much intelligence as the spider. Use your intelligence as the spider uses hers."⁶

Creative muse: There is no higher learning and living than with and through nature.

Booker T. Washington: "Mental development alone will not give us what we want but mental development tied to hand and heart training will be the salvation of the Negro."⁷

Creative muse: Whole body intelligence drawn from intuition and nurtured by experience

Booker T. Washington: "All the industries at Tuskegee have been started in natural and logical order, growing out of the needs of a community settlement. We began with farming, because we wanted something to eat."⁸

⁶ Thomas, H. (1958). *George Washington Carver*. Putnam. p. 108.

⁷ Washington, B. T. (1900). *The future of the American Negro*. Small, Maynard & Company. pg. 75.

⁸ Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 67.

Creative muse: We feed ourselves to free ourselves

Booker T. Washington: “We found that the most of our students came from the country districts, where agriculture in some form or other was the main dependence of the people. We learned that about eighty-five per cent of the coloured people in Gulf states depended upon agriculture for their living. Since this was true, we wanted to be careful not to educate our students out of sympathy with agricultural life, so that they would be attracted from the country to the cities... We wanted to give them such an education as would fit a large proportion of them to be teachers, and at the same time cause them to return to the plantation districts and show the people there how to put new energy and new ideas into farming, as well as into the intellectual and moral and religious life of the people.”⁹

B.D. Mayberry: “The first four years of Tuskegee University were devoted mainly to on-campus academic training integrated with practical training based on the concept of ‘learning by doing.’ At the same time, emphasis was placed on encouraging the students to return to their generally impoverished rural communities to help less fortunate families... One of Dr. Washington’s first objectives was to visit the homes of the rural poor to secure first-hand information as to their needs in order that they could be taken into consideration in planning the course of study for the students, families, and the communities from when they came. Throughout the Black Belt Counties in Alabama and other Southern states could be seen ramshackled cabins – occupied by poverty-stricken Blacks who year after year

⁹ Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 61.

struggled in cotton fields trying to eke out a miserable existence. After long day's work, they came home to rest in the crude one or two room log cabins of rough pine slabs. In these shacks there were as few as one or two beds with many of the families having a dozen persons ranging from infants to the old and decrepit. Pig pens were often at the door and a well from which they obtained water was down the hill below these pens. Windows, screens and steps were practically unknown. Many shacks had no toilet facilities whatever."¹⁰

Booker T. Washington: "... in the teaching of civilization, self-help and self-reliance... I was determined to have the students do not only the agricultural and domestic work, but to have them erect their own buildings... while performing this service, [they were] taught the latest and best methods of labour, so that the school would not only get the benefit of their efforts, but the students themselves would be taught to see not only utility in labour, but beauty and dignity, would be taught, in fact, how to lift labour up from mere drudgery and toil, and would learn to love work for its own sake. My plan was not to teach them to work in the old way, but to show them how to make the forces of nature – air, water, steam, electricity, horsepower – assist them in their labour."¹¹

Creative muse: work in service to community self-determination
versus work in service to colonial empires...

¹⁰ Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

¹¹ Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 71-72.

Booker T. Washington: “One man may go into a community prepared to supply the people there with an analysis of Greek sentences. The community may not at that time be prepared for, or feel the need of, Greek analysis, but it may feel its need of bricks and houses and wagons.”¹²

Allen Jones: “...he issued an invitation to about -seventy-five representatives of the masses – the bone and sinew of race – the common, hard-working farmers with a few of the best ministers and teachers’ to come and spend the day of February 23, 1892 at a Negro Conference on the campus of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. The purpose of this meeting was to arouse public sentiment among the farmers and create among them a real interest in the common good, mundane and practice affairs of life. To the surprise of Washington, over 400 men and women, mostly farmers, ‘of all grades and conditions’ attended the First Tuskegee Negro Conference. In order to find out the ‘actual industrial, moral and educational conditions of the masses,’ delegates were urged to speak. They spent the morning telling about their problems of owning and renting land, living in one-room log cabins, mortgaging crops, paying debts, educating children, and living a moral and religious life. The farmers reported frankly and simply that four-fifths of them lived for food on which to live. Their three-months schools were conducted in ‘churches or broken-down log cabins or under a bush arbor. The afternoon portion of the conference focused on remedies. After an extensive exchange of views on how “to lift themselves up in their industrial,

¹² Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 75.

education, moral and religious life,' the delegates adopted a very optimistic ten-point declaration which recognized the problems and evil conditions facing rural black people and pledged support to a program of self-improvement."¹³

Creative muse: Rising from our own strength

Allen Jones: "Out of the Farmers Institute movement grew community and county fairs which did much to stimulate Black farmers to improve their efforts. The first Farmers Institute was held in the fall of 1898 on the campus of Tuskegee Institute. It provided the farmers an opportunity to display their products and show what they had accomplished. At first the farmers' products exhibited at the fair were few and of poor quality. But each fall thereafter the samples of their crops and livestock and of the women's needlework, quilts and canned goods were more abundant and of the best quality and variety. The fairs developed into educational and social gatherings for the black farmers in each county. They came to the fairs, listened to lectures by experts on agricultural subjects, examined the exhibits, received suggestions about how to improve their farming, watched the parades, and took part in the races and other amusements that were available."¹⁴

Carver: "I landed at Tuskegee Institute in a strange land among a strange people. I also found devastated forests, ruined estates, and a thoroughly discouraged people, many just eeking out a miserable sort of existence from the furrowed and guttered hillsides and

¹³ Jones, A. W. (1975). The role of Tuskegee Institute in the education of Black farmers. *The Journal of Negro History*, 60(2), 252-267.

¹⁴ Jones, A. W. (1975). The role of Tuskegee Institute in the education of Black farmers. *The Journal of Negro History*, 60(2), 252-267.

neglected valleys called farms. It was easy to see that the first and prime essential was to build up the soil and demonstrate to the people that a good living can be made on the farm. This had to be done by actual demonstration..."¹⁵

Thomas Campbell: "The 'Jesup Agricultural Wagon,' also known as the 'Movable School' or the 'Farmers' College on Wheels'... "became a major resource to facilitate the growth and development of Negro extension work... it is fitted up with improved implements such as may be used on any up-to-date farm; for example, a cream separator, a milk tester, a revolving hand churn, a two-horse steel-beam plow, a one-horse steel buster, a set of garden tools, a crate for the purpose of carrying the best breeds of livestock, such as Berkshire and Poland China pigs, Jersey and short-horned calves. The real object of the Jesup Agricultural Wagon is to place before the people concrete illustrations, and to prove to the farmer that he can do better work, make more produce on a smaller number of acres of land at less expense. It is also designed to visit as many centers of influence as possible. The agent personally shows what is meant by deep cultivation and thorough preparation of the soil."¹⁶

Creative muse: Knowledge without practice is not knowledge

¹⁵ Carver, G. W. (n.d.) "A Gleam Upon the Distant Horizon" in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

¹⁶ Campbell, T.M. "The Alabama Movable School" in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

Thomas Campbell: “In conducting these schools the man agent takes the boys and men of the community, organizes them into groups, and gives them practical instructions in, for instance, making doorsteps, mixing whitewash paint, building sanitary toilets and poultry houses, sharpening saws. When in season, instruction is given in curing and storing sweet potatoes, pruning the orchard, terracing land, and inoculating hogs against cholera. An effort is made also to give various groups as nearly as possible what they would like to know individually. Simultaneously the women are organized into groups by the home demonstration agents and given instruction in cleaning the house. They wash the cast away rags, and from them make rugs and mats; they learn to make useful articles from shucks and pine needles; they are given instruction in cooking, remodeling old garments and the making of new ones. Joint instruction is also given to all in attendance in poultry raising, gardening, and home dairying.”¹⁷

Creative muse: Everyone has a lesson to learn and a role to play

Thomas Campbell: “No one can go into the rural districts and mingle with the people without being conscious of the fact that there exists among them a kind of empty and depressing loneliness. Especially is this true with the young people. This problem is being met by the Movable School force and county agents in the communities where they work. They not only carry tools and implements with which to teach farmers how to work out but, in addition, have a supply of athletic equipment with which to teach those isolated

¹⁷ Campbell, T.M. “The Alabama Movable School” in Mayberry, B.D. 1989. The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793).

people organized play. At the close of the day, the whole group of 'students' is brought together, at which time they play volleyball, dodge ball, tug-o-war, and engage in foot races, potato races, jumping hurdling, and many other simple games directed by the Movable School force. It is interesting to notice how these simple people, old and young, unused to these games, after some little coaxing forget their timidity and join in the exercises."¹⁸

Wendell Paris: "Tuskegee did a hundred-year economic development plan for the city of Mt. Bayou, Mississippi. Mt. Bayou was a city that was an all-black city at one time and it was founded by black people. Tuskegee went over there and worked with Mr. Jones who established the Piney Wood school. All of those independent institutions that were being established throughout the South they were based kind of on the Tuskegee model. You know drop your bucket where you are. What can you do to help yourself? What are the power realities, the economic realities? How can you diversify your farming operation to be successful where you are? That comes from the Tuskegee model."

Booker T. Washington: "I have sought to impress the students with the idea that Tuskegee is not my institution... but that it is there institution, and that they as much interest in it as any of the trustees or instructors. I have further sought to have them feel that I am at the institution as their friend and adviser, and not as their overseer."¹⁹

¹⁸ Campbell, T.M. "The Alabama Movable School" in Mayberry, B.D. (1989). *The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990*. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

¹⁹ Washington, B. T. (1995). *Up from slavery*. Dover Thrift Edition. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1901, pg. 83.

B.D. Mayberry: “When the 1918 replacement of the Jesup wagon needed expanding... “[t]he Negro farmers of Alabama proved to be the ‘men of the hour’ when 30,000 of them and their friends throughout the state contributed a total of \$5,000 to purchase a new truck, named the ‘Booker T. Washington Agricultural School on Wheels,’ and its equipment... Among the equipment carried were spraying outfits, farm levels, a set of carpenter’s tools, a milk tester, an inoculating set, a lighting plant for the farm, a moving picture projector, kodaks, a sewing machine, an electric iron, a baby’s bathtub, a set of baby clothes, a medicine cabinet, kitchen utensils and playground apparatus for recreational games. The new truck, like the old one, carried trained workers; a man to demonstrate the use of the farm equipment and to teach improved methods of farming; a woman to show how to make and use home conveniences, how to care for poultry, cook, sew, can, and conduct the home on a more healthful and economic basis; a trained nurse to give demonstration in simple practices of home sanitation and hygiene, and care of the sick.”²⁰

W.E.B. DuBois: “Education must not simply teach work-- it must teach life.”²¹

B.D. Mayberry: “An essential ingredient in the process of providing ‘education for a people’ is the ability to read and understand the printed page. Ironically, however, millions of the black farmers of the South who were destined to be served by the Negro extension effort were variously characterized as uneducated or illiterate. This, of course, limits the

²⁰ Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

²¹ DuBois, W.E.B. (2013). “W. E. B. Du Bois: Selections from His Writings”, p.60, Courier Corporation.

probability of reaching them by way of bulletins, pamphlets, farm journals or newspapers. This situation neither discouraged nor hindered Tuskegee University from attempting to reach and serve the farmer by way of printed materials.”²²

Allen Jones: “One of the department’s major responsibilities was the distribution of printed bulletins, circulars, farmer’s leaflets and pamphlets that were issued by various departments of the school... most of the publications were very elementary and simple in character. They contained information about the scientific methods of agriculture such as rotation of crops, the uses of fertilizers, the advantages of the garden, nature study, and business economy for the farmer... In another attempt to reach Black people of central Alabama, Washington established a newspaper, *The Messenger*, in September 1905... the paper was devoted to ‘improving the general condition of the people’ in Macon and surrounding counties by encouraging the work of the public schools and instructing the farming community in agriculture. It reported all extension activities, advertised farm equipment and farms for sale, and printed ‘Suggestions to Farmers’ written by the school’s agriculture faculty.

Creative muse: Education for us, by us... Community-centered and community-controlled literacy

²² Mayberry, B.D. (1989). The Role of Tuskegee University in the Origin, Growth and Development of the Negro Cooperative Extension System, 1881-1990. Tuskegee University. Library of Congress Catalog Number 89-51793.

Creative muse: We learn and come to know by way of our spiritual understandings of the world

Carver: “The thoughtful educator realizes that a very large part of the child’s education must be gotten outside of the four walls designated as classroom. He also understands that the most effective and lasting education is the only that makes the pupil handle, discuss and familiarize himself with the real thing about him, of which the majority are surprisingly ignorant.”²³

Wendell Paris: “That’s one reason I could sit down with miss Hamer because I was comfortable sitting down with my grandma and my mother and all the women in our community who taught me a lot about myself.”

Toni Cade Bambara: “The revolution begins with the self, in the self.”

Fannie Lou Hamer: When I was I a child, I asked my mother “why I wasn’t white, so that we could have some food.” She responded, “Don’t feel like that. We are not bad because we’re black people.”²⁴ She said, “I want you to respect yourself as Black child, as you get older, you respect yourself as a Black woman... if your respect yourself enough, other people will have to respect you.”²⁵ “...a lot of people is ashamed of this old Baptist

²³ Kremer, G. R. (Ed.). (1987). *George Washington Carver: in his own words*. University of Missouri Press, pg. 84.

²⁴ Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO, pg. 20.

²⁵ “Fannie Lou Hamer Speaks Out,” 53 as cited in Lee, C. K. (2000). *For freedom's sake: The life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Vol. 132). University of Illinois Press, pg. 13.

teachings, but my mother used to sing a song, it was a hymn that said, ‘Should earth against my soul engage, and fiery darts be hurled, when I can smile at Satan’s rage, and face this frowning world.’”²⁶



Scene 3 – Mrs. Hamer as teacher.

The hot summer afternoon surrendered to the humid moonlit air. A caravan of young Black students traveling from near and far sit in silence as they drive along the bumpy roads of the

²⁶ Hamer, F.L. (1969). “To Tell It Like It Is,” Speech Delivered at the Holmes County, Mississippi, Freedom Democratic Party Municipal Elections Rally in Lexington, Mississippi, May 8, 1969 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Mississippi Delta. Sweat hangs from their eyelids. The crickets' song drowns out the faint music from the radio. The eyes and ears are on alert, peeled wide open, for harm in any form – mainly white terrorism. Ahead of them, lie the lessons awaiting to fill their hearts knowing of what is and what is not. The things hidden in plain sight. What couldn't be learned from stealthy books, snooty lectures and full dinner tables. School is in session.

Wendell Paris: "...Alabama at the time had what is called an academic curriculum and I was in that general academic curriculum in high school and I found that most of my education the real education that I had was not what I learned in formalized education settings... I spent 2 weeks with Mississippi's Fannie Lou Hamer. She was a renown civil rights worker that worked on a plantation in Mississippi. I spent 2 weeks with her in 1965 doing voter registration where I learned more than I did in all of my years of former education in both high school and college. Mrs. Hamer was my instructor and I say I have a PhD from Mrs. Hamer, a university education from Mrs. Hamer."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "And you see people can say that you've got to have a PhD degree to live. But you see my Holy Bible tell me that He was taking from the wise and revealing it to babies..."²⁷

Wendell Paris: "Mrs. Hamer, her foundation, her real relationship [was] with God through Jesus Christ that is what she relied and depended on because she certainly could not

²⁷ Hamer, F.L. (1967). "The Only Thing We Can Do Is to Work Together," Speech Delivered at a Chapter Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women in Mississippi, 1967 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

depend on the white power structure. She couldn't depend on the Black so-called elite because they considered themselves above Mrs. Hamer as well. She didn't have anything to do with people who looked down on her. No matter what your social or education level was if you weren't working to liberate black people then she didn't have much time or much talk for you.

Fannie Lou Hamer: I want to “tell you what it is... like it is...”²⁸ My family was some of the poorest people that was in the state of Mississippi, and we were sharecroppers. Now, sharecroppers is something; it's out of sight... Number one, you had to plow it. Number two, you had to break it up. Number three, you had to chop it. Number four, you had to pick it. And the last, number five, the landowner took it. So, this left us with nowhere to go; it left us hungry... We never had so many days in my life that we had cornbread and we had milk and sometimes bread and onions. So, I know what the pain of hunger is about.”²⁹

“Sharecropping, halving... you split the cotton in half with the plantation owner. But the seed, fertilizer, cost of hired hands, everything is paid out of the cropper's half. My parents tried so hard to do what they could to keep us in school, but school didn't last but four months out of the year and most of the time we didn't have clothes to wear. I dropped out of school and cut corn stalks to help the family.”³⁰

²⁸ Hamer, F.L. (1971). “Until I am Free, You are Not Free Either,” Speech Delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin January 1971 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

²⁹ Hamer, F.L. (1971). “Until I am Free, You are Not Free Either,” Speech Delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin January 1971 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

³⁰ Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO, 21-22.

L.C. Dorsey: "Survival was a combination of hard work and skill for everyone. The black families supplemented their incomes by taking from nature whatever was available. They used their home remedies, because they could not always be assured that the bossman would let them use the doctor's services. They hunted, fished, and picked wild berries and wild greens to stretch the food."³¹

Fannie Lou Hamer: "I seen my mother go out in the garden and she would get the tops off of the greens; she would get the tops off of the white potatoes. She would get the tops off of the beets and all this kind of stuff. And she would cook it."³²

Creative muse: Alchemy as survival. Survival as alchemy.

L.C. Dorsey: "The art of sewing and quilt making was taught to all the girls so that they could clothe their families and keep them warm. The thrift women also used the printed feed sacks to make dresses for the children, aprons and blouses for themselves, and curtains for their homes. Preparing the cotton sacks involved removing the bottom which was covered with tar, and boiling the remainder in a lye solution to whiten and soften the material. The sacks were then sewn together to make bedsheets, curtains, and tablecloths... Little children were taught to grow vegetables and to fish. Ladies Birthday Almanac and MacDonald Almanac were the handbooks for these important lessons. The children learned from their mothers and grandmothers the different moon signs. There were signs for root crops, and signs for above-ground crops. There were signs to avoid in order to prevent insect-damage and ones to avoid prevent excessive flowering in

³¹ Dorsey, L.C. (1977). *Freedom Came to Mississippi* by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 10.

³² Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.

vegetables. The trusted almanacs also listed the best fishing days and the days when the fish were spawning and not apt to bite. The boys (and sometimes the girls) were taught the basic hunting techniques and gun safety rules, often as early as twelve or thirteen. Their survival lessons included how to look for signs of game, how to flush out small game, and how to identify game that was unfit either because of disease, parasites, or pregnancy. During the long Winter evenings, the families learned from each other. Children learned to read and shared the wonderful books with their parents, many of whom had never managed the skill. In return, the children were taught by parents or grandparents how to make a rug from scraps of cloth or how to put a bottom in a chair using green tree bark.”³³

Creative muse: Alchemy as survival. Survival as alchemy.

Wendell Paris: “Our local student org called the Tuskegee Advancement League (TAL) that identified politically with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and we got a call in March of 1965 to come to a Sunflower County Mississippi to assist Ms. Hamer with voter registration... this was unique in that we are talking August 1965 which is prior to passage of the Voting Rights Act in November 1965. So here we were doing registration with Mrs. Hamer in Sunflower County, Mississippi because she had won in the federal courts the right to get black folks registered to vote in Sunflower County.”

Clayborne Carson: “...[T]here were some ideas about how to mobilize people by getting them to recognize the sources of their own oppression talking to people at the state that

³³ Dorsey, L.C. (1977). *Freedom Came to Mississippi* by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 10.

they were at then and now, and convincing then that not that the leaders have the answers about how to identify their sources of oppression and how to move effectively against them... During the 1960s, Black people moved quite effectively without leaders... remarkable circumstance. Movements and struggles were initiated without leaders, found leaders as they developed, developed their own leaders from within the struggle, and that this became one of the most unique features of the strongest movements of the 1960s, the ones that were able to sustain themselves the longest.”³⁴

L.C. Dorsey: “...it [Mississippi] became in consequence a decisive field of testing and struggle for the civil rights movement.”³⁵

Creative muse: Storms make trees take deeper roots

Fannie Lou Hamer: We the “ruralest of the ruralest and poorest of the poorest.”³⁶ “We’re excluded from everything in Mississippi but the tombs and the graves. That’s why it is called that instead of the “land of the free and the home of the brave,” it’s called in Mississippi “the land of the tree and the home of the grave.”³⁷ “Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human

³⁴ MS Freedom Summer Reviewed Genesis of the MS Summer Project. Oct. 30, 1979. Tougaloo College. AU 842.

³⁵ Freedom Came to Mississippi by L.C. Dorsey. The Field Foundation. 100 East 85th Street. New York, N.Y. 10028. Sept 1977. pg. 10.

³⁶ Lee, C. K. (2000). *For freedom's sake: The life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Vol. 132). University of Illinois Press.

³⁷ Hamer, F.L. (1964). I’m Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired”, Speech Delivered with Malcolm X at the Williams Institutional CME Church, Harlem, New York, December 20, 1964.

beings, in America?"³⁸ "...is this America, the land of the free and home of the brave? Where people are being murdered, lynched, and killed because we want to register to vote?"³⁹ "A house divided against itself cannot stand; America will crumble. Because God is not pleased. God is not pleased at all the murdering, and all of the brutality, and all of the killings for no reason at all. God is not pleased at the Negro children in the state of Mississippi suffering from malnutrition. God is not pleased because we have to go raggedy each day. God is not pleased because we have to go to the field and work from ten to eleven hours for three lousy dollars."⁴⁰

Wendell Paris: "Mrs. Hamer helped us to understand that, she helped us to understand that all of the entities of government, state local as well as federal were all working against the liberation of Black people. Here we are getting people registered to vote thinking that will give them one of the first tenets of citizenship... the greatest right that we know under a democracy is the right to vote. And here is the 1965 Voting Rights Act which is a temporary act. It didn't give us full-fledged voting rights. We still don't have them to this day so we are temporary citizens of the country of our birth because we do not have our full voting rights... We still don't have the permanent right to vote in this country."

³⁸ Hamer, F.L. (1964). Testimony Before the Credentials Committee at the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 22, 1964 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

³⁹ Hamer, F.L. (1964). "We're On Our Way," Speech Delivered at a Mass Meeting Indianola, Mississippi September 1964 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

⁴⁰ Hamer, F.L. (1964). "We're On Our Way," Speech Delivered at a Mass Meeting Indianola, Mississippi September 1964 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Fannie Lou Hamer: “I’ve heard several comments from people that was talking about with the people, for the people, and by the people. Being a black woman from Mississippi, I’ve learned that long ago that’s not true; it’s with the handful, for a handful, by a handful. But we going to change that, baby. We are going to change the because we going to make a democracy a reality for all of the people of this country.”⁴¹ “And I’m not only fighting for myself and for the black race, but I’m fighting for the white; I’m fighting for the Indians; I’m fighting for the Mexicans; I’m fighting for the Chinese; I’m fighting for anybody because as long as they are human beings, you white or Black, is to work together.”⁴²

Wendell Paris: “The main thing is finding out you have a common bond with them. That's how you organize. What are the things that we have in common because most often what we have in common is our oppression from white people.”

Creative muse: Common oppression does not equate common liberation

Wendell Paris: “2 carloads of us, all Tuskegee students went to Sunflower County to assist Mrs. Hamer. At our first day in her house the morning where the voter registration office opened we had breakfast at her house about 7 o'clock that morning and she said you know, you all, I am rich. She had 5 cups, I think she had around 6 plates, we drank out of

⁴¹ Hamer, F.L. (1969). “To Make Democracy a Reality”, Speech Delivered at the Vietnam War Moratorium Rally Berkeley, California, October 15, 1969 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

⁴² Hamer, F.L. (1967). “The Only Thing We Can Do Is to Work Together”, Speech Delivered at a Chapter Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women in Mississippi, 1967 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

mayonnaise jars as glasses and she said I'm rich which was a relative term to what other people in her community owned and had... So she explained that to us and as we were in conversation with her she flung open her shutter. She didn't have a window; it was just a wooden shutter at her kitchen window and she said do y'all see this red brick building over here. She said that is the hospital. Okay. She said the surgeon over there is a dentist, the surgeon is a dentist and any black women of childbearing years comes back terrible. And, it dawned on us here, these folks practicing genocide on these people in the United States. This hospital was receiving what was called Hill Burton funding which provided funds from the federal government to assist local hospitals in making sure that all the folks needs were met. So here is a Hill Burton hospital funded by the federal government Department of Health, and at the time, I think it was H-E-W... Health, Education and Welfare but later on they separated out education and health. So it was HEW that was funding this hospital for these medical professionals that were practicing genocide on our people.

Fannie Lou Hamer: "But the shame that we have before us today is whatever happened to us have to be legislated. But you can't legislate love. That's one thing that you can't do."⁴³

John O'Neal: "The most important single point the students in MS Freedom Schools can learn is that the world that they live in is a world that can be changed."⁴⁴

⁴³ Hamer, F.L. (1976). "We Haven't Arrived Yet" Presentation and Responses to Questions at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, January 29, 1976 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

⁴⁴ O'Neal, J. (n.d.). On an approach to the teaching of arts and crafts in MS Freedom Schools. Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

Wendell Paris: “There was a lady in her community named Mrs. Annie Lee Jones. I'll never forget her name because there was a woman where I grew up and was one of the matriarchs of our community in Alabama, Sumter County who was named Annie Lee Jones. And, Mrs. Jones was one of those getting registered to vote. We took her down for like 2 days and she would sit there all day and every time she would write her name she would erase it and write it again. So after she had sat there for 2 days and hadn't been able to get registered to vote I asked her Mrs. Jones, 'what is it?' She said I just can't write my name. I said well I'll come over and help you learn to write your name... after we had finished registration... I went over to sit with Mrs. Jones and just went over and over with her writing her name and she could write her name very well but it was the fact that she had to go to that all white government in Indianola, Mississippi and sit before that all white board of registrars with all of the entrenched racism that she had known for all her life before she got in there to write her name. She couldn't write her name so she just sat there and sat there so Thursday night all into the night I was over there with her to try to give her enough courage and enough support and enough strength to know that she could write her name and could write very well. She just couldn't write when she got in front of white people but one of the things that I'm most proud of is that Friday on the last day to get her registered to vote she wrote her name and got registered to vote. But the next morning she came over to Mrs. Hamer's house... and said Fannie Lou they didn't come get me this morning. So Mrs. Hamer says well Mrs. Annie Lee don't worry about it and she reached up on her shelves got her some preserves, reached in her pantry got her some grits, got her some flour, got her some staples. I know she went in her refrigerator and got her some bacon and she said here is 5 dollars, I'm giving you this money and giving you something to eat... those folks will

understand that you are more an asset to them and they really have hurt themselves by not...I think they were paying her something like 25 dollars a week. That's for her to be the maid, the chauffeur, the cook, the nurse, 5 or 6 jobs that she was doing for 25 dollars a week. They paid her cash money so that there wasn't no way, they wouldn't have to pay her any social security or anything. So, here was how America was really working. Not how it was in papers, not in the grand announcements that folks made but here was how it played out in Sunflower County, Mississippi in the 1960s which was a system that reflected all of the tenets of slavery because of the psychological imprisonment that was still in place there."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "...the purpose of education is to expand the mind, to enable free young minds to become even more free and creative. It is not the regimentation of minds or the quantitative absorption of facts. It must assume the creative nature of man, and seek to allow that nature to expand, to equip itself, and to put into action its dreams."⁴⁵

Creative muse: Building upon what is already there

Wendell Paris: "...[W]e politically educate people and change economic conditions... sometimes those things overlap but your job as an organizer is to work yourself out of a job. To prepare people to carry on after you leave. That was the philosophy of SNCC as opposed to the other civil rights organization that believed in mobilization when we studied organization to prepare the people in the communities to become self-sufficient and do things for themselves. You don't have to do it for them forever and you don't just come in

⁴⁵ Position Paper on Education. To Delta Ministry Staff, as a basis for argumentation, no date. Fannie Lou Hamer, 1917-1977 papers. Microfilm.

and have a march and leave the conditions as they are. The reason you march is because you are protesting something that is wrong in the community so you gonna stay there to make sure that even if you leave, the work continues. So that's what we learned from Mrs. Hamer and from the SNCC experience is to work yourself out of a job."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "These white teachers and white niggers can't teach black children to be proud of themselves and to learn all about the true history of our race. All I learned about my race when I was growing up was Little Black Sambo who was simple, ignorant boy. I guess that's all they ever wanted us to know about ourselves. We have gone through too much blood and grief in this movement to let our children be educated to still thinking Black in inferior."⁴⁶ "And what kids are saying to you throughout the country is why didn't you tell us that we have the longest history of civilization of mankind? And why didn't you tell us it was a black man that made the alphabet? And why didn't you tell us it was also a black man that discovered science? And why didn't you tell us something about Dr. Drew, the man that learned to save blood plasma that died out in the hall because he couldn't get a blood transfusion?"⁴⁷

Creative muse: We are the only ones who can draw out what is already inside of us

⁴⁶ Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.

⁴⁷ Hamer, F.L. (1970). "America Is a Sick Place, and Man Is on the Critical List", Speech Delivered at Loop College, Chicago, Illinois, May 27, 1970 in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Fannie Lou Hamer: “Being from the South, we never was taught much about our African heritage. The way everybody talked to us, everybody in African was savages and really stupid people...I saw black men flying airplanes, driving buses, sitting behind the big desks in the bank and just doing everything that I was used to seeing white people do.”⁴⁸ “A lot of things they do over here I’ve done as a child. Little common things, like they boil peanuts with salt when they’re real green. It just looked like my life coming [all] over again to me.” Similarly, the music resonated with familiarity: “Like the songs, I couldn’t translate their language, but it was the tune of some old songs I used to hear my grandmother sing. It was just so close to my family I cried.”⁴⁹ “Just to see Africa – we had learned and heard so many things about Africa. We got on a Ghanaian flight and went to Conakry, Guinea. I had never seen a Black stewardess on a plane. When I saw a man come out of the cockpit who was black, right away then this meant that it was going to be different from what I had been [used to], what had been taught to me... I had never seen where black people were running banks... I had never seen nobody black running the government in my life... it was quite a revelation for me. I was really learning something for the first time. Because then I could feel myself never, ever being ashamed of my ancestors and my background. I learned a lot.”⁵⁰

Wendell Paris: Well I’m saying it was the most enlightening experience that I’ve had and I got a university education. The highest education that you can get coming from the

⁴⁸ Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.

⁴⁹ Hamer, F. L. (1985). *To Praise Our Bridges: An Autobiography*. KIPCO.

⁵⁰ McMillen, Neil. (1972). “Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer by Dr. Neil McMillen,” April 14, 1972, and January 25, 1973, Ruleville, Mississippi; Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi” in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

community as to what is needed.... So I'm saying just by going and sitting and talking with Mrs. Hamer you learn so much because it was just an intense education experience by being engaged in the movement at all. Because less than 2 percent of the black population was involved in bringing about change in the civil rights movement. Everyone else was either scared or indifferent or both of them. So you are part of a special breed of people when you say you are a civil rights worker. So you were ostracized not only by white people but by portions of the black community as well. So, here was Mrs. Hamer who served as a matriarch of the community in the Mississippi Delta... She started a cooperative called Freedom Farm and just numerous civic and community orgs that she was engaged with in addressing the needs of not only the state of Mississippi but also the needs that should be addressed by the United States as a whole.

Wendell Paris: "Well yea you could see that connection because I'm saying they were evicting people from plantations so one way that you would move to help people who were being evicted or get them out from under economic exploitation was to establish businesses or organizations that people control that did not have them absolutely dependent on the local white establishment for their livelihood and for their being."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "And this land is organized and founded in '69 is called Freedom Farms Cooperative... So now what we plan to do is grow our own vegetables, is to grow our own cattle, and to grow our own pork and have a hundred houses in that area. Now, it's no way on earth that we can gain any kind of political power unless we have some kind of economic power. And all of the qualifications that you have to have to become a part of the co-op is

you have to be poor. This is the first kind of program that has ever been sponsored in this country in letting local people do their thing their selves.”⁵¹ “I had been going around a lot of areas and folks just not having enough to get food stamps and all of this kind of stuff. We just thought if we had land to grow some stuff on. Then it would be a help to us. Because living on the farm, on some plantation, they still don’t give you a place to grow stuff.”⁵² “... the main purpose is to feed and build the economic standard up.”⁵³ “...the purpose of that program was to get some land that we could grow vegetables that people wouldn’t have to leave Mississippi because our whole thing was, you give a man food he can eat for a few days, but if you give us the tools we can produce for ourselves.”⁵⁴

Wendell Paris: “...we went back and did voter registration in Macon county where Tuskegee is located and we elected the first Black sheriff since reconstruction. We can tie that directly to what we learned from Mrs. Hamer... it’s just that you are inspired and instilled and almost commanded to get to work to make changes in whatever communities

⁵¹ Hamer, F.L. (1971). “Until I am Free, You are Not Free Either”, Speech Delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin January 1971 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

⁵² McMillen, Neil. (1972). “Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer by Dr. Neil McMillen,” April 14, 1972, and January 25, 1973, Ruleville, Mississippi; Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi” in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

⁵³ “McMillen, Neil. (1972). “Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer by Dr. Neil McMillen,” April 14, 1972, and January 25, 1973, Ruleville, Mississippi; Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi” in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

⁵⁴ Hamer, F.L. (1976). “We Haven’t Arrived Yet” Presentation and Responses to Questions at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, January 29, 1976 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

you are involved in once you had that experience with Mrs. Hamer or people like Mrs.

Hamer... everything you learn in one community you try to apply to other communities..."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "Land, too, is important in the 70s and beyond, as we move toward our ultimate goal of total freedom. Because of my belief in land reform, I have taken steps of acquiring land through cooperative ownership. In this manner, no individual has title to, or complete use of, the land. The concept of *total individual ownership* of huge acreages of land, by individuals, is at the base of our struggle for survival. In order for any people or nation to survive, land is necessary. However, individual ownership of land should not exceed the amount necessary to make living. Cooperative ownership of land opens that door to many opportunities for group development of economic enterprises, which develop the total community, rather than create monopolies that monopolize the resources of a community."⁵⁵

Albert Turner: Co-ops were the "economic arm of the civil rights movement"⁵⁶

Wendell Paris: "Israel Cunningham down in Alabama was one of the stalwarts of the cooperative movement said that when we finally did get these hotels and cafeterias desegregated, we didn't have the money to go in there and buy nothing to eat and we didn't have no money to spend the night. So you had to look at how you pool your resources once again to come up with some economic alternatives. Some ways that you could move to self-sufficiency in the economic arena and the cooperative movement was the best way to

⁵⁵ Hamer, F.L. (1971). "If the Name of the Game is Survive. Survive," Speech Delivered in Ruleville, Mississippi, September 27, 1971 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

⁵⁶ 50 Years of Courage, Cooperation, Commitment and Community." (2017). Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, retrieved August 2017.

do that because it is democratically controlled. It gives everyone who is a member of the cooperative equal voting rights. So you can have some advancements when you have people working together like that especially at the grassroots level because it means that you are drawing the supernatural powers available to you. God himself steps in when he sees people working together across racial across social across educational lines. Because when you put all of those things to rest and come forward with the issues you are addressing and utilize the skills and abilities that people have in the most economic and useful fashion that's when things begin to occur, when everyone is included instead of rulings taking place just from the economic and political elite."

Fannie Lou Hamer: "...it's poison; it's poison for us not to speak what we know is right."⁵⁷

Wendell Paris: "There are basically in this county now two sets of folk who impact not only politics but other tenants of living. You have organized money and organized people. Organized people will always out rule organized money... See the idea is when you not organizing people and you just mobilizing people than folks don't get an understanding of why it's important for them to participate. But when you organize people... you organize people around what their felt needs are. The greatest skill you can have as an organizer is to listen. So you come in and you listen to people because there are always issues that people will rally around if they see them as being their interest, if people know their self-interest then people will organize around it because it's something that they see vital to them. But if they don't see how an issue is vital to them they won't organize around it."

⁵⁷ Hamer, F.L. (1963). "I Don't Mind My Light Shining", Speech Delivered at a Freedom Vote Rally in Greenwood, Mississippi, Fall 1963 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

Fannie Lou Hamer: “Community living and group decision-making is local self-government. It is this type of community self-government that has been lost over the decades and thus created decay in our poor areas in the South and our northern ghettos”⁵⁸

Wendell Paris: “...that's the education you get from the cooperative movement. You share with folks the problems that you are facing in your local community to best be addressed by some type of political action... because they have a self-interest in what's going on in the political arena, that's how you gonna hold onto your land and how you gonna gain some independence. When you own your own land, when you own your own businesses than you don't have to accept all of the racism and economic exploitation that folks bring at you. My uncle used to say, own your own land shoot we self-sufficient and growing what we need to eat, we go to the store to get some salt and buy something that maybe we want but we don't have to have it because we have what we need right here that's on our own land. Well, I learned in Israel in studying cooperative economics over there. The Jews would say our wine may be bitter but it's our wine. So you have something that you own and you control, this is yours. Unless you have that sense of ownership, that sense of engagement involvement then people don't organize so that's the reason you seeing the downturn in political participation because people haven't been taught or come to the progressive realization... we don't have folks participating at the levels that they once did because all of the entities that we used to have folks get some political understanding are not being used these days for those purposes.”

⁵⁸ Hamer, F.L. (1971). “If the Name of the Game is Survive. Survive,” Speech Delivered in Ruleville, Mississippi, September 27, 1971 as cited in Brooks, M. P., & Houck, D. W. (Eds.). (2011). *The speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To tell it like it is*. Univ. Press of Mississippi.

John O'Neal: "Our strength is the product of our relationship to the grassroots community efforts all across the South. Our major weaknesses are the result of the fact that most of us have not built our programs on the basis of philosophical and economic self-reliance."⁵⁹

RNA: "Can you teach? Man a saw? Build a generator? Tend an infirmary? Drive a tractor? Finish concrete? Lay pipe? Run a press? Tailor a dashiki? Shoot a gun? You can help make Black people's most important dream – our most important necessity – a reality by serving in Mississippi as we build a model community."⁶⁰

African Proverb: "When spider webs unite, we can tie up lions."

Creative muse: *We are the pedagogy!*

⁵⁹ O'Neal, J. (n.d). The Afro-American Artist in the South. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

⁶⁰ RNA advertisement, (n.d.). Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.



Scene 4 – Black Arts and Pedagogy

Wise I

Amiri Baraka (2007)

If you ever find
yourself, some where
lost and surrounded
by enemies
who won't let you
speak in your own language
who destroy your statues
& instruments, who ban
your oom boom ba boom
then you are in trouble

deep trouble
they ban your
oom boom ba boom
you in deep deep
trouble

humph!

probably take you several hundred years
to get
out!

Everyone hunches over digging the dark brown clay soil with whatever tools they can find – a shovel, a bucket, a spoon, their hands. A child approaches the group and stares in curiosity. Instead of probing, the child joins in without a word, using her hands to dig. She scraps so hard the soil digs deep beneath her nails, scratching her permeable skin. She spots a worm and smiles. The panting breathe of the diggers create rhythmic cadence that usher the hands and in feet into diametric unison. Digging holes. Digging crevices. Searching. As they dig, a man approaches asking, “what y’all looking for?” The child shouts in a commanding voice, our “oom boom ba boom.”

The soil rests.

Free Southern Theater: "...art and culture are every bit as vital to the total health of the community as are good health care and education."⁶¹

Gwendolyn Brooks: "Art hurts. Art urges voyages – and it is easier to stay at home."⁶²

Free Southern Theater: "to assert that self-knowledge is the foundation of human dignity... It is then our struggle for the freedom to make art/theater relevant to ourselves and to people; the freedom to shape, create, the space around our own expectations; to take part in determining how we as a society shall think and live."⁶³

John O'Neal: "Our work as artists derives its significance from its relation to the process of history... we should work to strengthen our relationship to our respective audiences by taking more serious interest in trying to understand the problems they face and then trying to find the point of connection, between the people, their concerns and our work."⁶⁴

T. David Watson: "The role of the relevant or "revolutionary" Black artist is to increase the collective consciousness of the struggling Black masses through the vehicle of culture."

"...alone knowledge of historical facts have in the facts of history been proven to be insufficient – outside the creative motif – to sustain a level of awareness sufficient to mount

⁶¹ O'Neal, J. (n.d). Preliminary Plan for a Functional Integrated Community, Cultural, Early Childhood Pre-school education – Medical Service Center, pg. 3. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

⁶² Brooks, G. (1967). *The Chicago Picasso*. CUNY Composers.

⁶³ FST Company Statement. Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

⁶⁴ O'Neal, J. (n.d). *The Afro-American Artist in the South*. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

a continued movement. For instance the vast majority of Black folk are well aware of the atrocities practiced on them throughout their history yet this information in itself has failed to form a sufficient impetus for the viable mass involvement to correct the situation. So to knowledge we must apply a correct analysis that will enable Black people to see and to understand their condition, the interrelation of what is happening to both individually and collectively and how to go about correcting the problems thereof. Thus, we will be enabled, to wage a successful struggle to liberate the minds of the masses which in turn will find the means to eliminate their oppression.”⁶⁵

Junebug Jabbo Jones: “...art and culture are like weapons. In the struggle for the liberation and independence of the Afro-American nation, they will be used for us or against us. If our art and culture are to serve and support our struggle, then our artists must make a conscious effort to understand the history and terms of the struggle against oppression and exploitation.”⁶⁶

Wendell Paris: “So that's what we have to do, we have to put in place institutions, we have to have a cultural understanding of what's engaged here in making progressive change. The cultural revolution precedes the political revolution so until you get people involved in a cultural understanding of what's going on you won't have a chance at getting them involved with political change.”

⁶⁵ Watson, T.D. (n.d.). Functions at this Junction. Freedom Southern Theater Collection. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

⁶⁶ O'Neal, J. (n.d.). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

John O'Neal: "The artist is an instrument of the people.

- 'The dancer gives shape to the... fears, joys, hopes and aspiration in space and time with their bodies.
- The musician – the ear from that deeper pulse that gives but to rhythm
- The painter – eyes of the people
- The singer & poet – the voice of the people⁶⁷

Wendell Paris: "That's the reason we couldn't have the drums when we came over from Africa because it served as a communication tool for us. It was ingrained in our culture so they had to take that away from us to take away that cultural longing of the people. That's one of the best ways to cripple folks is to separate them from their culture."

John O'Neal: "The aim of our work is to influence people; to influence how as well as what they see, hear, touch, taste, smell, feel; to influence their emotions; to influence their thinking."⁶⁸

Wendell Paris: "Well the music is what really sustained us. You walk up to an office and say we are here to register to vote and you have the deputy and all his officers out there saying he consider this a demonstration and you have to disburse. So here you are standing up there and the sheriff may have just a gun he may have Billy sticks or police dogs, he may have horses. Your side breaks out in a song, you don't even know who led it. I'm gonna do

⁶⁷ O'Neal, J. (n.d). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

⁶⁸ O'Neal, J. (n.d). "The Free Southern Theatre Living in the Danger Zone", pg. 12. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

what the spirit says do, I'm gonna do what the spirit says do. If the spirit says move, I'm gonna move, Oh Lord. I'm gonna do what the spirit says do. If the spirit say vote, I'm gone vote if the spirit say register I'm gonna register, if the spirit say run, I'm gone run, whatever the spirit says do. So that music is what served as a tool of empowerment for the people. It always has and it always will."

Creative muse: "Music... a gateway to the spirit"

Wendell Paris: "And when you just have a limited understanding of who you are as a people... folks will always be able to colonize you or keep you under subjection to them. But I'm saying that's the part of that education that I have that came from being engaged in the Civil Rights struggle and the cooperative struggle and my personal relationship with my God that helps me to better appreciate what has happen, what has taken place and what is taking place. And to know what needs to take place in order to move us to the next level."

John O'Neal: "As a weapon is to warfare... soul is to our movement."⁶⁹

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones): "The black artist's role in America is in the destruction of America as he knows it."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ O'Neal, J. (n.d). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

⁷⁰ Baraka, A. (April 1965). Negro Digest, vol. 14, no. 6, p. 65.

John O'Neal: "The essence of the matter is that the movement was a success for those who did the leading and a failure to those who did the following."⁷¹

Ella Jo Baker (SNCC organizer): "Strong people don't need strong leaders."⁷²

John O'Neal: "The most important single point the students in MS Freedom Schools can learn is that the world that they live in is a world that can be changed. Not only is it possible, but it is more likely that this point can be communicated more tangible in the arts and crafts program than in any other aspect of the total Freedom School curriculum."⁷³

Creative muse: We are the pedagogy of our transformation. Our memories. Our bodies. Our hands. Our imaginations. Our love for ourselves and our community. Freedom is school when we learn from the inside.

⁷¹ O'Neal, J. (n.d). As a Weapon is to Warfare. John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

⁷² Ransby, B. (2003). *Ella Baker and the Black freedom movement: A radical democratic vision*. University of North Carolina Press.

⁷³ O'Neal, J. (n.d). "On an approach to the teaching of arts and crafts in MS Freedom Schools". John O'Neal Papers, 1927-1999. SAF Newsletter. Amistad Research Center. New Orleans, LA.

Appendix

Theatrical characters in script

Albert Turner of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) served as a catalyst for Selma to Montgomery March by insisting that the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson be publicly addressed.

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), former Black Nationalist and third world socialist, became a primer poet and theorist of the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.

B.D. Mayberry, former Associate Provost at Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program and Direct Carver Research Foundation. He served more than forty years in various capacities in teaching, research and administration and assisted in the development of permanent legislation for the 1890 Institutions.

Benjamin F. Payton served as president of two historically black universities: Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina from 1967 to 1972 and Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama from 1981 to 2010.

Booker T. Washington Carver is known as one the most dominant and influential leaders, educators and orators given his leadership – as founding Principal – in developing the then named Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute as the one of the first Black agrarian educational institutions to trailblaze systemic education of self-reliance and self-help in a formal educational setting.

C.P. Zachariadis worked with the Clearinghouse for Community Based Free Standing Educational Institutions. No further information can be found on this institution.

Carol Prejean is part of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives family as a former co-op developer and volunteer. She is the co-founder of the Federation of Greene Country Employees (FOGCE) Federal Credit Union. She is also co-publisher of the Greene County Democrat Newspaper, a weekly publication created to educate the Black community.

Charles Prejean, FSC's first Executive Director, worked in cooperative development in Louisiana prior to moving to Atlanta, GA to led FSC for 17 years.

Creative muse is the academic author, shakara tyler, who interviewed Wendell Paris and extensively studied the literature and archival information cited in this scholarship.

Ella Jo Baker worked with a slate of civil rights organizations – the NAACP, SCLC, CORE and SNCC. As a primary leader of SNCC, she understood the purpose was not to lead people but to draw out and train the leadership already present in the community.

Emmett J. Scott, journalist, founding newspaper editor, government official and envoy, educator, and author, served as the Tuskegee Institute secretary under Booker T. Washington and was the highest-ranking African-American in President Woodrow Wilson's administration.

Ezra Cunningham served as the Alabama State Association of Cooperatives Coordinator and worked with the Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative Association. She worked closely with the FSC.

Fannie Lou Hamer, as a civil rights activist, organized voter registration campaigns and co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party prior to organizing around felt needs in the community through the Freedom Farm Cooperative in Mississippi Delta.

George Washington Carver blazed trails as an educator, chemist, botanist, entomologist, and mycologist at the then named Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute where he managed the (underfunded) first all-Black agricultural experiment station in the U.S..

Haki Madhubuti (Donald Luther Lee), Black arts movement poet, founded numerous institutions to serve the needs of black writers. Third World Press, *Black Books Bulletin*, the New Concept School, the Betty Shabazz International Charter School, the International Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent, and the National Black Writers Retreat.

John O'Neal, playwright, actor and civil rights activist, founded the seminal Free Southern Theater and co-founded the integrated Tougaloo Drama Workshop at Tougaloo College, Mississippi.

Junebug Jabbo Jones, conjured as a (fictional) folk hero of the civil rights movement, he represented the wisdom of common, everyday black people, how black people have used wit to survive.

Free Southern Theater (FST), a mobile repertory theater presenting plays in rural towns of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee, was the nexus of music, drama and political activism and often served as an educational tool in Black movement building using theater to stimulate self-expression. It was "theater for those who have no theater."

Republic of New Afrika (RNA), founded in Detroit in 1968, sought social independence through purchasing land in Mississippi to build an independent black state along the Mississippi River from Memphis to New Orleans. In the name of black nationalism, it was a priority to establish a land base for the black community.

T. David Watson was a member of the Freedom Southern Theater (FST).

W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) DuBois was an American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, Pan-Africanist, author, writer and editor. He is considered to be the father of Sociology as an academic discipline with his 1899 study, Philadelphia Negro, which identified social problems in the Black community.

Wendell Paris (72 years old) has been living in MS for the past 27 years. His father worked as Negro agent for the USDA Farm and Home Administration (FmHA) in AL. Upon graduating from Tuskegee Institute in 1966, he started working with Tuskegee Institute Community Education Program, TICEP, that sent Tuskegee students into the rural communities to supplement, enhance and bring new vision to the poor AL educational system. His commitment to the civil rights struggle in AL and MS led him to work with Fannie Lou Hamer at the Freedom Farm Cooperative in the MS Delta where he did direct action and voter registration campaigns through the Tuskegee Advancement League (TAL) and SNCC. He saw this work as a direct resistant to the impoverishment used as a tool by the white power establishment. He co-established the Southeast AL Self-Help Association which led him to the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) where he worked as the agricultural cooperative coordinator to establish and maintain cooperatives in AL and MS. In an attempt to understand the role of religion in Black advancement, he studied at the interdenominational theological center in Atlanta, GA. He proclaims his community experiences in the civil rights movement as the most impactful educational experiences in his life.

POLITICAL RELATIONALITIES

AfroAgrarian Cooperative
Political Education Sub-Curriculum
RESISTING THE CULTURE OF INDIVIDUALISM

This curriculum aims to provide a comprehensive educational resource on the cooperative business model while addressing the influence of the culture of individualism and its impact on marginalized communities, specifically highlighting the perspective of African/Black communities. It promotes the values of collective action, solidarity, and community empowerment within the context of cooperative enterprises.



Title: *"Building Collective Power: Cooperative Business and Community Empowerment"*

Duration: This Curriculum is intended as a one year program, however it can be adapted to fit the needs of the user.

Module 1: *Understanding the Culture of Individualism*

- **Lesson 1:** *Introduction to the Culture of Individualism*
 - "Origins of Individualism"
 - Defining individualism and its impact on communities
 - Individualism refers to a social and cultural ideology that emphasizes the significance of the individual over the collective or community. It places high value on personal freedom, autonomy, self-reliance, and

the pursuit of individual goals and interests. Individualism prioritizes the rights, desires, and achievements of individuals, often emphasizing personal success and self-fulfillment.

- The impact of individualism on communities can vary and may have both positive and negative consequences.
- Here are some key aspects of its impact:
 - Self-reliance and Personal Achievement:
 - Positive: Individualism can foster a sense of personal responsibility, motivation, and self-determination. It encourages individuals to take initiative, set goals, and strive for success. This can lead to personal growth, innovation, and accomplishment.
 - Negative: Excessive individualism can create a competitive environment that undermines cooperation and collaboration within communities. It may prioritize individual gains over collective well-being, leading to a lack of social cohesion and support.
 - Autonomy and Freedom:
 - Positive: Individualism can promote individual freedoms and rights, allowing people to express themselves, make choices based on personal preferences, and pursue their own paths in life.
 - Negative: Extreme individualism can undermine social cohesion and a sense of shared responsibility within communities. It may lead to isolation, indifference, and a reduced willingness to contribute to the common good.
 - Inequality and Fragmentation:
 - Positive: Individualism can provide opportunities for individuals to break free from societal constraints and challenge oppressive systems. It can empower marginalized individuals to assert their rights and advocate for social change.
 - Negative: Unbridled individualism can exacerbate social inequality and division. It may contribute to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, marginalizing

vulnerable populations and widening social disparities. It can also lead to a lack of social solidarity and empathy, hindering collective efforts to address communal challenges.

- Community Engagement and Cooperation:
 - Positive: Balanced individualism can create a healthy balance between individual interests and communal needs. It recognizes the importance of individual contributions within the context of a larger community, fostering active participation, civic engagement, and volunteerism.
 - Negative: Overemphasis on individualism can weaken social connections and community bonds. It may lead to a sense of detachment, reduced empathy for others, and a diminished willingness to work together for the collective good.
- It is essential to strike a balance between individualism and community well-being, recognizing the value of both individual autonomy and collective support for the overall health and resilience of communities
- Effects of Individualism on the Black community
 - Discussing influence of individualism in society
 - Identifying the consequences of prioritizing the individual over the collective
 - Challenges of overcoming individualism in the black community for future survival
- **Lesson 2: *Examining the Relationship between Individualism and Capitalism***
 - Exploring the connection between individualistic values and capitalist systems
 - Analyzing the ways in which capitalism perpetuates inequality and exploitation
 - Recognizing the impact of capitalism on marginalized communities, including the link to white supremacy. Capitalism is the economic foundation of white supremacy. Black people have labored under an educational system that supports white supremacy, which makes white people sick and black people sicker.

Module 2: *Cooperative Business as an Alternative Model to redirect the culture of individualism*

- **Lesson 1: Introduction to Cooperative Business**
 - Defining cooperative business and its core principles
 - Exploring the historical context and examples of successful cooperatives
 - Highlighting the benefits of cooperative models for community empowerment
- **Lesson 2: The African/Black Perspective on Collective Action**
 - Examining the cultural roots and traditions of collective action within African/Black communities
 - Discussing historical examples of collective efforts and communal support
 - *Indigenous Cultures:*
 - *Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Iroquois Confederacy):* The Haudenosaunee (also known as the Iroquois) formed a confederacy comprised of six nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora). They developed a system of governance based on collective decision-making, where each nation had representation and decisions were reached through consensus.
 - *Potlatch Ceremony (Pacific Northwest Coast):* Among indigenous communities in the Pacific Northwest, the potlatch ceremony served as a significant social and economic practice. It involved hosting elaborate feasts and distributing wealth, demonstrating communal support and reinforcing social ties within and between tribes.
 - *Zapatista Movement (Mexico):* The Zapatista Army of National Liberation, comprised largely of indigenous people in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, has fought for indigenous rights, land rights, and autonomy since 1994. The movement emphasizes collective decision-making, self-governance, and community solidarity.
 - *Black Cultures and Communities:*
 - *Maroons and Quilombos:* In various parts of the Americas, maroons (escaped slaves) and quilombos (free communities of escaped slaves) were formed. These communities represented collective efforts to resist enslavement, build independent societies, and protect their cultural heritage. Examples include the quilombos of Palmares in Brazil and the Maroon communities in Jamaica.

- *African American Mutual Aid Societies:* During times of racial segregation and limited access to resources, African American communities formed mutual aid societies. These organizations provided financial, social, and emotional support to community members, promoting self-reliance, economic empowerment, and collective progress.
- *Civil Rights Movement:* The Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the mid-20th century showcased collective efforts to fight against racial segregation and discrimination. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and many others organized protests, boycotts, and grassroots movements that galvanized black communities and allies in the pursuit of equality and justice.

These examples highlight the resilience, solidarity, and community support demonstrated by Indigenous and Black cultures throughout history. They serve as powerful reminders of the collective strength and determination to overcome adversity and create positive change.

Module 3: Implementing Cooperative Principles to redirect the culture of individualism

- **Lesson 1: Cooperative Governance and Decision-Making**
 - In cooperatives, effective governance and decision-making processes are vital for ensuring democratic participation, equitable distribution of power, and the achievement of collective goals. This lesson explores the key principles and practices that underpin cooperative governance and decision-making.
 - *Definition:* Cooperative governance refers to the structures, systems, and processes through which a cooperative is governed, ensuring that power is shared among members and decisions are made collectively.
 - *Principles of Cooperative Governance:*
 - *Voluntary and Open Membership:* Cooperatives are open to all who are willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without discrimination.
 - *Democratic Member Control:* Members have equal voting rights and participate in decision-making on a one-member-one-vote basis, regardless of their level of investment.
 - *Member Economic Participation:* Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative.
 - *Autonomy and Independence:* Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members.

- *Education, Training, and Information:* Cooperatives provide education and training to members, enabling them to contribute effectively to the cooperative's development.
- *Cooperation among Cooperatives:* Cooperatives work together to strengthen the cooperative movement locally, nationally, and internationally.
- *Concern for the Community:* Cooperatives strive for the sustainable development of their communities.
- *Decision-Making in Cooperatives:*
 - *Participatory Decision-Making:* Cooperatives emphasize inclusive decision-making processes that involve all members, ensuring that decisions are collectively determined and align with the cooperative's values and goals.
 - *Consensus Building:* Cooperative decision-making often aims for consensus, seeking agreement among members through open dialogue and respectful consideration of different perspectives.
 - *Roles and Responsibilities*
 - *Board of Directors:* The elected board represents the membership and is responsible for strategic decision-making and governance oversight.
 - *General Assembly/Meeting:* All members gather to discuss important matters, make collective decisions, and elect the board of directors.
 - *Committees:* Committees are formed to address specific areas of the cooperative's operations, such as finance, marketing, or membership.
 - *Staff and Management:* Cooperative employees, if applicable, work collaboratively with members and the board to implement decisions and manage day-to-day operations.
 - *Transparency and Accountability:* Cooperative governance requires transparency in sharing information, financial reporting, and ensuring that decisions are implemented according to the collective will.
 - *Ongoing Learning and Evaluation:* Cooperatives promote continuous learning and evaluation to improve decision-making processes and overall governance effectiveness.
- **Lesson 2: Building Cooperative Leadership and Solidarity**
 - Fostering leadership skills that prioritize collective well-being and community growth

- Promoting solidarity and collaboration among cooperative members
- Highlighting the role of cooperative education and mutual support in building collective power

Module 4: *Cooperative Business Development and Sustainability to resist the culture of individualism*

Lesson 1: *Starting a Cooperative Business*

- Guiding participants through the process of initiating a cooperative enterprise
- Providing resources and practical steps for business planning and development
- Emphasizing the importance of community engagement and stakeholder involvement

Lesson 2: *Sustaining and Scaling Cooperative Businesses*

- Exploring strategies for financial sustainability and growth within cooperative enterprises
- Discussing cooperative networking and collaboration opportunities
- Addressing challenges and sharing best practices for long-term success

Module 5: *Community Empowerment and Social Impact to resist the culture of individualism*

● **Lesson 1:** *Cooperatives as Catalysts for Social Change*

- Black Power Movement
 - Black Panthers' Free Breakfast Program
- Contemporary Resistance Movement(s) examples

● **Lesson 2:** *Engaging with and Strengthening Communities*

- Identifying opportunities for cooperatives to collaborate with existing community organizations
- Discussing ways to leverage cooperative models for equitable resource distribution and community empowerment
- Encouraging participants to actively contribute to collective efforts beyond their cooperative businesses

Building Ecosystems of Care: Defining Mutual Aid and How It Shows up for Us

Written by: Rukiya Colvin

Overview

Curriculum Goal

The goal is to start creating trust among the group. What do we value and what makes us feel seen and included in the work we see as being meaningful? How do our unique, individual selves contribute to the whole?

Workshop Objectives

1. Understand who's in the room and learn who our people are
2. Create a system of accountability through random buddy assignments
3. Develop a foundation of learning how we show up in our work to work toward interdependence
4. Overall, create an understanding of how mutual aid shows up among the group using principles as stated within Mutual Aid x David Spade

Resource Materials

- ❖ [Mutual Aid](#) by Dean Spade, Chapter 1
- ❖ Adinkra Symbol: [Nteasee](#)

Lesson Plan

Check in question: "Who are your people?"

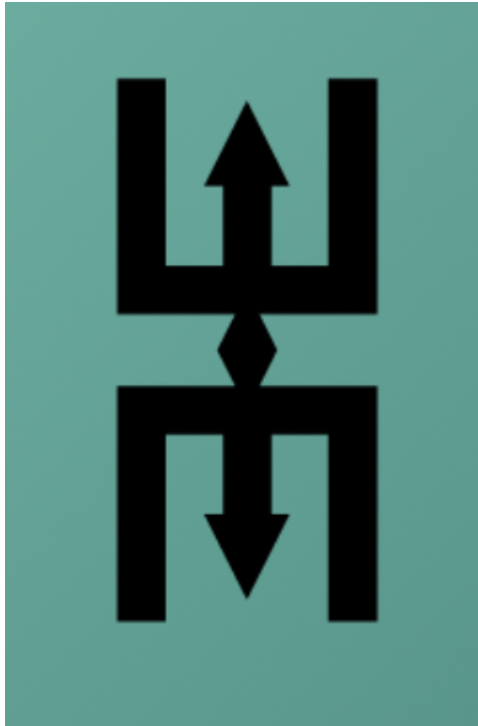
As we think about how we feel safe + seen as our whole selves and as we think about inspirations in our work and outside of our work, let's call them into space. This can be a person, group, spirit, element, movement, etc.

Exercise

Facilitator instructions:

- Allow participants to view the **Nteasee symbol** for a period of time. Ask them how they interpret the symbol? Afterward, give its definition
- Additionally, ask participants to journal for a period of time using the following prompt

Visual aid:



Writing prompt: Mutual aid to me looks like _____.

Discussion

Facilitator instructions:

- Ask a series of questions where folks will be paired with someone and they will share responses based upon the given prompts. This will help to build trust and see each other as we invoke our inner storyteller. (*tools: Experiential questioning*)
- Instruct everyone to take a deep breath and close their eyes prior to asking each question. Allow a few minutes to let each question sink in before answering w/ their partner. Ideally, answers should be based upon a recent (<1 year) occurrence. Partners should rotate per question – musical chairs style!
- Each discussion point is based upon a principle as explained in **Chapter 1 of Mutual Aid by Dean Spade**

Discussion 1: Think of a time when you fulfilled a need for someone; What was happening? What was the need? How did you feel? What were some challenges?

- ❖ Principle 1: *Mutual aid projects work to meet survival needs and build shared understanding about why people do not have what they need*

Discussion 2: Think of a time when you empowered someone; Who were they (demographically)? What evidence do you have for them being empowered? What action led to empowerment?

- ❖ Principle 2: *Mutual aid projects mobilize people, expand solidarity, and build movements*

Discussion 3: One thing I need from others to feel supported in my practices is ____.

- ❖ Principle 3: *Mutual aid projects are participatory, solving problems through collective action rather than waiting for saviors.*


Closing

Reflection

What are some noticings you have from our time together?

Quote

“Movements are born of critical connections rather than critical mass.” -Grace Lee Boggs



Mulema Ngoma: Activating Holistic Healing and Interdependent Communal Care Responsibilities with the Mentally and Physical Disabled

By Elmina Bell

What is “Indigenous” and “Holistic Healing” ?

Being holistic is about wholeness. Holistic healing gives a fuller picture that integrates mind, body/the physical, nature/environments/systems, ancestors, communities, and spirits/Spirit in the health assessment and treatment process. Holistic care provides spiritually scientific tools to look at the roots of issues and embody interconnectedness.

All Indigenous care practices are holistic but not all branded holistic healing is Indigenous.

Overview

- What is Indigenous Holistic Care
- Disability Justice Principles and Support Needs of Disability Justice Space
- Connection between the Malidoma Somè's Dagara take on the Invisible World, Gil Scott Heron, and Healing through Listening and Rhythm
- Indigenous African Understandings of Neuro-divergence and mental health and illness
- How Indigenous African
- Lessons from Neuro-Expansive Ancestors
- Sawubona Ubuntu and Strengthening Heart Based Philosophies

What is “Indigenous” and “Holistic Healing” ?

Indigenous holistic healing is not anti-treatment, anti-medicine or anti-therapy, it's anti-divorcing spirituality and environmental systemic factors from health matters.

While Indigenous and holistic care models are alternatives to western medical model, definitively seeing them as alternatives or reducing them to supplements centers western colonial health standards as superior.

Indigenous Values	Mental Health Application
Interdependence with others, environment sun, and societal systems, is central, romantic relationships and nuclear family are not seen as superior to every other relationship, Community care is valued over limitations of hyper individualism and nuclear family.	Self-regulation skills is paired with interdependent process involving relationships to people and societal systems, and relationships to ideas and places as well for co-regulation. Everyone can counsel and aid one another in their own way, not just the psychiatrist/Indigenous person.
Spirituality and cosmology is respected, often expressed through nature's elements and is powerfully connected to all affairs, Use of divination is necessary and preliminary, spiritual connection to biology and medicine. Preventitive care.	Divination and Indigenous practitioners into assessment and diagnostic process, understanding nature (literally and vibrationally/inwardly as tool to heal)
One's purpose is an extension of the spiritual and a way to honor one's unique divinity (Ori, Se,)	Understand that lack of alignment with self may be a cause of physical and or mental health problems
Reverence of Ancestors, music/art central to healing	Understanding that family/ancestral narratives and cycles and stories impact health and identity, not just medically reported patterns
A focus on balance, non-linear time and fluid layers realities , and harmony/alignment with self (holistic integration of differences)	Holistic spirit centred approaches identify root causes that allow for customization of treatment and multiples paths to healing instead of one size fits all treatment

Elmina Bell of Mulema Alchemy

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Why is it important gain and embody awareness and knowledge of Indigenous holistic practice?

Indigenous holistic healing is inherently participatory engaging in collective shared responsibility in survival and healing (interdependence)

- The effectiveness relies on and increases with each person having awareness of themselves + their roles and communities
- Removing over-reliance on nuclear family or clinicians and psychiatrists for healing, healing may arise from many different people, places, and sources, narrative therapies/oral traditions

People who face treatment resistance with western methods need other options

Move away from eugenic, sexist, Anti-Black, Anti-Indigenous roots of western methodologies and healing from harm of this

African Communal Values and Interdependence for Disability Justice Access Needs

Collective Shared Responsibility and Systemic Support and Mental Health in Indigenous Cultures

SPIRITUAL CRISIS AND COMMUNITY

In African indigenous culture, just as there is high respect for artists and healers, there is a similar respect for the person who is experiencing a psychological crisis. This crisis is seen as the result of an intense interaction with the Other World, making the person think and act crazily. Resolving that crisis, in an indigenous community, results in releasing that person's gifts to the community—the very gifts won through the person's intense dealings with Spirit. Every time I encounter a modern person who is in crisis, a person whom other people refer to as crazy, I wonder what gifts are being lost to the community.

Countless people wake up in the middle of the night wondering what is going on around and within them. Some think they are crazy, some feel something incredible is happening to them, and others just go insane. This problem is not specific to the modern world, it happens also in Africa. The difference is that in the modern world, errant behavior in a person is regarded as a personal problem, concerning only that individual. The possibility that there is a larger meaning to be found in the person's experiences, which might translate into something meaningful for that person's community, is rarely considered.

*The Healing Wisdom of Africa:
Finding Life Purpose Through
Nature, Ritual, and Community*
by Malidoma Patrice Somé

What is Disability Justice

[Image descriptions for Disability Justice principles flyer](#)

10 PRINCIPLES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

- 1 **INTERSECTIONALITY** "We do not live single issue lives" --Audre Lorde
Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world "invalid."
- 2 **LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED**
"We are led by those who most know these systems." --Aurora Levins Morales
- 3 **ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC**
In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.
- 4 **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING**
Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.
- 5 **RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS**
People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.
- 6 **SUSTAINABILITY**
We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.
- 7 **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY**
We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.
- 8 **INTERDEPENDENCE** We meet each others' needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over our lives.
- 9 **COLLECTIVE ACCESS** As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.
- 10 **COLLECTIVE LIBERATION** No body or mind can be left behind
-- only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

www.sinsinvalid.org

SINS INVALID 2015

Needs people in Disability Justice Spaces are Naming

- Having accessible entry ways and seating
- Having subtitles on videos and image descriptions on pictures for deaf folks
- Medical gaslighting (also happens across racial/weight/ gender lines for non-disabled)
- Co-vid safety protocols and supplies to access spaces or events
- The amount of disabled people increases as long co-vid continues
- Financial and benefits struggles
- Carceral Abuse people with mental illnesses face in psych wards and prisons
- Those with mental illness are more likely to be abused or killed than to abuse others and this is even more so for Black people



[Irvo Otieno murdered at Virginia psych ward](#)

Connection between the Malidoma Somè's On the Invisible World, Gil Scott Heron, and Healing through Listening and Rhythm

Ancestor Malidoma Patrice Somè would often say that the Western world fears, devalues and fails to understand the invisible, where as the Indigenous African way reveres the invisible and is spiritually literate and are "in tune"

Ancestor Gil Scott Heron on harming/ rhythm, revolution and community depicts for us the hidden place from which revolution happens.

Motelami open heart minded

When revolution happens, healing happens..



Balancing Boundaries with Interdependence and Communal Responsibilities help us with Disability Justice Needs and Survive the Pandemic

Mbongi is an Indigenous African concept from the Bakongo Bantu people meaning: “community, house without rooms/walls [separation], and learning place.” Mbongi teaches us that it is through community that we solve our problems and also nourish our creativity.

It is through community that we support one another, survive, and thrive. Indigenous peoples globally know that the ancestors, nature, and the stars are a part of community too.



Children of the World of Malidoma Malé

13

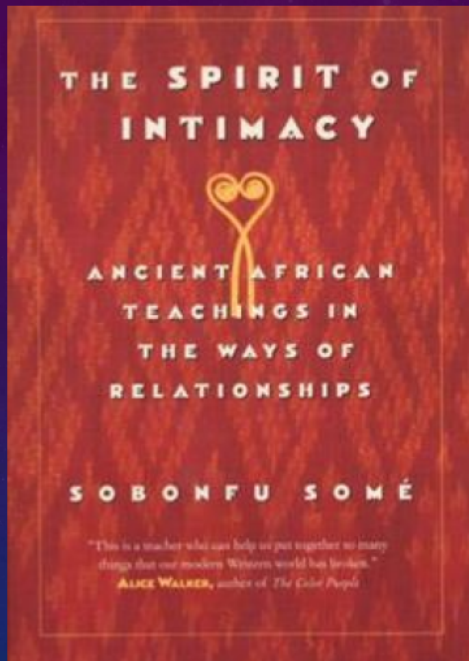
How Indigenous African Communal Values can help us with Disability Justice Needs and Survive the Pandemic

-helping disabled can be seen and including invisible people in the community and supporting them in their destinies

“Each member [of a community] is like a cell in the body. The group needs the individual and vice-versa.”

“A true community begins in the hearts of the people involved. It is not a place of distraction but a place of being. It is not a place where you reform, but a place where you go home to. Finding a home is what people in community try and accomplish.”

-Ancestor Malidoma Patrice Somè, from his book *Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community*



Community is the spirit, the guiding light of the tribe, whereby people come together in order to fulfill a specific purpose, to help others fulfill their purpose, and to take care of one another. The goal of the community is to make sure that each member of the community is heard and is properly giving the gifts he has brought to this world. Without this giving, the community dies. And without the community, the individual is left without a place where he can contribute. The community is that grounding place where people come and share their gifts and receive from others.

When you don't have community, you are not listened to; you don't have a place you can go to and feel that you really belong. You don't have people to affirm who you

The Embrace of Community
are and to support you in bringing forward your gifts. This disempowers the psyche, making you vulnerable to consumerism and all the things that come along with it. Also, it leaves many people who have wonderful contributions to make holding back their gifts, not knowing where to put them. And without the unloading of our gifts we experience a blockage inside, which affects us spiritually, mentally, and physically in many different ways. We are left without a home to go to when we need to be seen.

Sobonfu Somé-The Spirit of Intimacy:

Saturn Ingress in tropical Pisces and Full Moon tropical Virgo/sidereal Leo and sidereal Aqua/tropical Pisces Polarity



Ancestor Barbara Sizemore helps us to integrate the polarity of this transit through acknowledging interdependence, that our unique shine (Leo) is supported by compassion and sacrifice of the community/group (Aqua)

"I'm not giving up my individual rights to sacrifice for the group, that's not what it's all about. Hey, the problem with that is, the constitution gives you individual rights but you can only protect them as a group."

-Ancestor Barbara Sizemore

Co-vid 19 and Spiritual Alerts from the dream realm



-Different people having un-induced sightings of Abalu Aye in dreams months prior to quarantine

-June 2019-2020 Otura divination advising cleanliness and hygiene

-Image description of left image: Orisha Babalu Aye standing in front of a blurred forest background wearing purple sash and knitted pants with rafia endings holding a staves. Sash is adorned with plants

Ancestral Herbalism from the Dream realm: Relationship with Lemongrass for Co-Vid Prevention and Immune Health



Lessons from Neuroexpansive Ancestors and Re-Defining Mental Disability

Various neurodivergence definitions

1. The way your brain naturally functions that is different from expected cultural norm (most often used in the West)
2. brain changes that have occurred as a result of physical or emotional trauma (for example cognitive changes from head trauma in a car accident, cognitive changes due to stress from PTSD emotional trauma or depression)

Not everyone's brain and being is the same. There are many ways to think, learn, and communicate.

Diversity is naturally accepted in Indigenous African cultures and this understanding guides psycho-spiritual treatment, while the western colonial eugenic capitalistic psych is one size fits all with forced conformity/uniformity (neurotypicalness)

This is why I am inviting
Black people (only and
specifically) to explore
“neuroexpansive.”

Neuroexpansive (adj.) :

A rejection of the term “neurodivergent”¹
and the ideology that undergirds it².

1) Coined by Kassiane Asasumasu

2) Whiteness is not the center of our
[Black] experiences. We do not divert
from any “norm” or “standard” of white
nondisabled bodyminds.



Neuro-expansive coined by Ngozi (Ngwangwa)

Neuro-expansive Ancestors

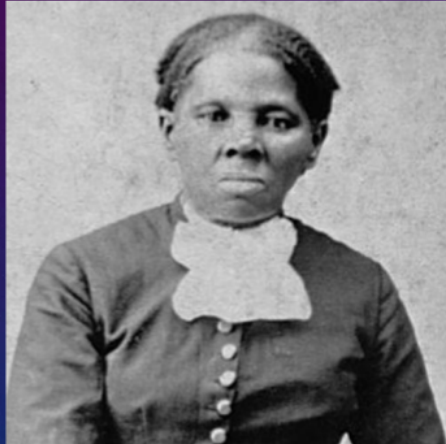


“We have ordered things so long in a certain way, we
are numb. Nobody dares question it. This is what is wrong,
symbolically, with America.” ~ Nina Simone



“I may be crazy, but that don’t make me wrong,”
Ancestor Marsha P Johnson trans activist

Neuroexpansive Ancestors



To be clear, I don't romanticize madness, but without sublime madness, there is no Harriet Tubman crazy enough to return some thirteen times to slave territory to free more slaves. Without sublime madness, we will accept the reality that capital trumps life, and we will go extinct [Psychiatrist Dr. Bruce Levine on Harriet Tubman](#)

Decolonizing and Reindigenizing our Connection to Our Emotions: Unpacking Emotional Regulation

“Epistemology relates to the nature and basis of knowledge, and the term affective refers to the quality of one's feeling or emotional being. Affective epistemology, then, refers to the process and belief system of a people discovering knowledge and truth, i.e., awareness through feeling or emotion. This feeling orientation to knowledge is highly representative of African people and is recently experiencing a reawakening among many progressive Western thinkers and health professionals” -Frederick Phillips Progressive life Center (Davies, 1983; Capra, 1983; Myers, 1988)

Decolonizing and Reindigenizing our Connection to Our Emotions: Unpacking Emotional Regulation

Who decides what does and doesn't need to be regulated? What's regular? (Eugenic roots of Western Psychology)

Regulation shouldn't be synonymous with taming ourselves and important truths

Regulation can vary from person to person, healthy regulation can take various forms, what may regulate one may dysregulate another.

The West fears emotion, cis-het White norms to keep us desensitized and disconnected from our emotions and body, messengers for what our spirit and body needs

We must practice interdependent communal and systemic co-regulation

Chlöe Bell of Ndlovu Ndlovu

Hyperpathology in Western Health and Letting Go of One Size Fits All Labels and treatments

Indigenous Models of Diagnosis Facilitate person centered/customized assessment care than generalized DSM diagnosis+adds clarity

"In the West, people tend to standardize everything.

So if you describe one ritual, people think it applies to all situations. Even though every case is different, people will follow the same formulas. In ritual, that doesn't work. A ritual has to be made specifically for the people who are involved in it. And if you try to standardize things, you actually take away the spirit of the people and force them into a false situation" -Sobonfu Somé, *The Spirit of Intimacy: Ancient African Teachings in the Ways of Relationships*

Being Disabled from an indigenous African Perspective can be

- Not having what one needs to authentically be themselves, connected to their authentic spirits and live out their soul's destiny
- not having access to authentic community
- not having access to spiritual literacy ((nature knowledge, ancestor work, etc)
- Not having food and shelter
- systemic oppression can be dis-abling

Rituals for Relationship/Communitify Building and Healing that Exercise can Expand Our Hearts

Rituals for Relationship/Communitify Building and Healing that Exercise can Expand Our Hearts

- Food
- Ancestral supports
- Divining on purpose
- Grounding meeting points/similarities
- Acknowledging identity differences and privileges identities center values
- Memory Lanes
- Energetic clearing and centering (sound, candles aroma therapy, incense, cleansing waters)
- Memories of support
- Symbol circle
- Talking stick
- Silence (Inner Listening)

“Tea may not always be the answer, but I find it can help clarify the question.” -Cassie, The Good Witch (show)

Activating Indigenous African Communal Bantu Philosophy of Ubuntu through Sawubona (Witnessing)

-With this Zulu/Bantu greeting Sawubona, sometimes the word you are still you all and is used interchangeably, as it's understood that no one got here or is sustained here by themselves

-The relationships between humans and spirits, their wills, needs, and personalities are important in the healing process. In all human interventions, it is God who heals." (Okpalaenwe & Odigwe, 2018).



Thinning Veil of Mulema Alchemy

30



Embracing Change :: Transforming for Tomorrow

by Kwasi Akwamu

"i₁ believe in the Community as more important than the individual."

~New Afrikan Creed

"i believe in the family and the Community, and in the Community as a family, and i will work to make this concept live." ~New Afrikan Creed₂

Change isn't always easy. Without vision, it is a move into the unknown, the unpredictable. We become comfortable with the status quo, even as We complain about how our needs aren't being met, or how hard life is for us. It is the devil We know. We know he kills, but We kinda think that We will somehow slide by unscathed. If We manage to escape the police bullet, or to even keep some semblance of a decent job, that utility bill, and grocery bill – that keeps going up – is guaranteed to terrorize us on schedule.

Despite all that We know from our experience on this earth, We ignore the heaviness of it for the sake of trying not to be driven stone crazy by it. Oppression is oppressive. And it aint going anywhere, until We slay the beast once and for all. That is what liberation is supposed to be about: freedom from and the freedom to. Yet, the best We can seem to do is act like it doesn't exist and hope it doesn't cause any major complications in the days ahead.

We avoid change because it seems impossible. Daunting. We can't even get along. Can't trust one another. We're afraid of being betrayed once again by someone (or someones) We wanted to believe in. Folks can't even be on time, or do what they say they gon' do, how are We supposed to believe in change?

The pain We feel is real. It isn't abstract, it exists. It is a living thing, and was borne somewhere. It was here when We arrived, so it seems organic to our existence in this lifetime. But it wasn't always this way, this bad.

Humanity became cruel, and is getting worse. Humanity lost its humanity, forgot the social basis for its existence. Ubuntu₃. *i am because We are and because We are therefore i am*. Some simply say, *i am We*.

Rather than cooperate, We compete. The greater good is sacrificed for greed and personal gratification. *Me, myself and I*. Toxicity at its ugliest.

Rather than share, We hoard. And flex on those who don't got. Those who has historically had the least flex the hardest. Materialism becomes a central part of our identities. Relationships are commodified. No romance without finance.

How does one even begin to create change in the face of this madness? How is it even imaginable that We could do anything that would leave a noticeable impression on the future? Where do We even start? And what exactly is it supposed to look like? How will i notice it when

it appears?

All real change starts with self. It doesn't end there, but it absolutely starts there. It is complemented with vision,.

Liberation for New Afrikan₄ people is ultimately about restoring our humanity. It is about putting the pieces back together that were deliberately broken so that We might be more easily taken advantage of. We are both oppressed and degraded to facilitate our exploitation. And as simple as this sounds, it is true.

That is how capitalism took root, that system that is adamant about ownership and private property, and being an individual separate from society. It started with owning us, Afrikan captives. Then they said We were less than beasts of burden. We were said to be good for nothing, but charged with doing everything. Cognitive dissonance – that notion of acting like We don't know We did all that made this land prosper, and doubting that We could do it again for ourselves – dogs our trail.

Restoring our humanity is remembering *ubuntu*, the social basis of our existence. Knowing that if We are not our brothers and sisters keepers, then We are not yet ready to be free. Indeed, liberation is a collective enterprise that only start with us as individuals but ends in togetherness.

When Fanon says “it is the liberated individual who undertakes to build the new society,”₅ he means you must be the change that is to come, *now*. A living example of the kind of people that will populate the new society that comprises liberation. This requires transformation of the self. That is the first and most important change. It sounds challenging in the face of everything swirling around us. But it isn't an endeavor to be undertaken alone. Only *you* can change *you*, but the process is best and most effectively achieved communally, with others. Like starting a new diet or exercise routine, it is easier to do so with companions. No one can determine the food you eat but *you*; no one besides *you* can run the laps *you* need to run to lose those unwanted pounds. But someone who shares the vision can help keep us on course. We, in fact, help each other. And the more others, the more change.

Change is hard mostly because it seems you are swimming against the current. And, for the most part, that would be true. But if you are modeling a better tomorrow, unlearning false narratives, discovering your wildest potential, and working with others then liberation is just over the horizon. This is why vision is so important. We must envision the change that We wish to see and move towards it. Without change in ourselves, there can be no true change in the world around us. We must empty our carrying bags of all germs and toxins that might pollute the new society.

When We rediscover our humanity, We find it easier to share, to work with and on behalf of others. We find value in the old value systems that carried us over during difficult times. Like the mutual aid societies after the end of colonial bondage (enslavement). Or the rent parties of previous generations. We used to show up and show out for one another. We cared for each other, and knew that without one another We would not have made it as far as We have. This is what it means to go back and fetch it (sankofa)₆.

We were our best selves when We functioned as a community. Transformation requires unlearning many of ways that We currently think, of the ways We currently relate to one another. We must cast away our aspirations and expectations of yesterday if they don't fit squarely with the vision of tomorrow. *Re-learning* how to work together is liberation work. Yet all of the value systems We say We cherish point to cooperation, reciprocity, sharing. None advise us to endlessly accumulate that which nature has allotted for all of us.

The *New Afrikan Creed* exhorts us towards collective struggle, to fashion victory in concert with our brothers and sisters. The *Nguzo Saba*, encourages us to practice *ujamaa*, to build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together. This is one of the ways by which We begin to reclaim our humanity.

NOTES:

1. Author intentionally utilizes an intentional style of grammar that includes using a lower-case “i” and upper-case “We” to reinforce the notion of the Community as more important than the individual. Additionally, spellings of Afrika with a “k” versus a “c” derives from the realization that the “c” is rarely utilized in anglicized Afrikan grammar, and that use of the “k” spelling suggests a liberated cultural orientation, freed of eurocentric connotations.
2. The *New Afrikan Creed* is a set of social, economic and political values, beliefs and commitments that originated in 1969 with the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, and is recited below in full:

i believe in the spirituality, humanity and genius of Black People, and in Our new pursuit of these values.

i believe in the family and the community, and in the community as a family, and i will work to make this concept live.

i believe in the community as more important than the individual.

i believe in constant struggle for freedom, to end oppression and build a better world. i believe in collective struggle; in fashioning victory in concert with my brothers and sisters.

i believe that the fundamental reason Our oppression continues is that We, as a people, lack the power to control Our lives.

i believe that the fundamental way to gain that power, and end oppression, is to build a sovereign Black Nation.

i believe that all the land in America, upon which We have lived for a long time, which We have worked and built upon, and which We have fought to stay on, is land that belongs to us as a people.

i believe in the Malcolm X Doctrine: that We must organize upon this land, and hold a plebiscite, to tell the world by a vote that We are free and Our land independent, and that after the vote, We must stand ready to defend Ourselves, establishing the nation beyond contradiction.

Therefore, i pledge to struggle without cease until We have won sovereignty. i pledge to struggle without fail until We have built a better condition than the world has yet known.

i will give my life, if that is necessary. i will give my time, my mind, my strength and my wealth because this is necessary.

i will follow my chosen leaders and help them.

i will love my brothers and sisters as myself.

i will steal nothing from a brother or sister, cheat no brother or sister, misuse no brother or sister, inform on no brother or sister, and spread no gossip.

i will keep myself clean in body, dress and speech, knowing that i am a light set on a hill, a true representative of what we are building.

i will be patient and uplifting with my brothers & sisters, and i will seek by word and by deed to heal the black family; to bring into the movement and into the community, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters left by the wayside.

Now, freely and of my own will, i pledge this creed, for the sake of freedom for my people and a better world, on pain of disgrace and banishment if i prove false. For i am - by the inspiration of Our ancestors and the Grace of Our Creator — a New Afrikan.

3. Ubuntu is South Afrikan term that in its basic meaning translates to *humanity*, however it embodies a deeper cultural/philosophical worldview that is often translated as *i am because We are and because We are, therefore, i am*. It alludes to human interconnectedness.
4. New Afrikanas a reference of identity refers to those Afrikans of different ethnicities who arrived in america as a result of human trafficking, and having evolved into a new single people as a result of their struggle against oppression and for freedom over the course of 246 years of enslavement, and for many generations after slavery ended, til today. The term itself was coined by Queen Mother Audley Moore in 1968 during the Black Government Conference held in Detroit.
5. Fanon, Frantz. "Decolonization and Independence," in *Towards the African Revolution*, 1967. Monthly Review Press. He elaborates: "The liberation of the individual does not follow national liberation. An authentic national liberation exists only to the precise degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his [or her] own liberation."
6. *Sankofa* is a symbol in the pantheon of West Afrikan adinkra symbols; it is depicted as a bird, that is reaching its beak backwards to retrieve what it has left behind it. Sankofa is roughly translated as "go back and fetch it," referring to the history, culture, values that sustained us across time.
7. The Nguzo Saba is the value system, consisting of seven principles, that serves as the

foundation for the cultural observance of Kwanzaa, and is recited below in full:

Umoja (Unity) *To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.*

Kujichagulia (Self-Determination) *To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.*

Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility) *To build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to solve them together.*

Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics) *To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.*

Nia (Purpose) *To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.*

Kuumba (Creativity) *To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.*

Imani (Faith) *To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.*

Created by [Ananya Taylor](#). It is meant to be an introduction to some of the most popular theories, and an exhaustive list of the contents of Black liberation theories themselves.



Four Corners

Written by: shakara tyler

Overview: Explores the histories, presents and futures of white supremacy, colonialism, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy and their intersections. Ideally, this could facilitate greater understanding of oppressive systems through analysis, discussion and reflection. The goal is to use the prompts and process as a dialogue generator across varying viewpoints. Expect to agree and disagree. Expect to be pushed. Expect to be uncomfortable. Expect new revelations.

Process:

1. Label each corner of the room accordingly: disagree, agree, neutral, abstain.
2. Facilitator provides a statement.
3. Everyone walks to wherever you stand on that particular statement. There are no right answers; many of these statements are intentionally ambiguous or provocative. Take as much time as needed to reflect on your position. Uncertainty is valid and welcomed. We are all on our journeys to figuring out what we know, why and how. Be patience with yourself and others.
4. Facilitator asks for explanations or reasonings on why participants chose their position.

**Start out with a test statement to ensure the group is clear on the process. It could be a silly example to practice and break the ice in the space. For example, "Prince is the most stylish artist in Black music history" or "Green vegetables taste better than purple vegetables."*

**All of the statements for each category do not have to be used in the process. Use the statements that you think will resonate the most with participants. This may be in numerical order or not.*

White Supremacy

1. I understand the origins of white supremacy as a system that has strategically politically, economically, socially, legally, mentally and culturally designated white people as superior beings to everyone else..
2. I understand how white supremacy operates in global society.
3. I understand how white supremacy impacts my everyday life.
4. I believe my daily actions, behavior and beliefs are complicit to the system of white supremacy.

5. I believe I am a victim of white supremacy.
6. I believe the system of white supremacy can be dismantled.

Colonialism

7. I understand the origins of colonialism as an operation of power in which one way of knowing the world is extinguished and replaced with another.
8. I understand how colonialism operates in global society.
9. I understand how colonialism impacts my everyday life.
10. I believe my daily actions, behavior and beliefs are complicit to the system of white supremacy.
11. I believe Black people are a colonized people.

Racial Capitalism

12. I understand racial capitalism as the centrality of race in structuring hierarchies within capitalist economies and is dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide.
13. I understand racism and capitalism to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship.
14. I understand what social class is, and I know what my own class background is.
15. I'm comfortable talking about my class background.
16. I'm comfortable talking about my race background.
17. Race has a bigger impact on everyday life than class.
18. Class has a bigger impact on everyday life than race.

Heteropatriarchy

19. I understand the system of heteropatriarchy as a system of domination that privileges white heterosexual men in material and non-material ways and remains a building block of a nation-state form of governance.
20. I understand what sexuality is, and I know what my own sexuality background is.
21. I understand what gender is, and I know what my own gender background is.
22. I understand what sex is, and I know what my own sex background is.
23. I'm comfortable talking about my gender background.

- 24. I'm comfortable talking about my sexuality background.
- 25. I'm comfortable talking about my sex background.
- 26. I understand how heteropatriarchy impacts my everyday life.
- 27. I believe my daily actions, behavior and beliefs are complicit to the system of heteropatriarchy.
- 28. I believe I am a victim of heteropatriarchy.
- 29. I believe the system of heteropatriarchy can be dismantled.

Intersections

- 30. I understand how all of these systems are interconnected.
- 31. I know what I can do to dismantle these systems.
- 32. I believe in a world beyond these oppressive systems.

Cooperative Conflict Resolution with Power and Privilege in Mind

Written by: shakara tyler

Overview: Explore conflict as an opportunity to grow as people, relationships, family and community and as adrienne maree brown states, getting “skilled at... healing that changes material conditions.” Part 1 is intended to facilitate deeper and non-white supremacist cultural meanings of conflict, unpacking conflict styles for greater self-awareness, exploration of identities and power (and privilege) attached to them and some examples of conflict as case studies (if appropriate). Part 2 is intended to serve as a suggested process of working through conflict, particularly in a cooperative setting. Part 1 is highly recommended as a preface explored in some way prior to a conflict, and thus, conflict resolution process unfolding as detailed in Part 2. Part 1 urges you, as we say, to “stay ready, so you don’t have to get ready.”

Materials:

- Ancestral altar materials
- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Talking stone or piece (Rose Quartz suggested for the symbolizing of emotional healing)

Approximate Time: 2 – 8 hours (Generally)

***Depends on so many factors such as scale of conflict, number of people involved, historical contexts and so many other things. Take as much or little time as needed.

Part 1

Unlearning and Relearning Purposes and Orientations of Conflict

1. Develop process norms (some suggestions below).
 - a. One mic
 - b. Ideas are debatable, experience is not
 - c. Listen to understand
 - d. Multiple truths can co-exist
2. Identify meanings of conflict. Discuss with a partner or small group for about 10-20 minutes, depending on the number of people sharing.
 - a. What comes to mind when you think of conflict?
 - b. What do you feel in your body when you hear or are confronted with conflict?Share what was discussed in the small group (with permission from others) with the larger group. *Consider mind mapping or scribing a diagram of the various meanings of conflict.*

3. Discuss how conflict can be an opportunity (indeed uncomfortable and somewhat dangerous) and not merely a negative experience. Some (untraditional) definitions of conflict include:

- a. *Conflict grows out of challenges that are presented by spirit. It is a gift, meant to help us move forward. It is through conflict that we gain knowledge of ourselves and learn new situations for using our own gifts. — Sobonfu E. Some, The Spirit of Intimacy*
- b. *“We create more possibilities for what we can do together in the world when we perceive conflict and difference as an opportunity, a gift, to expand our capacity to be in solidarity.” - adrienne maree brown, Emergent Strategy*
- c. *“Conflict is change waiting to happen.” - CompassPoint training team*

4. Use the Identity Wheel to identify your personal and social positions in society.

5. Think about how these identifications incubate relations to power. Power can be defined as capacity to shape your outcomes of your circumstances and the ability to influence other people's outcomes. *Be aware of comforts and discomforts, fears and complacencies.*

6. Think about how these relations to power impact how you navigate conflict. Discuss with a partner or small group (different people from previous pair or small group share, if possible) for about 10-20 minutes, depending on the number of people sharing. *Consider thinking about an example of when you felt powerful (or a weapon of power) and another instance when you felt powerless (or a victim of power).*

- a. How have you engaged in conflict previously based on your identity?
- b. How did you feel in those moments of conflict based on power position?

Share what was discussed in the small group (with permission from others) with the larger group. *Consider mind mapping or scribing a diagram of the various responses of power and conflict.*



7. Think about your approach to conflict. Here are some pre-identified conflict styles:
 - a. Avoid - To side step or ignore the problem, issue, or person
 - b. Accommodate - To yield your own position in favor of the other party's need in a conflict
 - c. Compete - The inverse of accommodation, where you fight your corner and insist on 'winning' the conflict
 - d. Compromise - Both sides yield or give up part of their position in order to resolve the issue
 - e. Collaborate - Working together to satisfy both parties; distinct from compromise in that neither side has to give anything up

What other conflict styles can you identify? Think about your experiences, goals and motivations in conflict.

8. Think of a conflict you were previously engaged in. Reflect on your own with the following suggested prompts:
 - a. What conflict have you directly encountered within your family, organization or community?
 - b. What harm was caused?
 - c. How did it make you feel?
 - d. What were your relationships to power?
 - e. What would you have done differently?
9. Reflect on all components of these activity. Where have you been with conflict? Where do you want to go with conflict? Consider writing some reflections.
10. Share out with the group your personal reflections comprehensively across the activity, if desired. *It is more than fine if no one chooses to share. Unshared thoughts with the group are always valid and valuable.*

Part 2

Resolving Conflict Process Between or Among People:

1. Create an ancestral altar (maybe in the center of the room). Begin with libations to the ancestors. Maybe focus on specific people by whom you feel held, protected and loved. Invite them into the space. Ask for their guidance to produce the most optimal outcome for the situation. Revisit the altar space as often as needed throughout the process. Maybe ask each person to bring a photo of their chosen ancestor(s).
2. Be aware of accessibility needs. Ask if anyone needs support to be as present in the space as possible (ex. phone call to children or caregivers, fresh air breaks, etc.).

3. Develop process norms (some suggestions below).
 - a. One mic
 - b. Ideas are debatable, experience is not
 - c. Listen to understand
 - d. Multiple truths can co-exist
4. Identify 1-3 cooperative principles that are most important to you (autonomy and independence, shared work and responsibility, collective care, etc.) and explain how your definition or interpretation of the concepts.
***These do not have to be strictly or only from the Rochdale Cooperative Principles.
5. Identify the conflict that occurred. Each person takes as much time as they need to speak about the conflict. Be aware of the divergent or convergent accounts of the conflict.
 - a. What happened?
 - b. How did it make them feel in that moment? *Use "I feel" statements rather than "you did..."*
 - c. How do they feel in this moment in a healing process? *Use "I feel" statements rather than "you are causing..."*
6. Focus on the other person's or people (if multiple) feelings, especially if there are divergent accounts.
 - a. Is it possible to understand, or accept their feelings as valid in spite of disagreement? *Be aware of intention vs. impact.*
 - b. How would you feel if the roles were swapped?
 - c. How do you think you can address the other person's feelings?
7. Speak your needs to heal or move forward in repairing and sustaining the relationship.
 - a. What do you need or want from this person or people to continue to be in relationship?
 - b. What do you need or want as an outcome to this occurrence?
8. Set intentions to heal the relationship. Each person speak an intention.
 - a. What are you prepared to do with the intention of addressing harm and repairing the relationship? *Be as direct as possible. Use "I will" statements. Avoid cause and effect statements such as "If you do this..., I will do this..."*
9. Revisit cooperative principles shared at the beginning of the process. Reflect on how these are showing up or not in the space or your organizational or community context, generally. Each person speak (if they choose) on their understanding of the presence (or lack) of cooperative principles honed in the space.
 - a. What principles are showing up for you?
 - b. What principles would you like to see more of?

10. Develop action plan moving forward (if the time and space is prepared to do so). Each person takes about 5-10 minutes (or longer as needed) to think about at least 1 specific action they will take to address harms caused, feeling shared, and goals for future building. Be aware of the cooperative principles shared by each person at the beginning.
 - a. What is an action (verb) you will take to address harms caused, feeling shared, and goals for future building? Use “I will” statements. Avoid cause and effect statements such as “If you do this..., I will do this...”


***Part 2 may or may not work for the specific conflict, at hand. There are so many factors that influence the context and many times, the process unfolded above will not adequately address the conflict in healthy ways. Use, adapt, and reflect, accordingly.

These activities were developed by shakara tyler with feedback from friends and comrades in Black liberation movement work. The following have informed this document: resources such as [Emergent Strategy](#) by adrienne maree brown and a Conflict Resolution training by [CompassPoint](#) along with shakara’s experiences and reflections of being in conflict and facilitating resolution processes in various settings.



The Intersection of Queerness & Blackness: Impacts on the Food Justice Movement

Gabrielle Davis MPH, MA, RRT, CHES, TTS, LPC,
NCC
June 2023



Disclosures

- This presentation does not reflect the thoughts, ideas and opinions of my employer at National Co+op Grocers.
- This presentation does reflect the thoughts, ideas and opinions of my employer at Equitable Counseling & Consulting.
- No financial compensation was or will be received for this presentation.

QUEER vs LGBTQIA

- Queer is a word that describes sexual and gender identities other than straight and [cisgender](#). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and [transgender](#) people may all identify with the word queer.
- Queer is sometimes used to express that sexuality and gender can be complicated, change over time, and might not fit neatly into either/or identities, like male or female, gay or straight.
- The word 'queer' has been used historically as a weapon to hurt queer people, but has been reclaimed by some individuals within the community.
- LGBTQIA is an acronym for **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual**-Created to be inclusive of everyone on the queer diaspora

'In Community' Discrimination

Reasons (Myths)

- Religious Trauma
- Trendy
- Sexual Assault
- Daddy/Mommy Issues

Outcome (Myths)

- Negative impacts on masculinity
- Mockery of the Black community
- Encourages children to be queer
- Ruins the sanctity of marriage

'In Community' Discrimination

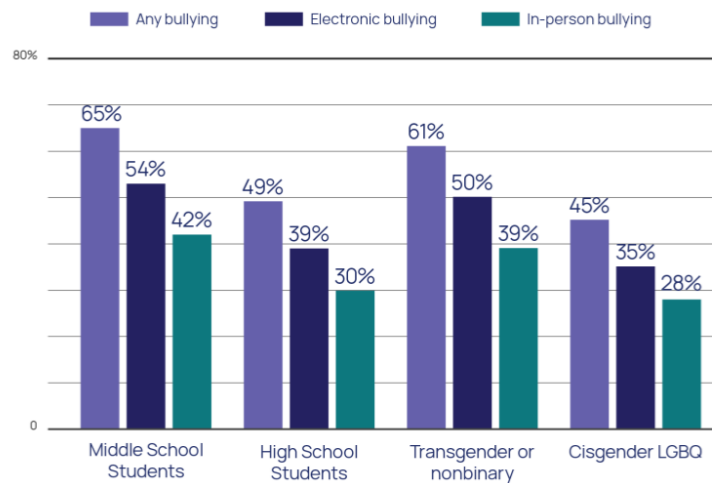
Outcome (Truths)

- Increased homelessness (especially with youth)
- Increased suicide completion
- Increased self-harm
- Increased substance use
- Increased bullying

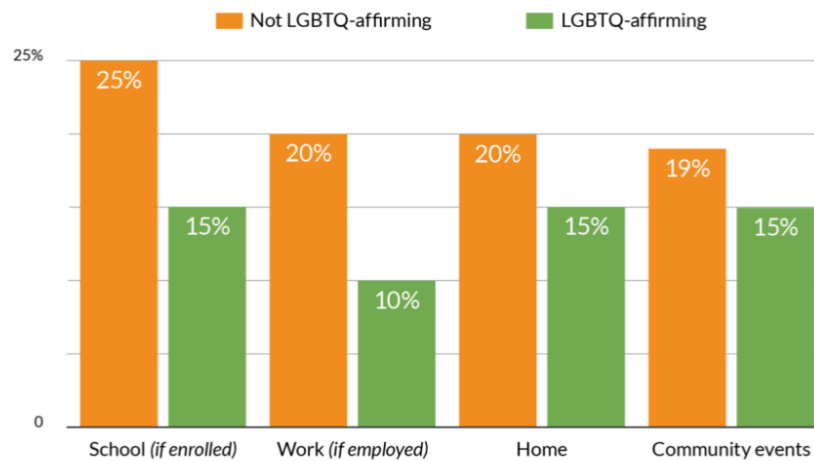
Outcome (Truths)

- Decreased participation in community organizing
- Absence from events with relatives
- Chosen family created
- Money spent outside of community
- Atheism*

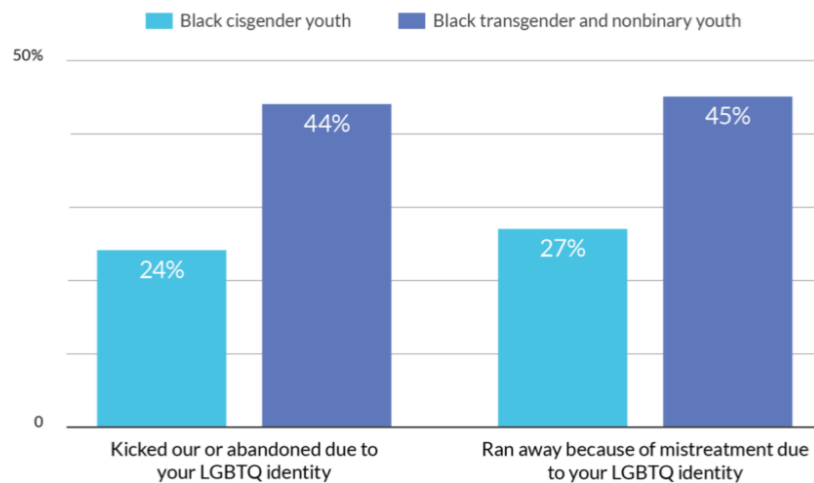
Bullying Experiences among LGBTQ Youth



Black LGBTQ youth who attempted suicide in the past year



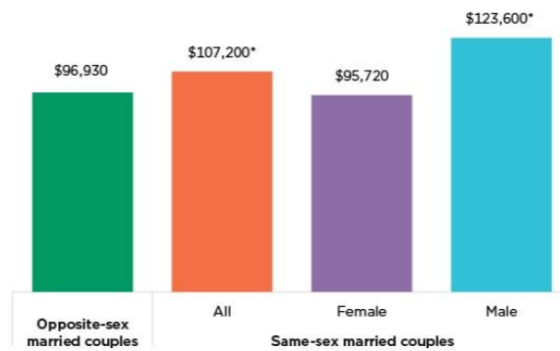
Among youth who experienced housing instability:





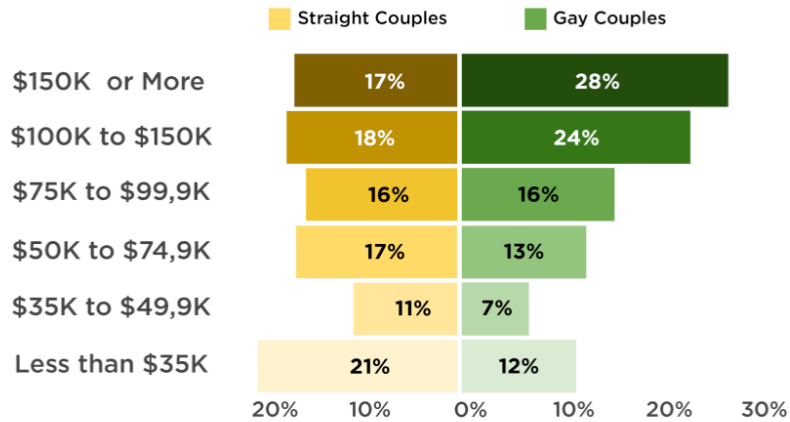
ECONOMIC POWER

Figure 1.
Median Household Income for Married Couples: 2019
(In 2019 U.S. dollars)



* Difference from opposite-sex married couples is significant at the 90% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-year data.

Married Straight vs. Married Gay Couples' Incomes



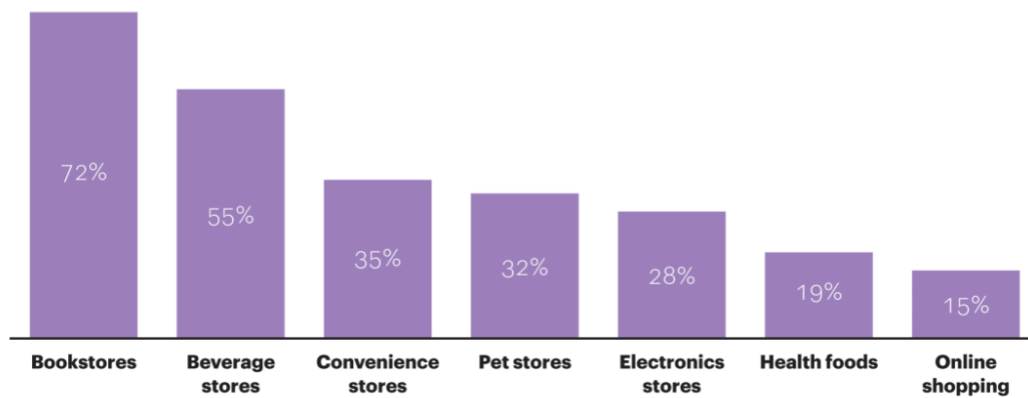
Sources:
<http://www.howmuch.net/articles/married-couples-household-incomes>
<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center>

howmuch.net

Figure 2

LGBTQ+ consumers have unique lifestyles and values that are reflected in their shopping habits

% greater per-capita spending than non-LGBTQ+ shoppers



Sources: Nielsen – 2015 LGBT Consumer Report; A.T. Kearney analysis



QUEER FARMERS/FARMS EXIST

Brown Girl Farms (CA)

Saint Roch Farm (TN)

Fresher Together (IL)

Fennigans Farms (MI)

Maroon Grove Farms (VA)

EXCLUSION CAUSES...

Feelings of unsafety to recruit members/volunteers

Inability to retain members

Disinterest in leadership roles within movement

Financial partnerships with non-Black organizations vs Black organizations

EXCLUSION CAUSES....

Lack of participation in Black-led institutions and organizations

Intergenerational rifts

Disinterest in powering Black food justice movement centric movements

How Can We Improve

InTRApersonal

- Refers to something occurring within self
- Just you and your work
- Reflections within yourself
- Thoughts and analysis of thoughts
- Most important

InTERpersonal

- Occurs between two or more people
- Exchange of ideas
- Shared learning
- Secondary to intrapersonal work
- Folks mostly skip to this step

Prioritize acceptance over understanding

Respect people's pronouns

Mind our business

How Can We Improve



✉ gabriellendavis@gmail.com

 [@GabNicDav](https://twitter.com/GabNicDav)

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Detroit Community Wealth Fund Cooperative Development Toolkit

Your Team & Start Up Roles

1. Determining Start-up Roles

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
4-5 Hours (Over 1-2 meetings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook• Padlet (great way to organize a brainstorm sesh)
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our Hard Skills• Crafting Our Committees

Your Current Members & Their Skills

Knowing what “hard skills” each team member possesses will help you determine who will take on what role as you continue to develop your business. “Hard skills” are measurable, tangible skills that it usually takes training and practice to learn.

Below, you’ll see a typical role/team in a start-up with a list of the responsibilities it comes with.

Customer Team

Bottom-lining the plan for customer management. Research the target customers and how the business will connect with these potential customers. Create a plan for ongoing customer engagement. Works with the branding/ marketing team to bottom-line the launch of the business.

Management/Governance Team

Bottom-lining how the business will operate, working with the team to identify who will be in what role, and what additional training and skills are needed to be successful. Will also bottom-line completing the governance documents and creating the worker-owner policies and procedures.

Finance Team

Bottom-lining the financial planning and modeling for the businesses. This includes being responsible for figuring out start up costs, and the plan for financing or fundraising for the business.

Product Team

Bottom-lining the planning for what products and services the business will sell, performing product research, identifying where products and raw materials will be sourced from, and working with the finance team to price out costs of goods sold.

Branding / Marketing Team

Bottom-lining the branding, social media, marketing, look and feel of the business. This includes working to create the brand identity (logo, style guide, etc) and also work on the media plan - create and manage the social media accounts. Works with the customer team to bottom-lining the launch of the business.

Other Teams

Are there any departments that don’t have enough (or any) interested members? These are roles you may have to recruit for. Start thinking now about where you might find committed new co-op members to fill this role, or how your team can work to gain the necessary skills!)

Steps to Start Up: Creating a Comprehensive Work Plan

1. Start-Up Checklist
2. Finalizing Your Start-Up Roles
3. Building Your 4-Month Work Plan

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
1-2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
Resources	
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Start-Up Roles• Our Final Start-Up To-Do List• Our 4-Month Work plan Chart

Start-Up Checklist

Review the following checklist and highlight what your co-op still needs to finish or follow-up on in order to launch your Minimum Viable Product/Phase 1:

- ☐ Find accountant or accounting software
- ☐ Set up a payroll system
- ☐ Determine & purchase necessary Insurance
- ☐ Finish Your Mission Statement, Brand Statement, Values Statement
- ☐ Choose brand colours
- ☐ Finalize Your Business's Name
- ☐ Finalize Your Product/Inventory List
- ☐ Finalize Estimate of Start-up Costs
- ☐ Determine if You Need Further Research on Your Target Market
- ☐ Determine if You Need Further Research on the Competition
- ☐ Create Plan to Deepen Market Research
- ☐ Choose Your Legal Structure
- ☐ Determine & Apply for Necessary Permits/Licenses
- ☐ Apply for EIN#/Tax-Exempt ID
- ☐ Open a Business Checking Account
- ☐ Create a Stripe/Paypal Account
- ☐ Register Domain for Your Website
- ☐ Have Your Website Designed
- ☐ Signup for Google Analytics for your website
- ☐ Create Social Media Accounts
- ☐ Determine Social Media Manager(s) Posting Schedule
- ☐ Set up Business Email
- ☐ Determine What & Amount of Inventory/Supplies to Purchase to Start Up
- ☐ Create a System to Keep Track of Inventory & Order Needs
- ☐ Order Necessary Supplies
- ☐ Make Sample Products
- ☐ Photograph Products
- ☐ Write Product Descriptions
- ☐ Finalize Pricing & Profit Margin
- ☐ Design Logo/Hire Graphic Designer to Design Logo
- ☐ Create Packaging for Your Product
- ☐ Create & Order Business Cards
- ☐ Create a Marketing Timeline
- ☐ Create a System to Manage Orders from Customers

- ☐ Notify Friends/Family/etc to spread the word
- ☐ Join Networking Groups (ex: Facebook groups to post in)
- ☐ Create & Build Email Mailing List
- ☐ Apply to local markets and events or reach out to local spaces to show up as a pop-up
- ☐ Purchase & Set Up Mobile Point of Sale System
- ☐ Determine Your Business's Location & Format Before You Have A Physical Commercial Space

Finalizing your Start-Up Roles

Revisit the committees your co-op outlined in your “Start-Up Roles” section. Are there any you’ve realized you missed-- especially after reading the checklist of tasks above?

Building Your Start-Up Work Plan

Review the list of materials from our “Getting Loan Ready” checklist from the beginning of this toolkit. Note which items you still have to complete or follow up on.

Still have questions? Never hesitate to reach out to us!

Margo Dalal | Executive Director

To discuss receiving a loan from DCWF or general inquiries, contact Margo.

margo@detroitcommunitywealth.org

calendly.com/margodalal

Rosie DeSantis | Director of Education

To discuss starting a cooperative or getting support on democratic management, governance, or operations, contact Rosie.

rosie@detroitcommunitywealth.org

calendly.com/rosiedcwf

Keyanna Silverman-Maddox | Director of Ownership Transitions

To discuss transitioning your business to worker ownership or selling your business to your employees, contact Keyanna.

keyanna@detroitcommunitywealth.org

calendly.com/keyanna1

Our Operating Agreements & Setting Policies

1. Basics of Operating Agreements
2. Creating Anti-Oppression Policies
3. 28 Questions to Answer to Build Operating Agreements
4. Templates for Operating Agreements

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
7-9 Hours (3-4 meetings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michigan LLC Operating Agreement• Operating Agreement for Co-ops Illustrated PPT (English & Spanish)• Anti-oppression policy examples created by the 2020 Co-op Incubator participants• Sample articles of operation by DCWF
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our Anti-Oppressive Policies• Question to Consider Before Meeting With a Lawyer• Operating Agreement Templates

Basics of Operating Agreements

Create an Operating Agreement

A [Michigan LLC Operating Agreement](#) is a legal document that outlines the ownership structure and member roles of your LLC. In Michigan, you aren't required to have an Operating Agreement to officially form an LLC, but it's still a good idea to have one. You can start your operating agreement before, during, or after you file your Articles of Organization. Your operating agreement will be kept in your LLC's private business records; you do not file it with the state.

What are Operating Agreements?

Operating Agreements are the co-op's most important rules for how it is governed, and do not need to be filed with the state. The co-op must obey the rules in the Operating Agreements. The Operating Agreements create the co-op's democratic structure. The rules in the Operating Agreements are usually limited to fundamental governance-level issues and so are intentionally more difficult to change, and a democratic vote of members is required for a change to be made. Other documents like a member policy manual have more specific operational rules that are easier to change.

Operating Agreements best practices

The Operating Agreement should be as simple as possible, so every member can understand them. It is important to review the Operating Agreement regularly to continue to be familiar with your co-op's rules and to check if anything needs to be revised.

Major topics covered in Operating Agreements

These are the major topics addressed in the Operating Agreement. Members should discuss these together when preparing the Operating Agreement for the first time. There are many more details contained in the Operating Agreement that are not listed here.

- ORGANIZATION We formed a company, here is our name, this is our purpose, here's our mission, this is where our office is.
- MEMBERSHIP These are the names of our members, here's how much each has invested. Here's how we accept new members. Here's how we terminate a member. These are the rights and responsibilities of members. We have this many classes of members, these are the names of the classes and this is the difference in rights and responsibilities of the different classes of members.
- MEMBER MEETINGS AND VOTING This is when we have membership meetings, here's how many people need to be at each meeting for decisions to be made, when we vote it's always ONE MEMBER ONE VOTE, we need a supermajority for these really important decisions.

- **BOARD OF DIRECTORS** Here's how many people are on the board of directors. Here's how we elect board members. Here's how we remove a board member. Here's when the board meets. Here's how many people need to be there to conduct business. Here are the officers (usually President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) and their responsibilities.
- **MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF BUSINESS; COMMITTEES** Members manage the company together and have committees. Here are the committees.
- **CASH AND SERVICE CONTRIBUTIONS** Here's how much money each member invests initially. Here's how we manage each members' investment.
- **DISTRIBUTIONS AND ALLOCATIONS** Here's how we pay ourselves, here's how we share the company's profit.
- **ACCOUNTING; FINANCIAL AND TAX MATTERS** We keep records for the company that all members have access to. We have bank accounts. We file and pay taxes.
- **DISSOLUTION; WINDING UP; TERMINATION** - Here's how and when we close down the business.

Creating Anti-Oppression Policies: Building Equity & Justice Into Your Co-op

Every member of your co-op has their own unique set of identities, needs that come with the way they experience those identities, and ways that those identities affect the way that they are perceived by others. "Intersectionality" is the word used for the way all of our identities impact one another in general and in different contexts. If you carry multiple identities (all of us do), they will each affect each other in your life through different contexts. (For example: to be formerly incarcerated & a woman, gay & Black, a single parent while chronically ill, transgender & Muslim, etc). Spoken or unspoken, power dynamics based on the identities of different members and how they affect each other can and will arise if we are not deliberate about addressing them. DCWF prioritizes working with co-ops that make a point to build inclusivity and equity into their governance structure and policies. First, reflect on the different social identities that are present in your co-op.

Common social identities can include:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| - Race | - AbilityAge/ Generation |
| - Ethnicity | - Religion/Spiritual Practice |
| - Gender/Gender Identity | - Profession |
| - US Region | - Family and marital status |
| - Sexual Orientation | - Organizational level |
| - Socioeconomic class | - Education |
| - Geography (e.g. Region of the country) | - Company Affiliation |

- Nationality
- Mental Health
- Criminal Record

Questions to Consider:

1. How might our intersecting personal identities influence power dynamics in the workplace, especially when it comes to our decision-making processes as worker-owners?
2. Thinking about your own workplace experiences, what does it look like when someone “has power” in the workplace, even if they aren’t a manager or supervisor? What can power look like at work?

Reflection Questions for Developing Anti-Oppressive Policies:

1. Have you ever felt like you weren’t being listened to or heard in a situation at work because of one or more of your identities? What happened? Who had the power? Can you think of a time where you may have had the power because of your identities, and you were heard over another person because of them?
2. What workplace systems, policies, protocol, or hierarchy reinforced you or the other person being unheard, silenced, or misunderstood? What were the consequences?
3. What workplace systems, protocol, or hierarchy can we think of that might reinforce those kinds of power dynamics in general? (ex: only observing christian holidays, super limited PTO or strictness about sick days, no accountability system when someone files a complaint about someone’s behavior, no mediator during decision making discussions, no conflict resolution system, having majority-men membership, gendered bathrooms, no accountability systems for payroll)
 - a. **How do we actively strip those policies away? In Section 11 of your workbook under “Our Anti Oppression Policies,” record policies you can imagine that would support an anti-oppressive workplace, especially for all of the identities present in your co-op. [Here are some examples created by the 2020 Co-op Incubator participants.](#)**

Operating Agreement Templates

If you are not able to or do not wish to meet with a lawyer, below are some resources to guide you through the process when you’re ready to begin formally creating your Operating Agreement using your

answers to the questions in the previous exercise. Review the sample bylaws below before proceeding in order to get a better picture of what bylaws look like

- [Sample Operating Agreement by Northwest Construction Cooperative](#)
- [Video: LLC Operating Agreement Tool Walkthrough](#) (here's the link to the [free operating agreement building tool the video refers to!](#))

Marketing and Branding

1. Knowing Your Audience
2. Revisiting Your Mission & Values
3. Building a Brand Statement
4. Outreach Strategies
5. Creating Branding Materials
6. Your Social Media Presence
7. Your Marketing Budget

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
5-6 Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
Resources	
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions to Get Started• Revisiting Our Mission & Values Statement• Our Brand Statement• Outreach Strategies• Our Brand Materials• Our Social Media Presence• Our Marketing Budget

Knowing Your Audience

Product, price, promotion, & place: how will you get your customer to buy your product or service? Marketing is the process of building a relationship with your customer and getting the customer to know, like, and trust you. Key to building that relationship is knowing how your customer engages with your messaging-- the main idea you want to communicate to your customer about your business, the benefit it offers, and why your customer would want it. The following questions will help give you the

foundation for the rest of your marketing & communications plan. You have to start by knowing what your customer base is looking for and what would attract them to your business.

1. Who is my customer?
2. Why would they care about my business?
3. What about my product/service would spark their interest?
4. What do they need to know? What is most important?
5. What sets me apart from the competition to make them choose me?
6. What will my message need to communicate to make my customer like and trust me?

In section 7 of your workbook, complete the exercises, “Questions to Get Started,” and “Revisiting our Mission and Values.”

Your Brand Statement

Source: Namechamp

A business brand statement is a simple, specific, memorable statement of what you do, ideally one sentence. It starts with defining your brand’s personality-- the characteristics that make your brand more human and relatable so that your potential audience can connect with you (examples might be: “friendly,” “down-to-earth,” “reliable,” “convenient,” “professional,” “hip,” “eco-friendly,” “caring.”

Brand statements differ from mission statements in that they are catchier, less descriptive, and more outward-facing than mission statements. A brand statement informs the general public, customers, and clients what it is you offer; a mission statement targets employees and shareholders to describe why it is you do what you do, and the path you will take to achieve it.

A brand statement also summarizes your “Unique Selling Proposition”-- the thing that makes your business different that is compelling and relevant to your target audience. It should describe what it is they want most from the market you are operating in.

Brand statements often follow this template, but are sometimes simplified for the sake of remaining “catchy”: "At [your business] we help [target customer] do [summation of your USP]."

Examples of effective brand statements from businesses:

- Motel6: “Lowest price of any national chain.”
- Casper: “The Best Bed for Better Sleep”
- Lyft: “A ride when you need one”
- Ryanair: “Low fares. Made simple.”
- BMW: “The Ultimate Driving Machine”
- Coors Light: “The World’s Most Refreshing Beer”

- Walmart: “Save money. Live better.”

In Section 7 of your workbook, complete the exercise, “Our Brand Statement.”

Developing Outreach Strategies

Now, it’s time to think through how you plan on reaching your customers to attract them to you and build up your name recognition. Review the profiles you made of your target customers, and the questions you answered above. Now, thinking about the lifestyles and needs of your target audience, read the following list of marketing strategies to utilize and mark the ones you believe are best to communicate with and connect with your customers.

Then answer the questions under “Outreach Strategies” in section 7 of your workbook.

MARKETING METHODS TO UTILIZE: IDEAS/EXAMPLES

Source: ProsperUs Detroit Curriculum

- ☐ Social media Be specific about which platform(s)
- ☐ Brochures Be especially smart about the message and the distribution.
- ☐ Print Media Select your publications carefully. For example, if you are in the wedding business, you may want to ask the local paper if they have any special editions coming out that will focus on weddings. Putting an advertisement there will have a much bigger impact.
- ☐ Broadcast Media Many small businesses do not really consider television ads because they assume it will cost too much, but the reality is that localized cable advertising can be quite affordable - check it out.
- ☐ Promotional Items You can easily put your business name and logo on thousands of pens, but think a bit more about what will really make sense and what might be related to your business. For example, a travel business might give away luggage tags, a bank might give away a tiny calculator, etc.
- ☐ Direct Mail Many people are using email these days that few businesses focus on direct mail. Depending on your business, there may be an opportunity for direct mail to targeted lists. These may be purchased for a reasonable price.
- ☐ Email It is free (or nearly free if you are using an email service) so this is often a good idea. The key is to build a good email list and you may need to give customers and potential customers an incentive for giving you their email addresses.
- ☐ Public Relations Tell a story in such a way that it gets attention. What is unique, interesting, surprising, or inspirational about you and/or your business? Tell it to everyone, email and mail it to newspapers, radio stations, and television stations.
- ☐ Sampling: Give samples to potential customers. Find creative ways of doing it. Go find the potential customers and put your product in their hands. Give samples to nearby offices.
- ☐ Networking: Be friendly, go to meetings, tell people about your business, and be interested in their work.

- ❑ Point of Purchase Put eye-catching displays at the check-out that increase sales
- ❑ Strategic Partnerships Partner with similar businesses. For example, you could offer discounts to the customers of nearby businesses if the nearby businesses will do the same for your customers.
- ❑ Word of Mouth Sometimes 'word of mouth' spreads by itself, but this is not part of your strategy. What can you do to actually make 'word of mouth' spread? You might give your customers some small incentives to tell their friends about your business. Check out the ideas below for some creative examples to help build & spread word-of-mouth!

GUERILLA/LOW-COST/CREATIVE/UNCONVENTIONAL MARKETING IDEAS:

Source: ProsperUs Detroit Curriculum

- ❑ Give free samples at events/in a crowded public place
- ❑ Be involved in community events
- ❑ Hold an event: Cocktails, free lunch, block party, etc.
- ❑ Be your product: Dress like a banana if you sell fruit and hand out fliers for your grand opening or to get attention for a big event
- ❑ Do/be/create/offer something fun for children
- ❑ Give a artist/muralist some free publicly accessible space by letting them use their artistry on your shutters or paint a mural on the side of your building
- ❑ Contests: Nathan's Hotdogs holds an annual hot dog eating contest. It gives them worldwide publicity. Viral videos: make one!
- ❑ Offer free item to repeat customers: Create a punch card or similar kind of system to track purchases
- ❑ Pens, magnets, stickers, temporary tattoos, key chains, luggage tags, etc.
- ❑ Be there! Where are your customers when they need you? Be there!
- ❑ Teach: Give an informational workshop
- ❑ Put up a controversial slogan to get noticed for something you believe in/support
- ❑ Use floor stenciling on vacant urban spaces (e.g. the movie Trollhunter was marketed using a stencil on bridges in cities saying, "Troll Below," sparking curiosity.)
- ❑ Chalk it up: Write your website in chalk outside a major event related to what you do.
- ❑ Create Projections: Use a blank wall at night and to become a billboard / cinema screen
- ❑ Offer free exhibition space on your premises to new artists
- ❑ Events: Service your existing customers with social events that allow them to make a positive association e.g. a book club in a bookstore after hours, storytelling evenings in a cafe, or coffee mornings with toys for moms to socialize in a nursery goods store
- ❑ Trade Marketing Events: Get your suppliers to offer a workshop or educational lecture to your clients or customers for free thus getting their collaboration.
- ❑ Conversely if you supply into retail: Do free in-house events via demonstrations of your product with Q + A sessions and tips on how to use your products in radical new ways.

- ❑ **Shared Services:** Collaborate with your business network to pool marketing resources, procurement, and engage in collective bargaining.
- ❑ **Secret Tours:** Collaborate with other businesses in your local business network and organize a secret tour around a theme. For example, if you are in hospitality, a secret food trail showcasing the best culinary experiences for tourists and locals.
- ❑ **Pay it forward:** Be a parking fairy (pay for someone's parking) outside a city building, and perhaps stick your business card in with the parking receipt on their windshield.
- ❑ **Local Community Events:** Support family days or church fairs by offering your products for use – e.g. bean bag company sponsors a chill-out zone at local festival proving the durability of its products.
- ❑ **Find other pages** where your customers and prospects spend time online and post there as your page. Other people viewing those pages will see your posts and if what you've said is interesting (or if your logo is interesting) they will click over to your page to check you out. Add value to the conversations and avoid (at all costs) putting out promotional updates for your products/ services on other people's pages.
- ❑ **Write Guest Posts:** Write for other blogs where your target market follows. This is a great way of getting yourself in front of potential future customers and making them aware of your existence / your knowledge of your industry. There is a hidden bonus with these posts - not only will you potentially get direct traffic when prospects read your post and click through to your website, but you will also get an SEO boost from the link to your website at the bottom of your post.
- ❑ **How-To Articles:** Write for how-to blogs to show your expertise. For example, perhaps you own a building company, you could write DIY articles showing people how to hang pictures, paint a room correctly, fix faucets in the bathroom, etc. These could be published on your own blog or on an article directory like e-zine.
- ❑ **Create Videos:** Post them to YouTube - YouTube is a completely free resource and the 2nd largest search engine in the world. It is a great place to get direct traffic to your website and also to get an SEO benefit as videos regularly show up in the first page of search results on Google. You can also publish the videos to your website.

Using what you checked off, complete the exercise in section 7 of your workbook, “Outreach Strategies.”

Creating Branding Materials

It's time to start thinking about how you all will represent yourselves! Take a look back at your co-op's inspiration page, the vision you all wrote, your brand & mission statements, etc. What images & colors best and most vibrantly communicate the feel of your brand and what you want the customer to feel when they interact with you? Do research to find logos and colors from similar businesses that inspire you. Use this space to share links to your inspiration for your logos and color schemes that you might show to an artist designing your branding materials. Keep in mind designs for:

- Your logo
- A basic template for digital and paper flyers
- A banner
- Any other materials specific to your industry (ex: menus, labels, etc)

Creating your Social Media Presence

10 Types of Social Media Posts for Businesses

Source: Influencer Marketing Hub

Which kinds of posts do you think would be the most effective at engaging with your specific customer base? **Read the following post types then answer the questions in Section 7 of your workbook under “Social Media Presence.”**

1. Product Posts: The first type of post is, unfortunately, the default post that unimaginative firms make. It is easy to make every post an advertisement for your product. Unfortunately, you will not build up your audience this way, and when the social networks spot the lack of engagement on your posts, their algorithms will make your posts almost invisible to your followers. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't make any product posts, however. You still have some opportunity to promote your products. However, limit these posts to perhaps no more than 10% of your entire posting output.

2. Engagement Posts: You can consider your engagement posts your default posts. You don't use them to promote your products, although you can refer to your product features and other good points, as long as this does not dominate the post. Often Engagement Posts will look at the bigger picture, revolving around the brand rather than any individual product. You want your engagement posts to pique your followers' interest, perhaps their curiosity, without perceiving them as a promotion for your products.

3. News / Trending Posts: People liked to be kept up-to-date with what happens around them. If you can find a way to legitimately tie in the latest news or craze with your business, you could create a post on that theme. However, in your effort to be seen as current, avoid writing a trending post if it is irrelevant to your social audience. Overall, news articles generate more shares than any other type of post. While your post doesn't need to relate to your product at all, it will perform better if you find some connection and can explain to your followers why you choose to post on this topic. This could include posts connected with any sponsorship activity your brand may participate in.

4. Competitions: One way to build engagement is to create a competition for your followers. You can make posts building up excitement for your competition. These posts reward your followers for their engagement. The more you run interesting and worthwhile competitions, the more people will take note of your social posts. However, any competition needs to be relevant to your target audience. In particular, your competition prize needs to be something that your audience will value, and preferably something that will be of less interest to those not in your target market. Some firms have spent a considerable sum of money buying generic high-value prizes, such as iPads, and then been disappointed when analyzing the effects of their competitions.

The problem with such a prize is that while the engagement statistics for your competition posts will rise, many of the entrants will take little interest in your other posts or products. Ideally, you require a laser-like focus between your competition prize and the interests of the type of people you want to enter your competition.

5. Infographics: Infographics have become incredibly popular over the last few years, particularly for visual learners. The brain processes visual information much quicker than text. Infographics perform particularly well on social media, often becoming viral. They include salient facts, visible at a glance. If you select infographics relevant to your target audience and include teaser facts in the text that accompanies your image, interested followers will click on your post for the full infographic.

6. Personal Photograph Posts: People like to see the human side of businesses. They want to ensure that they are not dealing with corporate drones – they are interested in the personalities behind the company. Sharing personal photographs from your staff on your business social accounts often comes across as authentic, and a sign that the business includes real people. Potential customers find it much easier to relate to a human face. Obviously, you only want to share appropriate personal photographs – it is not a good idea to share images of management drunk at last year's Christmas party, for instance.

7. Workplace Behind-the-Scenes Posts: People love to see behind the scenes. This is just as relevant to a factory, an office, or even the making of a major motion picture. In the case of a business, behind-the-scenes images or videos help to humanize the place for potential customers – they emphasize that customers are served by people, not faceless robots. As with personal photographs, workplace behind-the-scenes shots help establish authenticity and trustworthiness.

8. Polls: If you can think of a relevant question for your audience, you could create a poll as an excellent way to improve your engagement. This is particularly the case if you can think of a relevant, but contentious, topic. Although social media polls are highly unscientific, they can give a general idea of your audience's views on a particular topic– although you must remember that any self-selected poll will always give biased answers.

9. Questions: Polls are similar to questions, but you don't give your followers an opportunity to record their answer. The idea is to ask your followers a relevant question, that makes them think carefully about their views on a particular topic or situation. You will generally want the question relevant to your organization and your target audience, however. Be prepared for silly answers in your comments, if you misjudge your question, however.

10. User-Generated Content: People love to see their own content shared online. Many businesses gain favor by sharing their followers' (users') content. User-Generated Content is a great way to increase engagement and reach. Some brands are particularly skilled at this. For instance, they might invite their followers to send in images, and then the business shares them as their Photo of the Day. The key to this is ensuring that you credit any user-generated content you share. This helps increase the goodwill your followers, and customers feel towards your brand. Often, any people whose posts you share, in turn, re-share with their friends. They may even brag about the fact that your business shared their work.

Marketing Budget

Knowing what you know now about how you would like to market your co-op, create a list of start-up marketing expenses, then monthly marketing expenses. Are there particular methods you will use just to launch your co-op (for example, an event, a pop-up, etc) that you might not utilize regularly? Complete the exercise in your workbook, "Marketing Budget."

Market Feasibility

1. Your Customer Profiles
2. Customer Demand Survey & Analysis
3. Competition Survey & Analysis
4. Drawing Conclusions

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
6-7 Hours (2-3 meetings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Workbook
Resources	
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Our Customer Profiles● Customer Demand Survey● Customer Demand Analysis● Information About the Competition in Our Area● Competition Analysis● Drawing Conclusions

What is a Market Feasibility Study?

A “market feasibility study” determines if there is a consumer demand (“market”) for your product or service in your area, and if there is enough of a unique place for you among your competitors such that you will be able to make enough money. Market feasibility studies are essential-- even a great product and business plan aren’t going to be successful in a market with declining consumer demand in that area! In addition to helping you determine if your business is feasible at all, it can help you determine how to make your business unique among your competitors to attract your customer base. It should answer the following questions:

1. Is your market healthy-- is it projected to grow or decline over the next 5, 10, 15-- even 20-- years?
2. What are your different types of customers based on their demographics and needs, and are they present in the area you want to do business in?
 - a. [Learn about “market segmentation” in this video!](#)
3. Based on how your competition is doing, does there seem to be a strong demand for your product or service? If so, what is the size of consumer demand in your area?
4. What would your customers need and want from your product or service, and will you be able to acquire the skills and resources to provide that?
5. Is there too much competition for your business to thrive?
6. Does your market seem to be receptive to new players, or are there dominating competitors that have absorbed the market? (ex: if you were trying to start an online marketplace, you would have a very difficult time trying to compete with Amazon to draw customers’ attention away from them and towards yourself!) Is this a market where new businesses frequently start up with success?

Lending with DCWF

Detroit Community Wealth Fund is a “non-extractive” lender. To know what that means, first look at the way banks and other financial institutions typically lend:

- Many banks won't give business loans to co-ops - they'll want there to be only one owner (some will accept two)
- They'll want collateral that is unrelated to their investment
- some lenders require down-payments on loans to demonstrate a certain level of personal investment
- Personal credit checks
- interest is often compounded
- Principal payments start being due as soon as disbursements begin, regardless of whether the business is breaking even
- They generally don't provide TA/coaching

How Detroit Community Wealth Fund financing works:

- We are a non-extractive loan fund specializing in support for cooperative businesses.
- We do not ask for any personal financial information, or require personal collateral or guarantees.
- We mitigate risk by working with projects to create a sound business plan, and with projects on an ongoing basis until the loan is completely repaid.
- We only accept repayment as a % of monthly profit, after wages are paid, or as a set rate based on projected income.
- We use simple, not compounding interest.

We assess potential borrowers based on the following criteria:

- **Demographic Inclusivity**
This is based on the demographic identity of the group including race, gender, nationality, age, and income.
- **Meets Community Need**
There is a demonstrated need in Detroit, or a specific community within Detroit. This might include an existing customer base, feasibility studies, or other relevant information.
- **Creates Jobs**
This business creates meaningful and living wage jobs for its members, and intends to grow membership when possible.
- **Financially Viable**

This business has demonstrated financial viability, including existing financial reports, projections, and project members' demonstration of capacity.

DCWF's Loan Terms:

- Repayments are made exclusively out of % of monthly or quarterly profit. We determine "profit" based on the break even amount, and after worker owners are paid at least \$15 an hour. We will never take repayment before the co-op has started to turn a profit.
- If a loan defaults, DCWF estimates to recuperate ~30% of the original value of assets purchased with the loan.
- Terms also include continuing ongoing communication with their Project Officer, and notification of any urgent issues.
- Loan interest rates are typically 8%. For larger loans, interest can be negotiated lower.
- Real estate interest rates are between 3-5% .

DCWF's Loan Development Process:**Phase 1 Duration: 3-18 months**

(depending on the frequency of the co-op's meetings with their project officer, on the current status of the business, previous business planning, and the urgency of the loan.)

Phase 2 Duration: 1-3 months

Your DCWF project officer presents the prepared credit memo to the Seed Commons Sustainability Committee. The Sustainability Committee will assess several factors, including:

- If the project is based on a truly sustainable financial business model that will lead to profits and loan repayment within a reasonable period of time
- If there is an achievable and supportable plan in place to execute in order to achieve the project's goals - with assumptions that are based on strong sources (e.g., market research, competitor data, existing data from your own business)
- If the cooperative has the necessary members, skills and equipment to produce and sell at the levels needed for the business to achieve profitability
- If the project will ultimately have tangible impact (e.g., living wages, more jobs, etc.) for those working on your project and your broader community
- If there is an agreed-upon plan and commitment between you and the project officer for ongoing support necessary to ensure the success of the plan

If any questions or concerns from the Sustainability Committee arise, then your DCWF Project officer will return to you and your co-op to discuss how the loan memo can be improved so that the outstanding questions and concerns can be addressed and resolved. After receiving approval from the Sustainability Committee, your DCWF project officer will provide you and your cooperative with a loan

contract to review and will be available to explain any and all parts of the contract including how disbursements and repayments will work.

Detroit Community Wealth Fund Loan Readiness Checklist

The following is a list of things DCWF needs to see to consider a co-op ready to begin the lending process.

- ☐ Proof of shared ownership (data on member shares, legal documents, etc)
- ☐ Your team's governance & management model
- ☐ Your team's Operating Agreement
- ☐ A statement of your team's ability to implement the business (your team's experience, your assessment of the success of your pilot so far and how it demonstrates that you will be able to grow and maintain the business)
- ☐ A statement on your business's relationship to the community it serves & how it supports that community's self-determination & well-being
- ☐ A breakdown of the demographics of the co-op members
- ☐ A statement on why you want to become & intend to remain a co-op
- ☐ A statement of your plan to grow your membership when it becomes possible, how you'll do so, and a statement on your member buy-in
- ☐ Proof of legal incorporation & a business bank account
- ☐ Budget, break even, & historical financial data of spending & earnings
- ☐ Financial projections (pro forma)
- ☐ A listing of your spending thus far and breakdown of its justification (a summary of your minimum viable product plan, market data, etc)
- ☐ A breakdown of your justification for your pricing (market research, your break even, customer surveys, etc)

- ❑ A breakdown of what you intend to use the loan for & a goal timeline for repayment

Governance & Management

1. How to Have Meetings
2. Deciding How to Decide
3. Your Governance & Management Structure

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
4-5 Hours (1-2 meetings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Workbook
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Video: How to Facilitate Democratic Decision-Making● Sample Decision-Making Chart● Decision Report Template
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Our Governance Model● Our Decision-Making Chart● Rights & Responsibilities

How to Have Meetings

Decisions in a co-op are made democratically-- one member, one vote-- and many are made by the entire team together. Plus, while there may be management systems and committee leaders, co-ops are run non-hierarchically with all member contributions valued equally-- there are no positions of “authority”, only accountability! That being the case, running a co-op requires healthy communication, well-structured meetings, a thorough system for how decisions are made and who is accountable to who, and a clear definition of everyone’s roles & responsibilities. This section will walk you through how to have structured, efficient meetings with good communication.

[Start by watching this video on how to facilitate democratic decision-making.](#) This video breaks down the roles and structure of a meeting, like building an agenda, facilitating, and notetaking.

Tips for Building an Agenda:

Source: ANTI-OPPRESSIVE FACILITATION FOR DEMOCRATIC PROCESS BY AORTA

- Set the agenda before the meeting starts. You can build it over email, through a list that is kept in an office, or at the end of the previous meeting. This helps everyone come well researched and mentally and emotionally prepared. If that's not possible, create the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.
- Some groups like a more emergent and organic style for building an agenda. If this is your group, participants can spend the beginning of a meeting writing each agenda item they'd like to discuss on an index card, and then the group can use different visual tools to select the card(s) people are most moved to talk about. The down side: you don't know what you're talking about in advance, so you can't prepare or share your thoughts if you're not able to attend.
- Review the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Share your reasoning before asking for amendments or changes. It is important that the whole group be on board with the agenda.
- Announcements and report-backs at the beginning of the meeting can save a lot of time.
- Give it variety: mix up the length and type of agenda items.
- Put agenda items that will be easy successes early in the meeting. This sets a positive tone and builds momentum!
- Follow with the “big stuff.”
- Break after big discussions.
- Schedule breaks for any meeting more than 90 minutes. After this length of time, groups fall into the trap of “decision fatigue,” making big decisions rashly or getting stuck talking in circles on smaller decisions.
- Finish on something short and easy— end with a good tone.
- Display the agenda so that all can see it (either on flip chart, blackboard, projector, or printed out).

- Label items with their expected actions: decision, discussion, play, evaluate, brainstorm, review, update, silence, feedback, appreciations and concerns. The expected action or desired outcome will/should inform how you design your facilitation approach for that item.

Tips for Note-taking

- **Garden/Bike Rack/Topics for Future Meetings:** Whatever your group chooses to call it, have a sheet or ongoing list to write down ideas, questions, and topics for future meetings that arise. Often in the course of talking about one topic, really important things surface that need to be addressed, but are not on the current meeting's agenda. Unless they are urgent/time sensitive, it can really help keep the group on topic to have a space to note them so that they can be incorporated into future meetings (and not forgotten about!).
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- **Next Steps/Who, What, When, Priority:** it can be very helpful to keep a sheet where you're taking running notes on any next steps or tasks that are coming out of the meeting. We sometimes do this in three (or four) columns: one for who is doing the next step or task (this could be an individual or a group), what it is they're going to do, by when they will have done it, and what priority level the task is (1-3, 1-5). You can end the meeting by reviewing this sheet and filling in missing details. You can also start your meetings by checking in with the sheet from the previous meeting.

Tips for Facilitators

Source: ANTI-OPPRESSIVE FACILITATION FOR DEMOCRATIC PROCESS BY AORTA

What is facilitation, anyway?

- Facilitation ensures that the group is empowered as a whole. Effective facilitation:
 - Ensures that everyone gets to participate and share ideas in a meeting, not just those who feel most comfortable speaking up and making cases for their ideas or proposals.
 - Helps prevent or interrupt any (conscious or unconscious) attempts by individuals or groups to overpower the group as a whole.
 - Mitigates and interrupts social power dynamics. Points out and addresses discrepancies in who is talking/whose voices are being heard.
 - Helps the group come to the decisions that are best for the organization/whole group. Helps people keep an eye on what's best for the group, rather than their personal preference.
 - Ensures the group follows its own agreed-upon process and meeting agreements.
- The facilitator keeps an eye on time (with help from the time keeper), and juggles it with the (ever present) need for more time. The facilitator:
 - Helps keep the group conversation on topic and relevant. Prevents ramblings and tangents.

- Makes process suggestions to help the group along.
- Summarizes discussion, synthesizes people's comments when helpful, and notes key areas of agreement, to help move the group forward.

Some things facilitators don't do:

- Dominate the speaking space.
- Comment on people's ideas.
- Let individuals take the group off-topic and off-task.

Common Mistakes:

- Not having a co-facilitator when you need one.
- Rushing the group. (Sometimes going slower takes less time in the long run).
- Not setting clear boundaries for yourself in your role as facilitator, getting pushed around by the group.
- Not taking a break when YOU need one. (When the facilitator needs a break, it's to everyone's advantage to have a break!)
- Spiraling down into group process about group process. (You know, when you spend 10 minutes deciding as a group by consensus whether you want to allot 10 more minutes of discussion to an item).
- Becoming inflexible or unwilling to adapt the agenda/plan to meet the group's evolving needs. Meeting for too long a time period without food, water, and/or breaks.

Tips for facilitators on naming, intervening, and addressing systemic power dynamics in a meeting:

- Name it when it's happening:
 - "I'm noticing..."
 - "that I haven't heard from many people of color recently."
 - "that there's a lot of interrupting happening, and that it's happening along gender lines. want us all to work to become more aware of that and change it."
 - "What you just said is hurtful to people." (Refrain from saying things that people hear as name-calling. Rather than "what you just said is racist." You can say: "What you just said is hurtful to people." Or ask questions.
- Ask questions to support self-inquiry.
 - What makes you say that?
 - Where did you hear that?
 - What do you mean by that?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
- Support the leadership of marginalized voices.

- Allow people to respond on their own behalf.
- Synthesize. “What I heard from this person is this....”
- Create space for those who we are not hearing from:
 - “I’m going to take a moment to see if anyone who hasn’t spoken in a while has something to say.”
 - “We’ve been hearing from a lot of men. Let’s take a moment to see if any of the women, genderqueer, or trans folks in the room have something to say.”

Red Flags & Unhealthy Dynamics to Watch Out For:

- Unhealthy, unchallenged, or unnamed power dynamics.
- People interrupting each other or the facilitator.
- People repeating or re-stating what others have said.
- Tone and body language: Do people look upset? Checked out? Bored? Angry? If you see this, check in with the group as a whole, or quietly with individuals.
- Individuals monopolizing conversation.
- Individuals or small groups bringing a fully-formed idea to the meeting, without any group conversation, brainstorming, or feedback, and wanting it passed that very day.
- Back-and-forths between individuals.

What to Do When You Get Stuck:

- Use the agenda and expected actions. Have you switched into “decide” mode when the desired action was “feedback?”
- Take a break: Have small groups work out a proposal based on what they’ve heard about the needs of the group. (What’s needed for a decision?)
- Ask questions to initiate discussion, as opposed to jumping directly into concerns. Questions assume the proposal writer(s) thought about the concern, and allow them to respond with their reasoning.
- When people are voicing concerns, ask them what can be done to address their concern.
- Do people need a refresher about the decision-making process your group uses?
- Listen for agreement and note it, no matter how small. This both builds morale and helps clarify where the group is at.
- Reflect back what you’re hearing. Practice synthesizing and summarizing.
- Break big decisions into smaller pieces.
- Don’t allow back-and-forths between two participants to dominate a discussion or agenda item: ask for input from others.
- Hosting part of a meeting with everyone standing in a circle (if they’re able) can help wake people up, decrease tensions, and support more concise statements.

- Asking participants to switch seats after a break or agenda item also helps to energize and mix things up. This can be really helpful when the group is feeling stuck.

Agenda Template

Meeting Date

Admin:

Roles:

Notes:

Check-in (a reflective question to help folks get present)

Agenda bucket (add items & vote here)

Agenda

1. Time: Activity

Materials needed for this section:

- a) # minutes time: activity instructions
 - i) Break down steps if necessary
 - ii)
- b)

2. Time: Activity

Materials needed for this section:

- a. # minutes time: activity instructions
 - i. Break down steps if necessary
- b.

Next Steps (scribe copies & pastes next steps that were brought up here, with the person bottom-lining them written next to each task/project)

Wrap (a reflective question about the outcome/process of the meeting and/or a place to

share gratitude and appreciations for team members)

Deciding How to Decide

[Watch this video for a breakdown of different methods of decision-making to suit different situations!](#)

One of the most important aspects of being part of a co-op and running it smoothly and equitably is deciding as a group how different decisions will be made, by whom, and who the decision-makers have to receive input from as well as report their decision to. For example, a cafe co-op wouldn't decide to make a small menu change in the same way it would decide to make a change to its mission statement or hiring policy! Below is a breakdown of different voting and decision-making styles that are appropriate for different scenarios, and some tools to help you keep track of how different decisions are made, by whom, when, and who they are reported to.

Some of the factors to consider when deciding how to decide are these:

1. The time it will take to decide and the urgency of the matter. Consensus takes more time than simple majority vote and assures greatest buy-in, since it takes into account everyone's concerns. Simple majority voting is faster, but there is less certainty of buy-in. Many management and operational decisions tend to be made by an individual or very small group in order for quick and nimble decisions to be made.
2. The significance of the decision: You might consider using super majority voting when you want to have a greater level of buy-in than just half of the group. Many worker cooperatives start out with major decisions being made by a super majority. They live with that for a while and then may adapt it as they have time and reason. The exception is in regards to any decision that concerns the possible closing of the business. Generally, this is required to be a consensus or consensus minus one vote of the entire membership because of the significance of the decision. Many board level and strategic decisions tend to be made by supermajority or consensus.
3. What degree of change the decision will cause: consensus decision making tends to be more conservative. It is harder to decide to make changes than keep the status quo. When there are situations of impasse or difficult personalities involved, consensus minus one can move the group forward.
4. The importance of buy-in. When people participate in decisions that impact them, they are more committed to making something work.

Methods of Decision-Making:

- Voting Simple Majority (51%)
- Voting Supermajority (>51%)
- Consensus “minus one”
- Full Consensus

Decision-Making Models

Democratic Decision Making

Democratic decision making works well when choices are clear cut, when your team is well informed, and when your culture embraces majority rule.

“Majority Rules.”

Democratic decision making is when a leader gives up authority over a decision and presents a series of options to the full group to vote on. The option accepted by the majority of the group is then enacted. The democratic system, or “rule of the majority,” is usually traced to ancient Greek city-states, although it’s probable that people have been voting in one form or another throughout human history.

Pros:

- Transparent process
- Perceived as fair
- People easily grasp where the process begins and ends (unlike consensus and consent)

Cons:

- Vulnerable to groupthink or political campaigning
- The majority feels little need to compromise with the minority
- Lack of ownership on implementing decisions - “I didn’t vote for that!”

The Process

1. Assess the situation and develop your options
2. Call a meeting for voting
3. Designate an advocate for each option
4. Hold a timed debate between the advocates
5. Vote (yes, no, abstain)
6. Count the votes and continue voting if a stalemate exists

Avoid These Common Traps!

- Fear of dissent: Because voting visibly pits one group against another, participants who tend to avoid conflict may remain silent even if they have valuable insights to

contribute. Before voting begins and factions have the chance to emerge, ask participants to write down their position and any questions they may have.

- Tensions escalate and groups argue disrespectfully: Remind everyone of their shared purpose and if necessary, take a break so that parties have a moment to cool off.
- The tyranny of the majority: If you use voting repeatedly, there's a good chance that low-powered constituents or diverse viewpoints will be repeatedly overruled. First, be sure to restrict voting rights to the people who will be directly affected by the decision (i.e., don't give the whole company say over the type of desk just one team uses). Second, consider giving more airtime to less prominent voices during the debate.

Consultative Decision Making

Consultative decision making works well when you need to gather expertise from a limited group or when you need the support of key members of the group.

“I decide, with input.”

Consultative decision making means asking for input from a few select individuals, but ultimately reserving the decision for yourself. The consultative model is used when you need additional expertise or when you need to curry political favor. The consultative process is often done one-on-one, but it can also happen in a small group setting.

Pros:

- Yields additional perspectives beyond your own
- Helps you gauge how the decision will play out politically
- Gives you access to technical knowledge you may not yourself possess
- Opportunity to influence key stakeholders

Cons:

- People may feel excluded and unimportant
- Creates the perception of politicking

The Process

1. Assess the situation and evaluate the obvious choices
2. Decide on 2-3 people who have information or perspectives that can help you decide
3. Ask their opinions (leaving time for them to mull/gather facts if needed)
4. Make the decision and communicate it

Consensus Decision Making

Consent works well when speed is needed, when the proposal is clearly defined, and when the impact of the decision is limited and reversible.

“No one objects.”

Consent means the absence of objections. Similar to consensus, consent invites group participation in the decision making process. But instead of granting each member the power to mold the proposal in pursuit of a compromise, consent urges the group to accept a “good enough” solution. After a formal decision-making process, a decision is ratified when there are no meaningful or “paramount” objections.

The Process

1. Gather your group for a formal consent-based decision-making meeting and identify who in the group is bringing forth a proposal
2. ELECTIONS: Elect both a Facilitator and Recorder, someone to keep the conversation moving and someone to capture what is proposed and objected
3. Review the rules:
 - No interruptions – only one conversation at a time, and only one speaker at a time
 - Aim for ‘Safe to Try’ – rather than rejecting a proposal in favor of finding an ideal or long-term solution, embrace “good enough” short-term solutions
 - Follow the process – the prime benefit of consent, speed, is lost if the process devolves into a consensus-seeking discussion
4. STATE THE PROPOSAL: The person with a proposal starts by describing a challenge/opportunity that falls within the group's authority and offers a proposal to address it. A proposal can add/edit a role on the team, a rule for the team, a project on the team's plate, or an overarching strategy the team follows.
5. QUESTION ROUND: The group takes turns asking clarifying questions and for each, the proposer has an opportunity to respond (or not respond). Example: “Who do you think this will most impact?”
6. REACTION ROUND: The group takes turns offering reactions to the proposal. The proposer listens but is not expected to respond to each reaction. Example: “I think the problem you've identified is real, but the solution you've offered doesn't seem to address the root cause.”
7. RESTATE THE PROPOSAL: The proposer may revise or clarify the proposal based on the previous questions and reactions. The group listens but does not respond.

8. OBJECTION ROUND: First, the group takes 2-3 minutes to silently generate objections (this is called “Harvesting Objections”). The group then takes turns raising their most severe objections to the proposal. Objections are only considered valid if the proposal will cause harm to the group or obstruct it from reaching its goals. These are so-called “paramount objections.” Objections are captured without discussion or debate.
9. OBJECTION ROUND (contd): The proposer addresses each paramount objection one at a time and works with the objector to revise the proposal to
10. resolve the objection and find a safe-to-try or “good enough” middle ground. The proposal cannot move forward until all objections are resolved.
11. RATIFICATION: Once all objections have been addressed and no objections remain, the proposal becomes accepted and should be captured by the Recorder and shared wherever the team keeps their rules/roles/projects.

Avoid These Common Traps!

- Discomfort with the formal process: The consent decision-making process can feel overly rigid, dogmatic, and foreign to cultures that have only practiced consensus or autocracy. Practice the process until everyone understands why each step matters and then allow your group to try new formats.
- Individuals feeling rushed to judgment: The consent process can be challenging and stressful for people who need time or conversation to formulate their opinions. If this happens, you can create a “review period” for any non-urgent proposal, say 48-72 hours, that allows participants to consider the proposal, talk it out with colleagues, and generate their objections
- Confusion around what is and what isn't a valid objection: Consent requires a “paramount objection” to reject a proposal, yet the definition of a “paramount objection” is often subjective. Instead of debating the definition, ask questions like, “Will this cause harm?”, “Can you live with this proposal for now?,” or “Is this safe to try?” to help frame what is and what isn't a paramount objection.
- Staying quiet for fear of slowing down the process: Consent is designed for speed, so much so that it can feel as if speed is the ultimate objective. Participants can withhold their reactions and objections for fear of slowing down the process, but the group loses their valuable insights. Ask participants to slow down, put themselves in the shoes of others on the team, and think of reasons why they might object. By explicitly slowing down the process and depersonalizing the objection, participants should be less timid and more forthcoming.

Governance & Management Structures

Now that you know a little about how to decide between different methods of making decisions, it's time to determine what the different committees are that will be responsible for each aspect of the co-op, and what the structure of accountability & management will look like in your co-op.

What Are Governance & Management Systems & Why Do We Need Them?

A Co-Op's Governance & Management Systems are the structures that ensure communication among the co-op members about matters of organizational policy and regular, day-to-day operations; that provide member-owners with meaningful influence in setting policy; and that protect the personal rights of members.

Basically: how do we communicate and represent our needs, and who reports to who, about what, in what circumstances?

What's the difference between Governance & Management?

Source: Anthony Murray, Co-op News

Governance: how the views/will of the members (who own the co-op) are represented; how they set their vision, goals and strategic direction of the co-op and translate those things through policy.

Management: how the co-op will achieve these goals and implement those policies, overseeing the details and managing resources on a day-to-day basis.

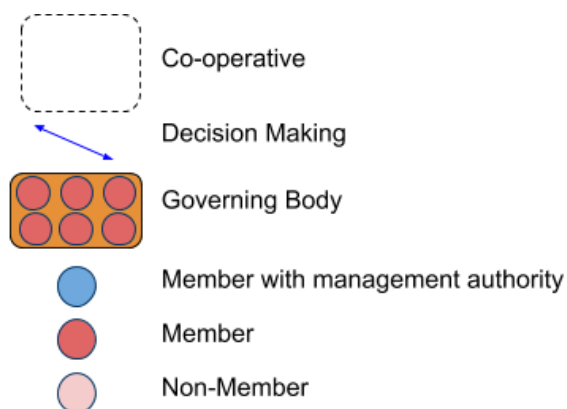


Diagram Key

Key Terms:

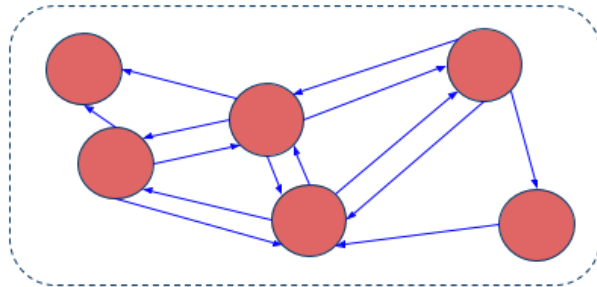
- The Governing Body/Board: the group of people who govern the organization and hold it accountable on behalf of the members. The Board is responsible for all Policy and Governance matters not handled by the Membership. Specifically, they select key managers, approve the budget, and set the strategic direction of the firm. Generally, the board meets quarterly, although more or less frequent meetings are common. The Board also deals with policy matters through standing and ad-hoc committees.
- Board Committees: Boards of directors typically have committees that work through issues before they are brought to a full board meeting for formal action. In addition to increasing the efficiency of a board's functioning, a committee structure allows board members to develop special skills and interests in various aspects of the co-op's operation (e.g., its personnel policies or the management of its finances). A list of common board committees is presented in Exhibit 1. Which committees the co-op will need depends on the nature and complexity of the organization. Most small co-ops will not need all the committees listed; some will need a committee that is not listed to deal with a topic of particular significance for that organization. In thinking about board committees, it should be kept in mind that work not assigned to a committee will have to be done by the board as a whole.
- Grievance council: The grievance council is responsible for protecting the rights of individual co-op members, and for dealing with questions of perceived inequity or mistreatment that may be brought to the council by organization members. The council hears and acts on "cases" submitted to it; it may recommend new policies or procedures to the board (or seek clarification of existing policies); and it may be consulted by the board, by managers, or by regular co-op members about questions of member rights. A grievance council should mirror the full diversity of the co-op membership. It should include both co-op managers and members who do not hold specific roles in the governance system. Moreover, if the co-op is diverse in gender, age, and/or race, these differences should be reflected in the council. But a grievance council should not be composed of "two of everything," since that often would result in a group too large to do its work well. Generally, a grievance council should not exceed half a dozen members. If those members are chosen by election (a common method), the election procedures must ensure that the people chosen will reflect the diversity of the membership.
- Members: The members are the people who work at the firm and own it. As shareholders in a democratic firm, they are responsible for all corporate matters and significant policy matters. Additionally, the by-laws can specify issues that should be addressed by the membership as a whole.

Examples of Different Management Structures

The Collective (usually 2-10 people)

When people first come together to create a small worker co-operative, they often start as collectives-- usually all members are at the same level in terms of Governance, and operate using a flat management structure. Different members usually take the 'lead' in certain areas or activities (and this may swap and change depending on the circumstance).

Worker Co-operative Collective: All members are Directors and flat management structure

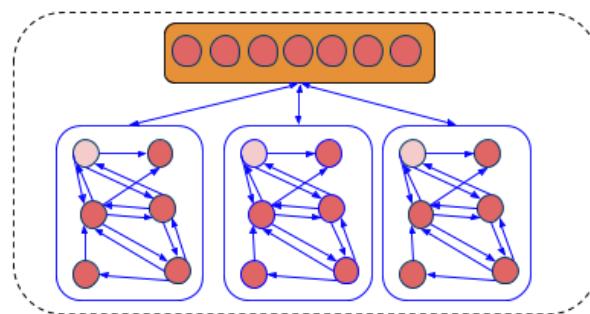


As a worker co-operative grows or becomes more complex/specialised (around 8-15 people, some even longer) it becomes more and more difficult to keep everyone informed and the level of interaction needed for decision making becomes too high. At this point two things happen. Firstly; Governance moves to a system of representation where some members are elected by the membership to represent their views and these representatives are delegated to make certain decisions on their behalf. Secondly: team management changes in a variety of ways.

Self Managing Work Teams

As co-operatives grow, they split into committees based on areas of the business: Cafe/Shop, Sales, Buyers, Customer Service, Marketing, Designers/Printers, Buyers & Inventory Managers, etc. These are self-managing collectives, who then nominate representatives from their own team to represent them directly in the Governing Body.

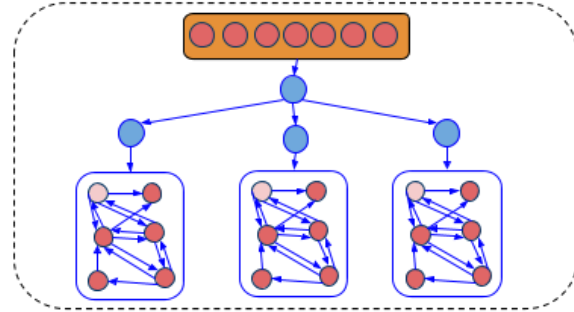
Worker Co-operative Large: Representational with semi autonomous teams.



Hierarchy System

Usually this means there are managers chosen for each committee, and a general manager is chosen; (sometimes elected or specifically recruited/selected by the governing body). Managers report to the governing body, and have been given authority to manage the organisation by members. In larger co-ops there may be multiple levels of management. Remember: "Management is not a status, but a function."

Worker Co-operative Large: Representational with hierarchy.



[Check out this article breaking down one of the most widely-used collective governance structures in co-ops: sociocracy. Then, check out this webinar for even more detail and hear from real co-ops using sociocracy!](#)

Who Decides What?

Governance Decisions	Operations Decisions
<p>"Big picture" decisions that affect a majority of members and/or have a long-term impact on the future of the business.</p> <p>These are GROUP decisions made democratically by either the board or assembly. They often include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting mission / vision (e.g To give customers the most compelling shopping experience possible)• Setting goals and evaluating progress (e.g. we want to have x new customers in 2018)• Approving hiring / firing (e.g. bringing a new member into the cooperative)• Setting policies (e.g. defining disciplinary process)• Allocating profits (e.g. determining what % of profits is paid out vs. retained)	<p>"Day-to-day" decisions that affect the ordinary, everyday activities of the business.</p> <p>These are DELEGATED decisions made by specific individuals or committees. They often include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Day-to-day activities• Coordinating / managing• Accounting• Purchasing and logistics• Human resources• Customer service

Key Questions to Ask When Deciding What Part of the Co-op Should Handle an Issue:

Deciding Between Management or the Board: The Extensiveness Test

An item passes this "extensiveness test" and is considered policy if:

- It affects a large number of co-op members
- It commits a substantial portion of the financial (or other) resources of the organization
- It affects co-op operations, personnel, or resources over a long period of time

Deciding if the Board Should Consult the Membership: The Significance Test

While the board has the right to make all policy decisions that are not explicitly assigned to the membership in the by-laws, co-op members should be consulted about issues with extraordinary significance to the organization before the Board makes final decisions on said issues. An item passes the "significance test" if:

- It affects the likely survival of the co-op
- It has to do with overall policies for hiring or terminating co-op members
- The matter affects the basic character of the cooperative

Deciding if a Matter Should Go to the Grievance Council: The Grievability Test

A grievance council should go to work on a problem only after its members are convinced that reasonable attempts to resolve the matter directly have failed. Second, the kinds of grievances considered by the council should be restricted, in order to prevent the council from becoming a "catch-all" group, handling any and all difficult or emotionally-charged problems. An item passes the "grievability test" if:

- The complaint involves a violation of existing organizational policy
- The complaint deals with a situation for which there is no applicable policy
- The complaint questions the fairness of an existing policy

Decision-Making Chart

Below is an example of a chart that can help your team keep track of what kinds of decisions will be made by whom within the business, organized by "significant," "extensive," and "operational" decisions. To complete it, for each decision to be made, indicate who votes or decides on it, and if necessary, who recommends a change be made and who drafts and amends proposals for the change to be made.

The “members” column refers to all members of the coop. If a decision is made by all members, it is always a vote. The “board” column refers to the board of directors. For smaller coops or coops that are just starting out, there may not be a need for a board, and this column can be ignored. The “committee” column refers to the committees within a coop that oversee and make decisions about different departments of the business, such as marketing, inventory, finances, or grievances. For smaller coops or coops just starting out, each “committee” may just be one person who has agreed to take lead on that aspect of the organization. The “manager” column refers to the general manager. Not all coops have or need a manager, and for smaller/newer coops, there may instead just be “shift leaders” every day.

Here’s an example of how to fill out the chart: in the example, under “significant decisions” look at the “fire/remove members” row. To fire or remove a member, a manager recommends the change to the grievance committee. The grievance committee reviews it and thinks of other potential solutions, and the membership ultimately votes on the decision to be made. Under the “operational decisions” section, this example chart reads that for decisions about the marketing strategy, the general manager decides without formal outside input.

Sample Decision Making Chart for a Cooperative

Source: Cooperation Buffalo

Decision to be made	Members	Board	Committee	Manager
Significant Decisions				
Amend Operating Agreement & certificate of incorporation	Vote			
Dissolution, merger, sale, location change, expansion	Vote			
Membership eligibility	Vote			
Fire/remove members	Vote		Grievance	Recommend
Elect Board of Directors	Vote			
Review, amend, or overturn a decision made by Board	Vote			
Extensive Decisions				
Setting and moving decision-making boundaries		Vote	Governance	Recommend
Corporate strategy and measures of success		Vote		Recommend
Annual budget, including goals		Vote	Finance	Recommend

Distribution of profits		Vote	Finance	Recommend
Selection, compensation, evaluation of Manager		Vote		
Staff compensation & benefits policy, decision to give raises		Vote	Finance	Recommend
Review, amend, or overturn a policy set by Manager		Vote		
New policies & changes to policies (except above)			Governance	
Purchasing decisions to meet budget projections				Decide
				Operational Dec
Expenses that are within budget projections				Decide
Expenses that are outside of the budget projections		Vote	Finance	Recommend
Hire/fire staff, disciplinary action with staff			Grievance	Decide
Decisions regarding staffing chart				Decide
Decisions in relationship with landlord and vendors				Decide
Decisions about marketing and outreach strategy				Decide

Decision Report Template

Here's a simple template that can help keep track of decisions that are made, in order to maintain accountability between committees and even keep track of items to be added to future agendas.

- Issue:

A decision was made on the following issue:

- Date:

The decision was made on _____ by _____

- Decision:

We decided (check off one of the following):

___ Not to initiate a process ___ Not to take action ___ To veto ___ To take action

- Result:
Based on this decision, the following will happen:
- Reason:
The choice was made because:
- Decision makers:
This decision was made by:
- Information:
People with the right to be informed about this decision are _____. They have the right to talk to _____ for more information. They have the responsibility to understand the decision and how it affects them and the way they work.
- Next steps:
The decision will be reviewed on _____ by _____

Forming an Entity

1. Determining Your Co-op's Entity
2. How to File for an LLC in Michigan

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
3-4 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choice of Entity Chart• Naming Rules: Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs website• LLC name search• What is a resident agent?• Registered agent service• Filing Form 700 - Articles of Organization• Member-management vs. manager-management• What is an EIN• Get an EIN• Open a Business Bank Account• Get Licenses and Permits• Best Banks for Small Business review• Federal Licenses & Permits: U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) guide• State License Search
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our Chosen Business Entity• Our EIN• Bank we have chosen to work with• Licenses and Permits we need

Determining your Co-op's Entity

When beginning a business, you must decide what form of “business entity” to establish. The entity your business is incorporated as refers to what legal structure it will take, which income tax return form you have to file, and more.

What types of entities are there to choose from? (from [incorporate.com](#))

Limited Liability Companies (LLCs - most common for worker co-ops. LLCs offers the most flexibility with the fewest restrictions)

- Independent legal structures separate from their owners.
- Help separate your personal assets from your business debts.
- Taxed similarly to a sole proprietorship (if one owner) or a partnership (if multiple owners).
- No limit to the number of owners.
- Not required to hold annual meetings or record minutes.
- Governed by operating agreements.

C Corporations

- Independent legal and tax structures separate from their owners.
- Help separate your personal assets from your business debts.
- No limit to the number of shareholders.
- Taxed on corporate profits and shareholder dividends.
- Must hold annual meetings and record meeting minutes.

S Corporations

- Independent legal and tax structures separate from their owners.
- Help separate your personal assets from your business debts.
- Owners report their share of profit and loss in the company on their personal tax returns.
- Limits on number of shareholders, who must be U.S. citizens or residents.

- Must hold annual meetings and record meeting minutes.

Cooperative Corporations

- Places ownership and/or control of the corporation in the hands of the employees or patrons of the corporation, in which co-op members are not to be held liable for any debt, obligation or liability of the co-op.
- Must have annual meetings, Board of Directors meetings, corporate minutes, and stockholder meetings. Must meet additional requirements for cooperatives under cooperative code.
- Profit is taxed at the corporate rate, surplus is distributed to members and not taxed at the entity level.
- Salary is not subject to self employment tax, shareholder distributions are not subject to employment tax.

[Click here for a handy chart by co-oplaw.org that compares the characteristics of different entities](#)

In your workbook, record what entity you will be choosing for your co-op and why in Section 10 under “Our Chosen Business Entity.”

What are Articles of Incorporation? [\(from Business News Daily\)](#)

The articles of incorporation, sometimes called a certification of formation or a charter, are a set of documents filed with a government body to legally document the creation of an entity, establishing its existence as a separate entity from the individual(s). This type of legal document contains general information about the entity, such as the business's name and location. “Articles of incorporation” are easy to confuse with the “Operating Agreement,” which lay out the rules and regulations that govern a business and help to establish the roles and duties of the company's directors and officers. Operating Agreements work in conjunction with the articles of incorporation to form the legal backbone of the business (and some states also request a copy of the company Operating Agreement). Articles of incorporation are important because they establish a company within its home state, informing the state of the key aspects of the business. When filing, the business owner lets the state know the entity's purpose, the name and address of the registered agent, the number of authorized shares and amounts of common stock (if applicable– it often isn't to co-ops), and the names of any incorporators. By making your business a legal corporation, you protect yourself from the company's debts.

Articles of incorporation include the following information, with some variations by state:

- The name of your business.

- The name and address of your business's registered agent (the person or company to whom the state government will direct all vital legal and state documents and communications).
- The type of corporate structure (which may include a designation of your business as a nonprofit corporation, non-stock corporation or other category).
- The names and addresses of all members of your company's board of directors.
- The duration of the business (if it is not permanent).
- Your name, signature and address. If you are not the incorporator of the business, you will provide this information for the incorporator instead.

[*\(Video: What's the difference between Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws?\)*](#)

How to File for an LLC in Michigan

- [Step 1. Name your Michigan LLC](#)
- [Step 2. Choose a Resident Agent](#)
- [Step 3. File the Articles of Organization](#)
- [Step 4. Create an Operating Agreement](#) (to be covered in the next section)
- [Step 5. Get an EIN](#)

Choosing a company name is the first and most important step in forming an LLC in Michigan. Be sure to choose a business name that complies with Michigan naming laws and requirements and is easily searchable by potential business clients.

Step 1. Follow the naming guidelines for a Michigan LLC

- Your name must include the phrase “limited liability company” or one of its abbreviations (LLC or L.L.C.).
- Your name cannot include words that could confuse your LLC with a government agency (FBI, Treasury, State Department, etc.).
- Restricted words (e.g. Bank, Attorney, University) may require additional legal paperwork and a licensed individual, such as a doctor or lawyer, to be part of your LLC.

For a complete list of naming rules in Michigan, you can visit the [Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs website](#). Is the name available in Michigan? Make sure the business name you want isn't already taken by doing an [LLC name search](#) online through the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA).

Step 2: Choose a Resident Agent in Michigan

You are required to appoint and maintain a resident agent for your Michigan LLC.

[What is a resident agent?](#) A resident agent is an individual or business entity responsible for receiving important tax forms, legal documents, notice of lawsuits, and official government correspondence on behalf of your business. Think of your registered agent as your business's point of contact with the state.

Who can be a resident agent? A resident agent must be a resident of Michigan or a corporation, such as a [registered agent service](#), authorized to conduct business in the state of Michigan. You may elect an individual within the company including yourself.

In your workbook, record who you have chosen to be your registered agent under “Our Registered Agent.”

Step 3: File Your Michigan LLC Articles of Organization

To register your Michigan LLC, you'll need to file [Form 700 - Articles of Organization](#) with the Michigan Corporations Division. You can apply online, by mail, or in person. Now is a good time to determine whether your LLC will be [member-managed vs. manager-managed](#).

Once you've filed your Articles of Organization, you should take the following steps:

- [Create an Operating Agreement](#) (to be covered in the next section)
- [Get an EIN](#)
- [Open a Business Bank Account](#)
- [Get Licenses and Permits](#)

Get an EIN

An Employer Identification Number (EIN) is like a social security number for your LLC. You will need an EIN if you want to hire employees or open business bank accounts. You can get your EIN for free through the IRS website, via fax, or by mail. If you would like to learn more about EINs and how they can benefit your LLC, read our [What is an EIN](#) article.

In your workbook, record your EIN number for your co-op in Section 10 under “Our EIN Number.”

Open a Business Bank Account

Using dedicated business banking and credit accounts is essential to protect your business' [corporate veil](#). When your personal and business accounts are mixed, your personal assets (your home, car, and other valuables) are at risk in the event your LLC is sued. For reviews on some of our most trusted business banks, visit our [Best Banks for Small Business](#) review.

In your workbook, record what bank your co-op will be using under “Bank we have chosen to work with.”

Get Licenses and Permits

When you are registering an LLC, you need to determine if your business needs any licenses or permits in order to remain compliant. On the federal level, there are a handful of business activities that require licenses and/or permits. Find out how to obtain necessary licenses and permits for your business or have a professional service do it for you:

- Federal: Use the [U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\) guide](#) to federal business licenses and permits.
- State: Apply for or learn more about licenses, permits, and registration with The State of Michigan's [State License Search](#) website.
- Local: Contact your local county clerk and ask about local licenses and permits.

In your workbook, record the licenses and permits you will need and the steps to obtain them under “Licenses & Permits We Need.”

Financial Feasibility

1. Understanding Financial Feasibility
2. Industry Interviews
3. Start Up Costs
4. Costs of Goods Sold
5. Creating a Break Even Model
6. Building a Pro-Forma

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
7-8 Hours (2-3 meetings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Filing Taxes
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry Interviews• DCWF Financial Projections Template (Start Up Costs, COGS, Calculating Breakeven, Labor Costs, Pro Forma to Breakeven)

Understanding Financial Feasibility

“Financial feasibility” refers to whether or not it is realistic that your business will make enough money to survive and, eventually, grow to the point of achieving your financial goals based on how much it will cost to run and the demand in your market. You will need to determine what materials it takes and how much it will cost to produce a single unit of your product/service (“Cost of Goods Sold”), what the cost

of starting up will be (“Start Up Costs”), what portion of sales you expect each of your products/services to make up, what a realistic “start up” budget looks like for your co-op, and, based on that, determine how much you need to produce in order to “break even” (earn equally as much revenue as your expenses). You will then need to assess if that level of production is realistic for your co-op-- if it isn’t, you’ll need to adjust your expenses and rethink the ways you will earn revenue.

Knowing what raw materials and supplies you’ll need to start up and produce your goods/services is the first step! In order to make sure you aren’t missing anything and get a full picture of what you need to factor into your budget and planning, DCWF encourages you to gain some inside insight by interviewing existing businesses similar to yours and asking them about their start-up journey.

Industry Interviews

Do some research to find places that really resonate with your team and remind you all of your collective vision-- if you can’t find anywhere local, seek out places outside of the city or even state (in fact, places that aren’t local may be more willing to share their wisdom and experience with you since you aren’t their competition!)

Tip: if you can find the contact information, it’s always best to start with an email or direct message, so you can give a warm introduction while being considerate of folks’ time & capacity!

Start-Up Costs

Source: U.S. Small Business Administration

The key to a successful business is preparation. Before your business opens its doors, you’ll have bills to pay. Understanding your expenses will help you launch successfully. Calculating startup costs helps you:

- Estimate profits

- Conduct a break-even analysis
- Secure loans
- Attract investors
- Save money with tax deductions

Most businesses fall into one of three categories: brick-and-mortar businesses, online businesses, and service providers. You'll face different startup expenses depending on your business type.

There are common startup costs you're likely to have no matter what. Look through the following list, and make sure to add any other expenses that are unique to your business:

- Office space
- Equipment and supplies
- Communications
- Utilities
- Licenses and permits
- Insurance
- Lawyer and accountant
- Inventory
- Employee salaries
- Advertising and marketing
- Market research
- Printed marketing materials
- Making a website

Once you have your list of expenses, you can estimate how much they'll actually cost. This process will be different for each expense you have. Some expenses will have well-defined costs — permits and licenses tend to have clear, published costs. You might have to estimate other costs that are less certain, like employee salaries. Look online and talk directly to mentors, vendors, and service providers to see what similar companies pay for expenses.

Add up your expenses for a full financial picture

Once you've identified your initial startup costs, you'll need to determine your ongoing expenses: your fixed & variable costs. Fixed costs are ongoing monthly expenses that do not change from month to month, such as rent, internet, etc. Variable costs are ongoing monthly expenses that change depending on how much they are used. These numbers are critical to figuring out how much you'll need to make to run the business. They can also help you determine how much financing you'll need to get started.

Costs of Goods Sold

Cost of Goods Sold are also known as “cost of sales” or its acronym “COGS.” COGS refers to the cost of goods that are either manufactured or purchased and then sold. COGS count as a business expense and affect how much profit a company makes on its products.

What Is Included in Costs of Good Sold?

The items that make up costs of goods sold include:

- Cost of items intended for resale
- Cost of raw materials
- Cost of parts used to make a product
- Supplies used in either making or selling the product
- Overhead costs, like utilities for the manufacturing site
- Shipping or freight in costs
- Indirect costs, like distribution or sales force costs
- Container costs

Calculating Costs of Goods Sold Over a Fiscal Year

Once your business is up and running, your COGS can be predicted more accurately by looking back at one year of your business's financial history. That calculation can then be used to create more accurate projections moving forward.

In this instance, cost of goods sold is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{(Beginning Inventory + Cost of Goods)} - \text{Ending Inventory} = \text{Cost of Goods Sold}$$

The beginning inventory is the value of inventory at the beginning of the year, which is actually the end of the previous year. Cost of goods is the cost of any items bought or made over the course of the year. Ending inventory is the value of inventory at the end of the year.

Creating a Break Even Model

Your “breakeven” is the point at which your revenue is equal to your expenses. Let’s show a couple of examples of how to calculate the break-even point.

Comet Coffee is a coffee roaster in the Detroit area. They are considering introducing a new line, called Spacecraft Sumatra. They want to know what kind of impact this new drink will have on the company’s finances. So, they decide to calculate the break-even point, so that the Comet Coffee team can determine whether this new product will be worth the investment.

For the first month the product will be in production, their accounting costs are:

Fixed Costs = \$2,000 (total, for the month)

Variable Costs = .40 (per can produced)

Sales Price = \$1.50 (a cup)

Calculating the Break-Even Point in Units

Fixed Costs ÷ (Sales price per unit – Variable costs per unit)

So: $\$2,000 / (\$1.50 - \$.40)$ or $\$2,000 / 1.10$

=1818 units

This means Comet Coffee needs to sell just over 1800 cups of the new brew a in a month, to reach the break-even point.

Building a Pro-Forma

What is a Pro Forma?

Pro forma, a Latin term meaning "as a matter of form," is applied to the process of presenting financial projections for a specific time period in a standardized format. Businesses use pro forma statements for decision-making in planning and control, and for external reporting to owners, investors, and creditors. Pro forma statements can be used as the basis of comparison and analysis to provide management, investment analysts, and credit officers with a feel for the particular nature of a business's financial structure under various conditions.

A company uses pro forma statements in the process of business planning and control. Because pro forma statements are presented in a standardized, columnar format, you can use them to compare and contrast alternative business plans. By arranging the data for the operating and financial statements side-by-side, you can analyze the projected results of competing plans in order to decide which best serves the interests of the business. In constructing pro forma statements, a company recognizes the uniqueness and distinct financial characteristics of each proposed plan or project.

Pro forma statements allow you to:

- Identify the assumptions about the financial and operating characteristics that generate the scenarios.
- Develop the various sales and budget (revenue and expense) projections.
- Assemble the results in profit and loss projections.
- Translate these data into cash-flow projections.
- Compare the resulting balance sheets.
- Perform ratio analysis to compare projections against each other and against those of similar companies.
- Review proposed decisions in marketing, production, research and development, etc., and assess their impact on profitability and liquidity.

Envisioning Your Co-op

1. Developing Your Vision
2. Mission & Values Statements
3. Your Co-op's Inspiration
4. Co-op Name Brainstorming

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
4-5 Hours (Over 1-2 meetings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook• Padlet (great way to organize a brainstorm sesh)
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mission Statement Examples• Why and How Visioning Works
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our Vision Statement• Our Mission Statement• Our Values Statement• Brainstorming our Co-op's Name• Our Co-op's Inspiration

Developing your Mission and Vision

Source: Oberlo.com

What is a Mission Statement?

A mission statement is a short summary of an organization's core purpose, focus, and aims. This usually includes a brief description of what the organization does and its key objectives.

What is a Vision Statement?

A vision statement is a short description of an organization's aspirations and the wider impact it aims to create. It should be a guiding beacon to everyone within the organization and something which underpins internal decision-making and determines the intended direction of the organization.

Mission Statement vs Vision Statement: What's The Difference?

In short: The mission is the “*what*” and the “*how*,” and the vision is the “*why*.”

The mission statement defines what an organization does and includes tangible goals which the organization strives to accomplish. The vision statement, meanwhile, should clarify the aspirations of the organization and define the direction it's heading in.

Many organizations combine the two statements to form one clearly defined reason for existing that unites the efforts of everyone involved. Mission and vision statements are signposts.

Effective mission and vision statements will unify the focus of an organization – for the organization and their target audience. Okay, but what if you're only just starting a business?

Well, whether you're a massive corporation or a solopreneur, you can use mission and vision statements to gain clarity and ensure that you consistently make decisions in line with your ultimate goals.

These statements also help you develop a stronger brand that differentiates you from the competition.

Article: [Why and How Visioning Works](#)

Mission Statement Examples

- **Warby Parker:** To offer designer eyewear at a revolutionary price, while leading the way for [socially conscious](#) businesses.
- **Shopify:** Make commerce better for everyone, so businesses can focus on what they do best: building and selling their products.
- **Patagonia:** Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.
- **TED:** Spread ideas.
- **Southwest Airlines:** To become the world's most loved, most flown, and most profitable airline.
- **Google:** To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.
- **Asos:** Become the world's number-one destination for fashion-loving 20-somethings.
- **Loreal:** To provide the best in cosmetics innovation to women and men around the world with respect for their diversity.
- **Bulletproof:** Help people perform better, think faster, and live better.
- **Honest Tea:** Create and promote great-tasting, healthy, organic beverages.
- **Starbucks:** To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.
- **Passionfruit:** Create inclusive clothing and accessories that enable you to show your pride all year round while giving back to our community.

Creating Your Minimal Viable Product

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
2-3 Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
Resources	
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning Your Phase 1: Creating a Minimum Viable Product

Creating a Minimum Viable Product (aka Planning Your Phase 1!)

A minimum viable product (MVP) is a business development technique in which a new product or website is developed with only the features necessary to satisfy “early adopters” (your business’s first customers). More features are only designed and developed after considering feedback from those initial users.

So basically: your MVP is the simplest, cheapest, lowest-risk version of your business/product that will gather you the most information from your market about how to continue to develop the product. Kind of like the first phase of the business to get your foot in the door, get your name out there, and learn and grow from the feedback you get without taking on too much financial risk.

Don’t be afraid to be too “DIY” and never underestimate the value of starting small and simple! The Wealth Fund values working with a co-op in small, digestible phases, gradually escalating the risk we take on in a loan as we build trust with you.

Three Key Characteristics of a Minimum Viable Product:

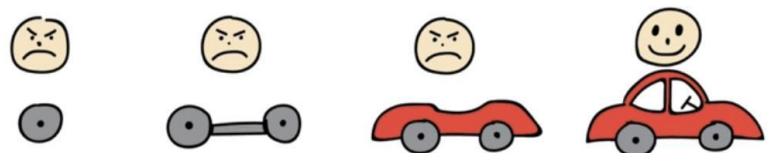
- It has enough value that people are willing to use it or buy it initially.
- It demonstrates enough future benefit to retain early adopters.
- It provides a feedback loop to guide future development.

[Watch this video for a breakdown on smooth, incremental product development and creating an “MVP” that actually addresses your customers’ needs](#) and allows you to collect the feedback you need!

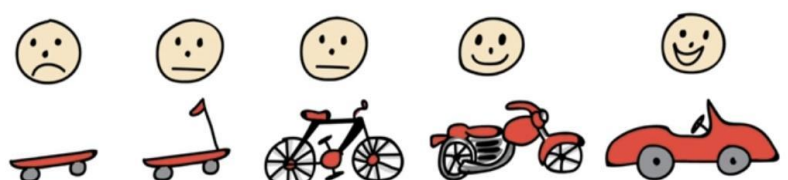
Minimum viable products are developed incrementally in scaled-down versions that still find a way to meet the customer’s fundamental need you are trying to address– even if it’s not the flashy, finished version, it’s just enough to help you gather information on what the customer wants from your product, as well as start developing a relationship with your audience!

This drawing by Henrik Knieberg is a great illustration of “MVP thinking” and what’s called “lean product development.” The

Not like this...



Like this!



customer in this example has a fundamental need for transportation, to get from point A to point B. So you, the product developer, says “Okay, I’ll sell cars!” In developing your final product you would create your MVP:

Cooperative Ownership Structure, Patronage, & Equity

1. Equity, Ownership, Patronage & Dividends
2. Accounting for Co-ops
3. Making Financial Decisions Together

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
1-2 hours; ongoing afterwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
Resources	<p>Setting a Member Share Price</p> <p>Accounting Software & Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quickbooks small business accounting software, desktop and on-line• Xero small business accounting software, on-line only• Gusto payroll and benefits• Wave Accounting Free accounting and bookkeeping software.• National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives – Large organization of accountants focused primarily on larger co-ops, but some gems for smaller co-ops as well.• Cooperative Development Institute – CDI is a Northeastern incubator and can help you find a cooperative accountant
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual Patronage Tracking• Retained Patronage Tracking Sheet

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Source: Democracy at Work Institute Democratic Management Toolkit

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Terms

- **Wage or Salary** is a fixed payment for work done by employees. Wages are generally calculated hourly and salary is generally calculated annually.
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In each member's ICA is both their member share and another number. That second number is a record of their “retained patronage.”

What is retained patronage?

When a co-op earns a profit, after deciding how much of that money will be reinvested back into the business as “retained earnings,” members decide how to distribute the rest as “member allocations.” There are two kinds of member allocations: cash distributions paid out immediately, or “retained

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Retained patronage is allocated to all member accounts, but different members receive different percentages of profit based on how many hours they’ve worked. This money along with the member buy-in is intended to be used towards the coop in case there are any losses, but ultimately it is meant to be paid back to members every few years (more on that in the next paragraph!)

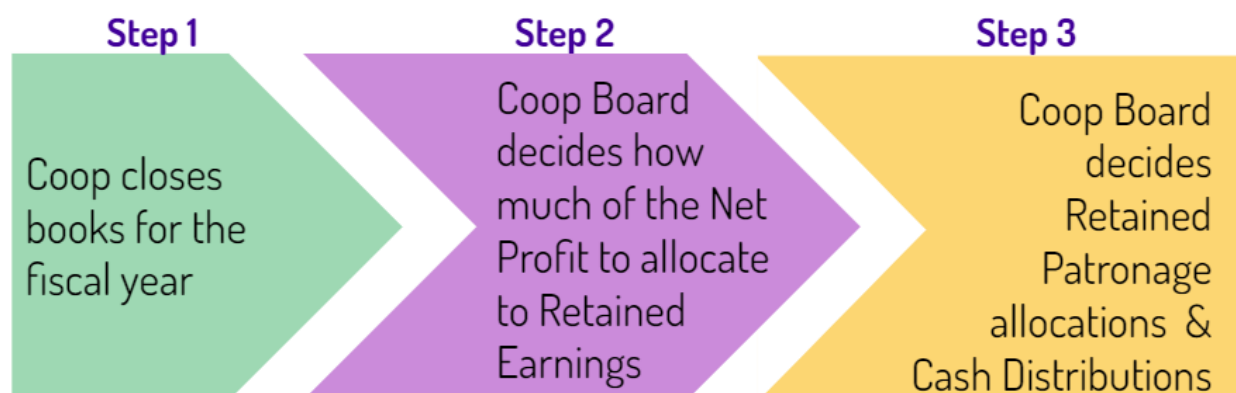
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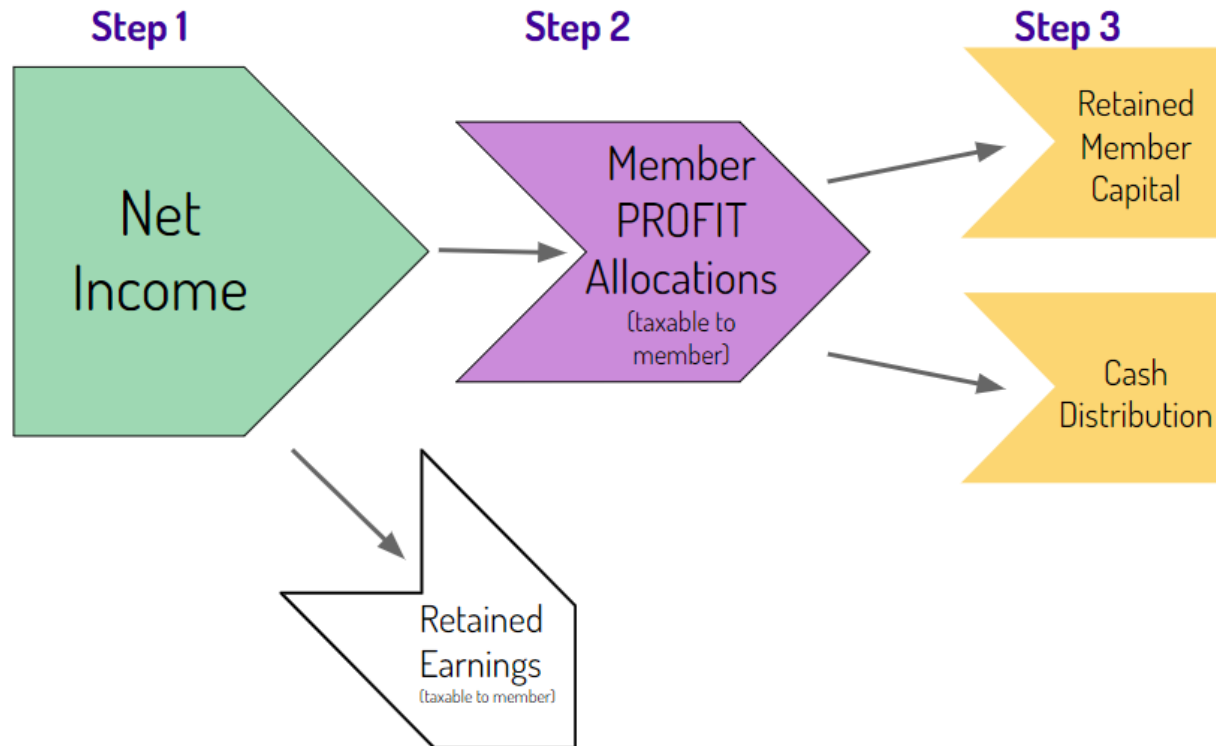
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Patronage & Dividends: How Are Dividends Distributed?

Again, dividends are the profit that is allocated to members either in cash and/or to their ICAs as “reinvested earnings.” Members are allocated a percentage of dividends according to how many hours they worked relative to the other members.

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Let's look at an example!

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You all collectively decide that \$1500 will be spent on the business to buy new equipment. That \$1500 goes into the co-op's collective account (retained earnings).

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PLANNING CHECKPOINT

How Does Money Flow through a Cooperative?

(Page 5 of 8)



Management Systems to Support Sharing Money

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Cooperative Ownership Structure, Patronage, & Equity

1. Equity, Ownership, Patronage & Dividends
2. Accounting for Co-ops
3. Making Financial Decisions Together

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
1-2 hours; ongoing afterwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workbook
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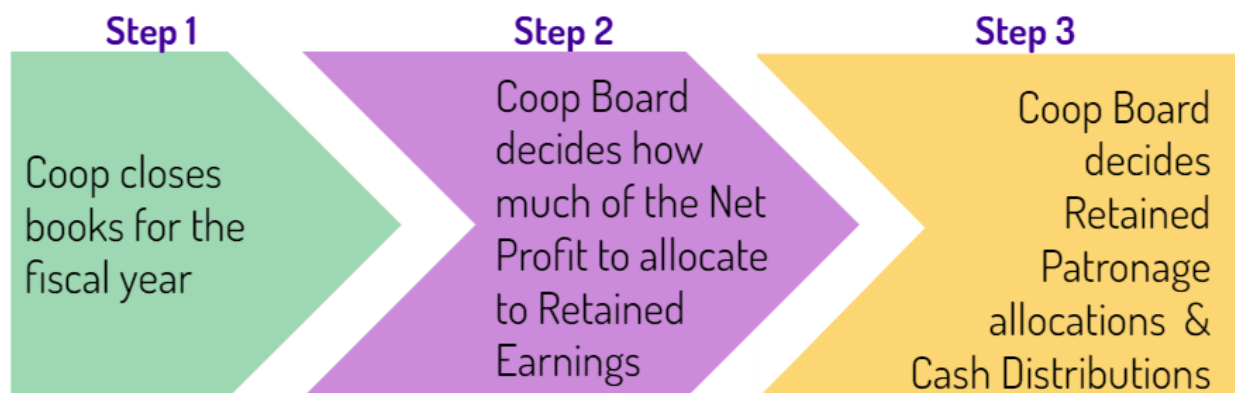
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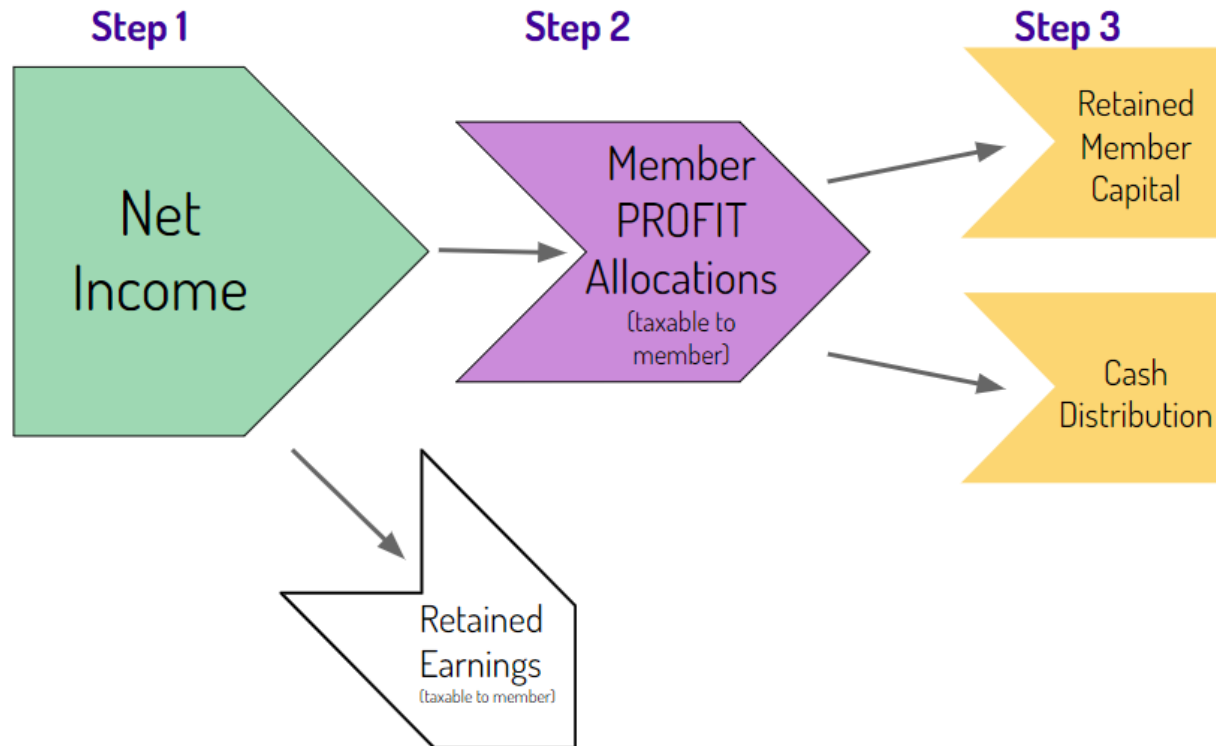
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Business Model Canvas

Estimated Time	Materials & Tools
2-3 Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Workbook● Butcher Paper, Sticky Notes, Markers (if completing in person)
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Step by Step Guide for BMC● BMC examples● Co-op Jumpstart Business Model Canvas Software
Workbook Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Business Model Canvas

Business Model Canvas

A business model canvas is like a template for a snapshot of your business model-- what value the business offers its customers, how it delivers it to them, what the costs are, how it will earn money, etc. It allows you to easily compare different versions of your business model when necessary, like if something isn't working and you have to take a new direction. It ultimately looks like [this chart](#), which you can build for free using [this google sheet by Baltimore Roundtable for Economic Democracy](#).

A business model canvas is useful because it's flexible & easy to make changes to and sketch out different models, it's customer-focused and forces you to think from the start with precision about the actual need you are meeting for the people you are serving, and it's easy to read & present and takes away all the extra fluff from a traditional business plan.

[Watch this video for a complete description of how to complete a business model canvas.](#) You'll see a brief description of each section of the business model canvas below.

Below are the sections of a business model canvas:

1. Customer Segments (Who do you help?)

- a. Which groups are you creating value for?
- b. Which of those groups is your most important audience?

2. Value Proposition (What do you do?)

- a. What value are you delivering to your audience?
- b. What needs of theirs are you satisfying?

3. Distribution Channels (How do you reach your customers?)

- a. Through which channel does your audience want to be reached? How much do those channels cost?

4. Customer Relationships (How do you interact?)

- a. What relationship does the target audience expect you to establish?
- b. How can you integrate that into your work in terms of cost and format?

5. Revenue Streams (How will you make money?)

- a. For what value are your audiences willing to pay?
- b. How much do they pay for that value from similar businesses?
- c. How would they prefer to pay?
- d. How much does each revenue stream contribute to the overall revenues?

6. Key Resources (What do you need?)

- a. What key resources does your value proposition require?

7. Key Activities (How do you do it?)

- a. What specific activities will you perform to deliver your value proposition?

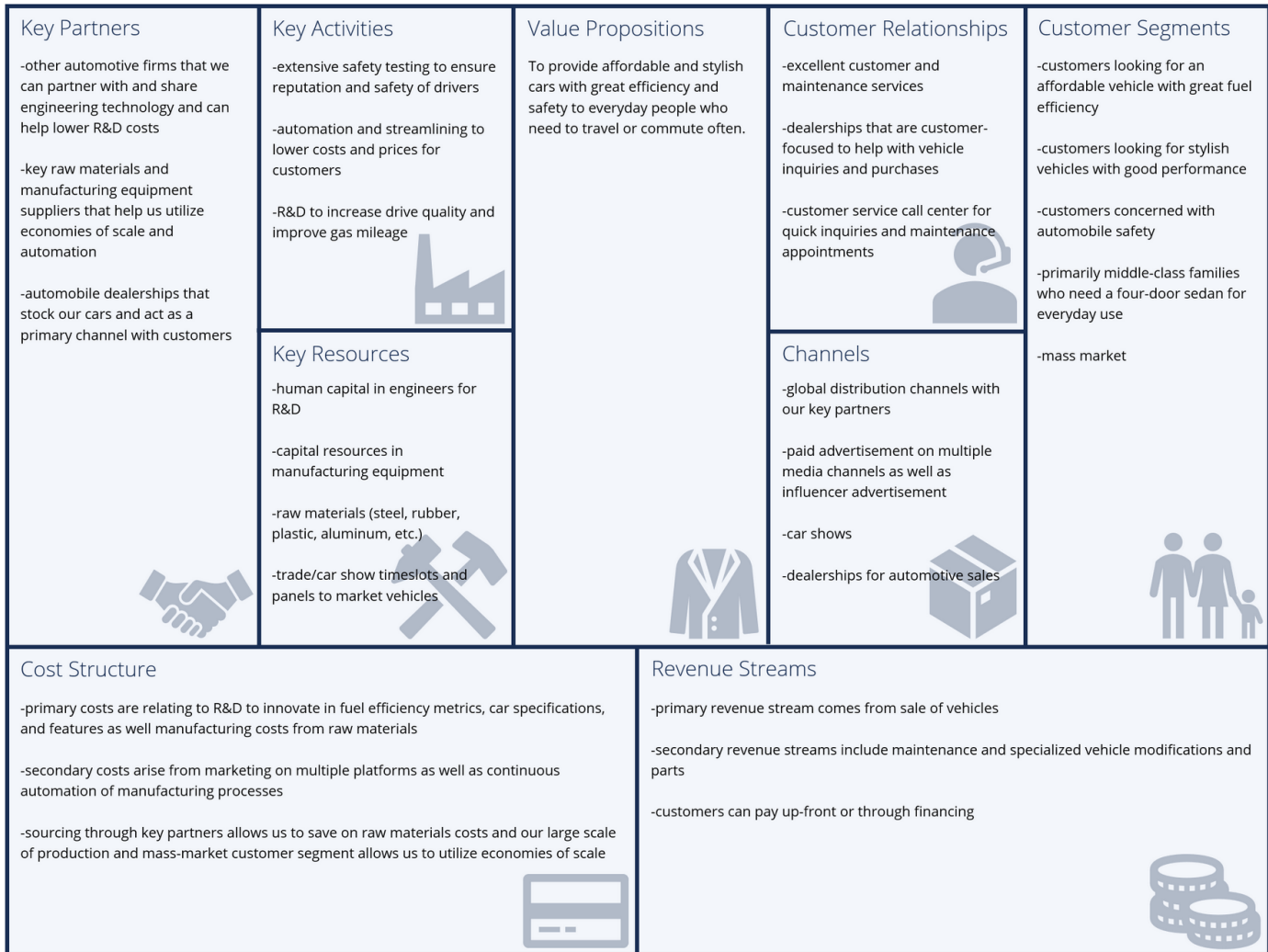
8. Key Partners (Who do you need help from?)

- a. Who are your key partners/suppliers?
- b. What are the most important motivations for the partnerships?

9. Cost Structure (How much will it cost to run your business?)

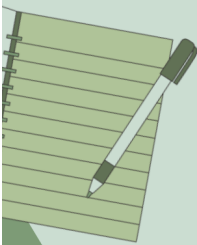
- a. What are the most important costs in your work?
- b. Which key resources/activities are most expensive?

Below is an example of a completed business model canvas chart:




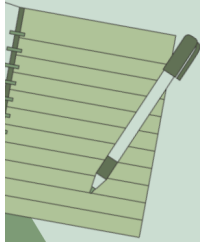


Co-op Decision-Making Tools



Mapping Your Decision-Making Structures: Sociocracy

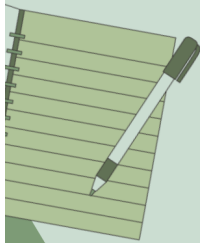




In worker co-ops, decisions are made democratically.

Sometimes this means you vote on who makes certain decisions; other times, the entire membership votes.

Different decisions can have different voting methods, for example, It might be the majority rule to approve the budget, but con census to add a new member.


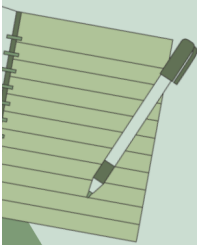


Before you can decide how to make decisions together, you've got to get clear on who is in charge of what, who they communicate with, and when. Sociocracy is one style of both governance and management that can make it easy to map this structure for yourself!



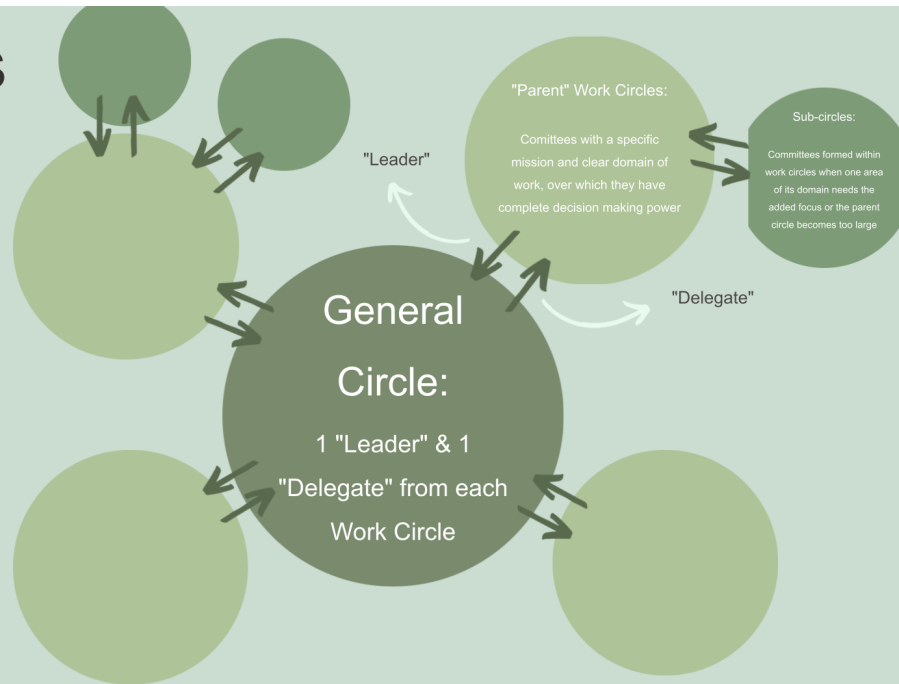


What is Sociocracy?

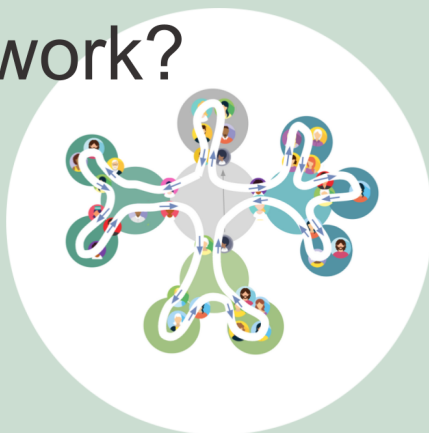


Sociocracy is a nonhierarchical governance system in which work "circles" within an organization have total decision-making authority over their domain of work and make decisions utilizing collective consent-based decision-making processes, while receiving input & feedback from other working groups through a system of continuous communication.

How does it work?



How does it work?



It combines the best of collective decision making with "hierarchical" management, to create a decentralized flow of communication!

"Leader": Makes sure the circle is making progress. Reports on their work circle to the General Circle. The "leader" role is not a decision-making authority, but rather just the person that keeps track of coordination, timelines, tasks & communication!

"Delegate": The second voice in the "general" or "parent" circle along with the "leader". Reports from the general or parent circle back to their work circle.

Secretary: takes notes, keeps circle files current & in order.

Facilitator: moderates circle meetings

General Circle: a circle in which the leaders and delegates of each "parent" circle come together to report on all activity and coordinate with other work circles.

Full circle: all members of all work circles together.

Traditionally, the plenary does not make decisions (usually)-- it is only called together to gain input.

This "double-linked" communication & accountability is a cornerstone of traditional sociocracy!

Traditionally, the GC does not actually make any decisions-- except to decide which work circle should handle any new "domains," tasks, or problems that arise.

can you have a board if you're sociocratic?

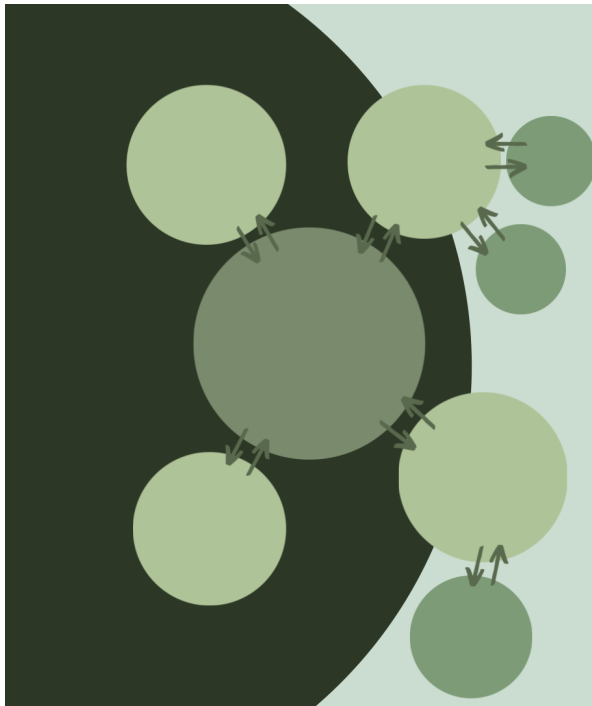


Yes! It's just up to you all to determine the "domain" of the board in relationship to the general circle and the full circle-- which body is responsible for what, and which one has to consult which other one for which decisions?

For example, which one creates the annual budget (if any of them-- maybe you have a finance circle!)? Does that body have to consult one of the others first? Which one oversees the mission of the group? Etc



Some sociocratic organizations choose to build their board into their general circle, with the board made up of one general circle rep from each working group, plus outside experts-- this way, communication is streamlined and the GC & board never have to have extra meetings to consult one another!

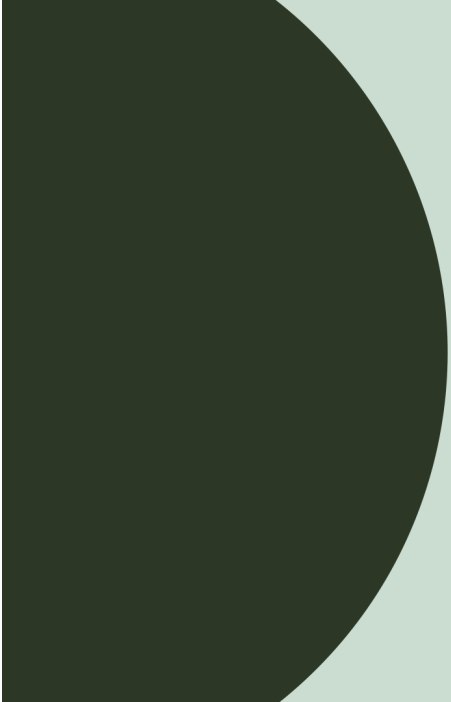


Activity

Map your current "circle system"!

Map what exists right now in order to get a birds eye view for the future to more easily adjust your communication structure!

What work circles do you have? What are each of their "missions" and "domains"? Are they each made up of groups, or are some individual roles? Do you have any sub-circles, or anything like a "general circle?"



Types of Decision Making

- Simple majority, super majority, modified consensus, and consensus.
- "Fist to Five" Consensus
- The Integrative Consent Process



Majority Rules



Types of Decision Making models

"Majority Rules": the most votes determine the outcome.

- Simple majority (51% + votes)
- Supermajority
 - $\frac{2}{3}$ majority
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ majority

Pros:

- Tends to be faster, simpler, and more familiar to folks than consensus

Cons:

- "Tyranny of the majority"
- Does not take into account the intensity of the "no's" or true enthusiasm of the "yes's"



Consensus

Types of Decision Making models

Consensus

A method of decision-making in which all participants have the opportunity to influence a decision until the group arrives at an acceptable outcome through discussion & compromise.

- Traditional Consensus: one member can block a decision approved by the rest of the group.
- Modified Consensus: 2 (or more– the group can determine this number) members are required to block a decision.

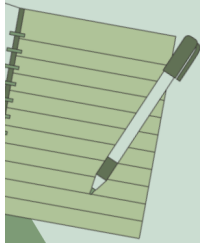
Pros:

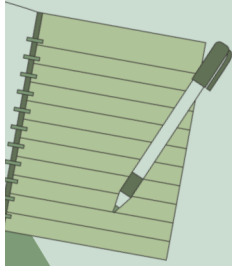
- Decisions are made in a way that everyone feels heard
- Decisions are often more nuanced & informed
- The group might feel more unified

Cons:

- One or a handful of members can hold a decision "hostage"
- Consensus is sometimes only possible when so many compromises have been made that no one is happy

Fist to Five consensus



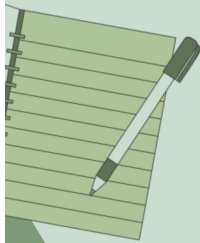


Fist to Five

voting is designed to encourage significant agreement without jeopardizing the quality of the solution in ways that can happen when groups attempt to achieve “complete consensus.”

Most people are accustomed to the simplicity of “yes” and “no” voting—Fist to Five introduces the element of the quality of the “yes.”

This moves a group away from quantity voting to quality voting, which is considerably more informative.



Fist to Five can also be used during consensus decision making as a way to:

- Get a quick “temperature check” on proposals or amendments to proposals
- Check the quality of a consensus (for example, a “mostly threes” passed decision might be one the group would want to schedule an evaluation for in the near future!)
- Decide between multiple proposals in a way that is more nuanced than a simple vote.



Fist to Five can be used as a full consensus process, when a proposal has already been discussed, amended, and revised by the group. the number of fingers raised indicates the level of agreement.

- A fist means, "I vote NO." or in consensus it means , "I object and will block consensus"
- 1 finger means, "I strongly disagree and I think there is serious work to do on this proposal. I might block without significant changes."
- 2 fingers means "I don't much like this but I'll go along." In consensus this would be referred to as standing aside without blocking.
- 3 fingers means, "I'm in the middle somewhere. Like some of it, but not all."
- 4 fingers means, "I like this."
- 5 fingers means, "I like this a lot, I think it's the best possible decision."

Fist to five steps:

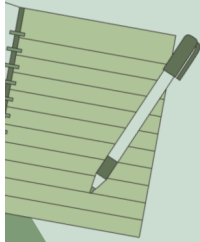
- Take the first vote: on the first vote, if everyone shows a 5, 4 or 3, consensus has been reached, and the motion is passed.

1A. If there are any 1s, 2s, or fists, those who indicate such are given the opportunity to explain to the rest of the group why they gave the rating and make recommendations to change the proposal in order to make it acceptable to them.

The originator of the proposal has the option to make the change or leave the option as it is and explains the decision to the rest of the group.

1B. If a change is made to the recommendation, then it is a new first vote.

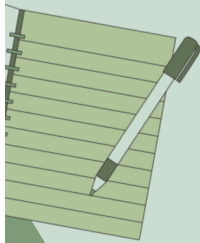
1C. If no change is made following that vote, the motion is passed. If there is a change, then it goes on to the second vote.



2. Take the second vote: on the second vote, if everyone shows a 5, 4, 3, or 2, the decision is made, and we can move ahead with the knowledge that the 2s indicate, "I don't think it is a good idea, but if that is what the group wants to do, I won't block it." However, if there are any 1s, those people are given the opportunity to explain to the rest of the group why they gave the rating and make recommendations to change the alternative in order to make it acceptable to them. Once more, the originator of the alternative has the option to make the change or leave the option as it is and explains the decision to the rest of the group.

2A. If a change is made to the recommendation, then it is a new first vote.

2B. If no change is made, then it goes on to the third vote.

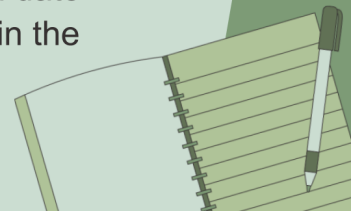


3. Take the third vote: On the 3rd vote, majority rules. The decision is made based on the majority of the participants who vote yes. If the proposal is turned down, it is time to go back to the drawing board and review other alternatives!

Note

A proposal that had a lot of 1s, 2s and 3s, or widely split vote tells you the decision will need to be watched closely and/or revisited soon.

It is wise to assign someone to keep records of the outcomes of the decision and attach a date for the group to re-evaluate the decision in the future.



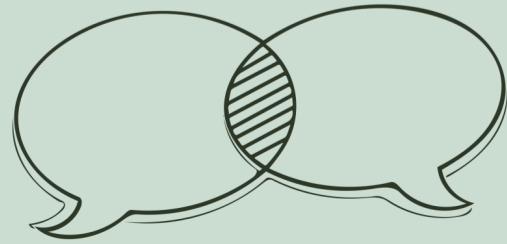
Fist to five can also be used as a modified, more nuanced version of majority rule that can be used when appropriate to only pass motions with a lot of enthusiasm around them.



- Determine the number of people making the decision and multiply that number by five (the number of fingers each has to vote).
2. Determine how many fingers must be up in total for a motion to pass or not (this should be done ahead of time!)
 3. Vote! Rather than, "Four out of six of us must vote yes," for example, you might decide "23+ fingers must be up."



Proposal Generation



Steps to forming proposals

- Picture forming:

What's the issue? Go around and hear from everyone on how they describe the issue to ensure there is clarity and full understanding of all perspectives

2. Dimension-defining:

What are the dimensions of the problem? What are all the various things & questions that must be considered to make a fully informed decision? Facilitator makes a list, then checks for consensus to determine if list is complete.

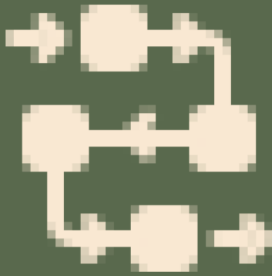
3. Generate proposal ideas:

Everyone who has one writes down their proposal & hands to facilitator.

4. Synthesis/Narrowing-Down:

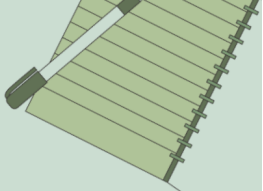
Facilitator takes a few minutes to look at the common threads between proposals. Facilitator synthesizes proposals where possible to reduce the number of proposals, then reads the final proposals out loud. Ex: Are there two proposals that are totally similar, except one has a couple additional elements that do not contradict the other proposal? Combine those two proposals into one!

Integrative Consent Process



Sometimes, consensus processes can be slowed down by the notion that everyone has to "agree." "Integrative consent" reframes consensus around consent instead of agreement– it asks participants to consider if they believe a proposal or decision would cause harm in its current state, rather than if they think it's the greatest idea in the world, and if so, what solutions can be "integrated".

Another notable characteristic of the integrative consent process is that there is no section for open discussion amongst the whole group– all communication occurs in "rounds" in which group members do not respond to what another has to say until prompted. When it is not in rounds it is occurring strictly between the facilitator, proposer, or one other person at a time with a question/comment/objection. This is to prevent "debate"-style communication, ensure that all voices are always heard, and to keep the process orderly and efficient.

- 
- Step ① clearly present proposal
 - Step ② hold a round for clarifying questions only
> this is not the stage for comments or concerns!
 - Step ③ hold a round for comments & reactions
> this is not the stage for discussion (people responding to others' comments)
 - Step ④ quick amendments: the proposer is invited to make any adjustments to the proposal based on what they have heard, and then re-present the modified proposal
 - Step ⑤ consent round. "I object" or "i consent" from everyone.

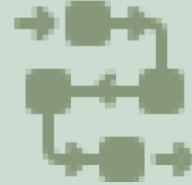
Step



objection round: go around to hear objections from everyone who has them.

> what's an objection?

A productive or "valid" objection is one that specifically addresses how the proposal could obstruct that person's work, the ability of the group to achieve its mission, or cause harm to the team.



> an objection is not:

- a reason why I don't like the proposal (these are offered during comments/reactions)
- a better way to do it (these are offered during comments/reactions)
- based on predictive concerns for which there is no current data

Step 6a: dealing with objections



for each objection:

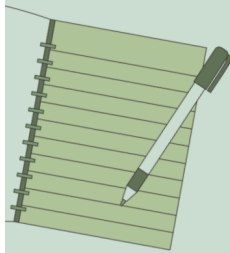
- the proposer asks clarifying questions of the objector, and questions to determine the validity of the objection based on the criteria above. this is not the time for open dialogue with the whole group.
- If the objection is valid, the proposer asks objector what might resolve the objection. this could be:
 - a shorter term for the proposal, ie a "trial period" with a specific set of measurements for success, followed by an evaluation
 - getting more feedback from either other teams/members that may not be present, or experts of some kind
 - an amendment to the proposal. Hear the objector's proposed amendment.

Step 6b:

objection reaction round

for each objection:

IF the objection is determined to be valid, do a reaction round to it & the objector's proposed solution, gathering responses to it from everyone that has one and other solutions for how to amend the proposal in a way that addresses the objection



Step

7

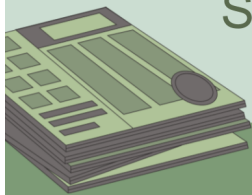
once all objections have been voiced and each valid one has had their own reaction round, the original proposer is given a chance to rewrite the proposal based on the objections

Step

8

2nd consent round: proposer presents new, modified proposal. Hold a round for everyone to consent, object, or "stand aside."

> Stand asides are used when you personally don't support a decision but choose not to obstruct it. "I disagree, but I don't think that it poses harm." Stand asides show that while you disagree with the proposal, you are not willing to take as strong an action as a block nor do you want to spend extra time in the meeting integrating objections.



Step

9

Consent! Repeat the process with any further objections. Once there are no further objections, the proposal is adopted!

spending too much time on a proposal?

you may need to table it for next time or send it to an online consent process! here are some tips for an email consent process:

How to use Integrative Consent by email:

- Write out your proposal clearly, including any supporting documentation but separately from the succinct proposal. Let people know you are using Integrative Consent and explain the process (you can include this step-by-step guide).
- With Integrative Consent by email, there is one additional stipulation that if any person requests this proposal be brought to a meeting for passing with a defined reason for why (e.g. this is too complicated for email) the proposal by email must wait for the next available meeting.
- Ask for questions and comments by a specific time. Send a reminder of the deadline for questions and comments at least 24 hrs in advance. If you know your team is not the best at email, consider texting or calling people to be more inclusive and thorough. If someone hasn't responded by the deadline, move ahead. Don't let stonewalling derail the process.
- Amend your proposal if needed right after the deadline and send it back out for final objections with a new deadline for objections. Send a reminder on the deadline for objections.
- If no objections, the proposal has passed. If someone hasn't responded by the deadline, keep moving forward. They can always raise tension at the next meeting if they need to revisit the decision.
- If there are objections, either create an integration yourself or ask the objector to propose a change that would integrate their objections. Once you've integrated all the objections, send a final call for objections, with a specified deadline for response.
- Once there are no further objections, the proposal has passed. It is a good idea to record it somewhere in your documents so you don't need to search your email for it.

keeping track of how you
decided to decide...

The Decision Making Matrix

The decision-making matrix is a chart that categorizes each type of decision that can be made in a co-op on one axis, with a list of each body & committee of the co-op on the other axis. It allows groups to keep track of their protocol for all kinds of decisions, and is used to record:

- What body recommends a change & to which other body
- What body makes the decision on it
- What method of decision-making must be used
- Who that body must consult about the decision
- Who they must report the decision to

"the onboarding circle approves new members using fist to five consent (75%+) consulting the general circle first and reporting back to the GC."

sample

Area	Decisions:	Management Team	Cooperative Membership	Committee or Department
Identity	Business Name			
Cooperative Principles	Requirements for membership			
	Amount of buy-in			
Governance	General membership meeting procedure and timing			
	Creation of and appointment to committees and individual positions of responsibility			
	Quality control and standards of service			
Service Delivery	Scheduling			
	Curriculum and training of new staff			
Personnel	Hiring and firing member-track employees			
	Minimum probationary period			
	Salary structure and hourly wages			
Financial	Financial reporting schedule and content of reports			
	Pricing			

Resources for Raising Cooperative Community Capital Collectively

- [**The National Coalition for Community Capital:**](#) *a multidisciplinary team of legal experts, educators, lenders, entrepreneurs, and community advocates working toward a sustainable and democratic economy that works for everyone, through community capital.*
 - **What is ‘community capital’?:** *“Community capital is a set of strategies that allows people of any economic status to invest in their community. Community capital projects utilize locally-sourced and locally-invested financial capital, raised from an economically diverse group of investors. Community capital makes local investing accessible to all, not just the wealthy.”*
 - [**Intro: Community Capital Toolbox:**](#) a breakdown of different strategies for raising community capital, such as Democratic Microgrants (like Detroit Soup!) & Community Investment Clubs & Funds
 - [**Handbook for Creating Community Investment Funds:**](#) a handbook documenting the challenges and accomplishments of place-based investments that are patient and catalytic. It outlines impact investing in places where financial capital isn’t usually found or apparent.
 - [**Community Capital Toolkit:**](#) a collection of how-to videos with associated resources, worksheets, and exercises for anyone who wants to develop a Community Investment Fund in their community
 - [**Community Capital Technical Assistance Directory:**](#) A listing of organizations that provide technical assistance for community capital initiatives that lists a description of their services, introductory customer experience, rate, geography, and contact information.
- [**Sustainable Economies Law Center Workbook for Raising Community Capital**](#)
- [**Local investing Resource Center Steps to Create a Community Investment Fund**](#)
- [**Guide to Starting a Soup \(Democratic Microgranting Group\) by Detroit Soup**](#)

Leveraging Black Dollars for Black Power: Conversation with Greg McKenzie and Ross Harris

shakara tyler: Let's start by you both telling me about who you are and what you do.

Greg McKenzie: I'm GMAC. Formally referred to as Gregory McKenzie my primary background is in accounting and I have a deep base of experience in marketing. To go along with my accounting training. I spent some time in direct sales. Some of that direct sales was door to door. And from that experience, I learned some best practices like making presentations, persuasive presentations. And, so I want to take and translate that experience into community fundraising. Building a base out of the base that already supports like most community organizations, so Alkebulan village provides the perfect opportunity to sort of like prototype and work through ideas of how that can be done. Brother Ross and I've come together, collaboratively having a similar background to sort of like test case the idea of utilizing that skill set to develop a community base and create a fund that comes from the community and not from a donor or large philanthropic donor.

Ross Harris: And, I'm Ross Harris. I have over 16 years of experience and community organizing, particularly housing organizing, environmental justice, organizing, political organizing. My focus right now is on fundraising, organizing, fundraising coaching, through crowdfunding which means fundraising outside of the nonprofit industrial complex model. I have years of experience doing sales, marketing, door to door sales for a number of years and over the phone sales. So, my whole lens is coming from a community engagement strategy, learning how to build out that base and how to talk to your market, your donors, and put value in the product or the ideas that you have. So that's where I'm coming to the table helping Alkebulan Village build out the blueprint to help create that donor base. Because there's a lot of great things that are offered here. And, I think if more of the community actually understood that and understood how it helps build the family, we can get more people involved. And not only in terms of donorship but also the active participant, which I think is key because when we think about power, my organizing experience tells me power is defined as organized people and organized dollars. So, how can we build that out? And we look at any company, any political party, they're focused on two main things: organized people, organized dollars.

GM: To that point, we've decided that our Alkebulan campaign will be one of "friendraising" and fundraising. So not simply raising money but raising the awareness of what the village is doing to folks who would love to participate in it but just don't know about it. And then, you know, when we're studying how a person goes from merely a friend to someone who

provides funds as well, because it's everyone's responsibility, ultimately, to keep this going. And sure we have a budget that's based on some larger donors. But if they all disappeared, the only way that the community will be able to sustain this institution is if everybody chipped in a little bit to make it exist as possible. And, so we want to start now, getting people in the habit, like to say muscle memory of making a small contribution, \$10 a month, \$5 a month, \$25 a month. I want to add an additional \$60,000 to the base. And that's only 200 new donors at \$25 a month. And so it's very practical and doable to aggregate large sums from very small frequent donations.

st: So aggregating large sums from very frequent donations is fundraising. Tell me more about "friendraising."

GM: The friendraising is having more people know about Alkebulan Village and participate in our programs, services and activities. This is base building. Once they do that, then they will likely consider becoming a monthly donor.

St: So, friendraising is a more intimate process.

GM: Right. We want to go door to door in the neighborhood immediately and then working our way out, into the outer radius of this as the center. This means canvassing people, telling them about Alkebulan Village and making a pitch for a donation. If, in fact, they don't want to or don't feel compelled to donate at that moment, then everybody will leave with some information and we'll hope to get contact information from them, to put them in a position to know about what we're doing. For example, be on a listserv or something else. Basically, be in contact in some digital way like a text message to give you information about upcoming events.

"The friendraising is having more people know about Alkebulan Village and participate in our programs, services and activities. This is base building. Once they do that, then they will likely consider becoming a monthly donor."

RH: I think that's important that we're also focused on that commitment of information, even if we don't get donations right at the door, we still get that contact. Data is power. Data is key. If we get a direct line of communication to these people, it helps to draw them in. We can send out information which is needed. When I used to do direct sales, you might not get the person at the door. You might not get them to buy whatever you're selling. I was selling Comcast at the time, you might not get them to buy Comcast from you at that point in time. But what would happen sometimes is their AT&T would go out or their bill would go up. Later down the line and just having your information, your contact, you may be one of the first people on their mind. And, we have to think about the environment that we're in as

"...it's getting in the psyche of the population, that muscle memory. It's all about consistency."

Black people. There's something negative happening to us almost every day. So if I don't have time to donate, but you knock on my door, I got your contact information, and then I see something on news that's triggering that you just spoke on, I'm gonna call or I'm gonna make sure I come to that event. You may think, GMAC did knock on my door and talk about child safety and they just found that little girl or martial arts, so it's getting in the psyche of the population, that muscle memory. It's all about consistency. Even when we're talking about the farmers you work with, shakara, they are selling at Eastern Market and their products are a little bit higher than Joe Bob down the road and people are like, nah, I could just go down there where the prices are lower. But if we have the education piece we have an advantage. If they don't know about the economics of locally grown and why it's more expensive, then they see something possibly on the news talking about GMOs in food, it kind of clicks right there. I think education is key in terms of building the base essentially. Consistency.

st: I agree. So what does that education look like?

RH: So, when I'm talking to my leaders about doing crowdfunding, one of the first things that we talk about is, what is your story? If you're going to try to get donations to your campaign, what is the story? What is the overall story? Why is it important to you? Why is it important to the community as a whole? And who, what, when, where or how does that happen? So that's kind of like the educational piece you want to educate them on. How is this affecting you and how their contributions can change the overall picture.

"What is the story? What is the overall story? Why is it important to you? Why is it important to the community as a whole? And who, what, when, where or how does that happen?"

GM: Yeah, so we're thinking of it from the standpoint of direct sales, product knowledge. If I think about Alkebulan Village as a product and I liken it to selling the Kirby vacuum, people will buy a Kirby vacuum from me because I can explain it in a way that makes them realize they need this product or service. So, it's about providing the information to make an informed decision. That's the education part for me.

RH: I remember the thing that was key for us is one of the things that we said people don't know what they want sometimes. Education is huge in terms of giving people the information but not info dumping, not making it too big, where it's too large of an idea to comprehend. So, like meeting them where they are, is always a good place to start. So that's one of the things that we used to do when we knocked on doors, was trying to get information first, to try to figure out where they were. For example, we would say, "hey, how's your service going?" Or, "your neighbor saying that the bill was too high or it was

over \$120. How much is your bill?" When I was doing political work, we were saying, "if there's one thing you could change in the neighborhood, what would you like to see change?" So, when you get that kind of information of 'where are you, then, now I know how to approach you in a sales standpoint or in a donation standpoint or in ideology. If we're talking about, you want to see the crime reduced in the area, I need to talk more about things that relate to crime, and how we are working to solve those things.

GM: And then, in addition to that, direct sales is often ruthless and immoral. Yeah, it's like the tip of the spear of capitalism. Like I'm shoving this product down your throat whether you want it or not, you know what I mean? And we seek to take from it, those elements that are useful, but not the pressure based, the manipulative parts. So, even when I was in the direct sales world, I did it in a way that was in line with my values as best as I could at that time. But now I'm gonna use that model to build a base for the community which is going to be even more important to me to maintain high levels of integrity or how we function and deal with people because some people are gullible and impressionable. And we don't want to be manipulating that. We start off first with a deep love for the people that we're serving and then everything flows from that.

RH: Sales is ruthless. But I always came from a standpoint of, if I am selling something, I am trying to improve your life. So, yes, it costs money. But if I can save you some money, let me help you save. And, if I find the area that you don't need, I'm not gonna push it on you, even though they want me to but if it doesn't make sense, it doesn't make sense. So when you get their ear, you're not gonna try to get them to believe your vision, you may want to point out things that they forgot or things they don't have time to think about. That's what a lot of direct sales and organizing is, is getting people to pull out their own conclusions based on the information that you give them. Technically, I'm not selling you anything. I'm just leading you down a path where you can make your own informed decision on which way is the best way to go.

st: Right. Education for liberation. We gotta understand that people have their own sets of values and skills and ways of just being and moving in the world. And you're building upon that. We want to draw out instead of assuming they are empty vessels that you can manipulate which is extremely oppressive. So, let's dig a little deeper. Let's talk more about what that looks like.

GM: We start the conversation with a question to sort of gauge where they are. Let's say we're going door to door and we're talking about the new development program at Alkebulan Village. We'll start out knowing if they have children or not. And then from that, we start to share information about activities that are available for children at no cost, or the ones that are available for children at a cost, and what are all things that happen at Alkebulan Village around children. And, in that way, we just start the conversation of

finding out if there's some interest and direct parallels or connections. In developing the pitch, we start with an introduction, presentation, qualification and then a close. Then, at the close, we get something from them right in exchange for something from us. So, starting with the intro, find out what's going on, if they got children in the house or not. For people with children, we present the things that Alkebulan Village has to offer. Qualification is finding out if they have the want or need to participate. They may not want to participate, if their children are in baseball and don't have the time or an African-centered perspective doesn't align with their values which are our organizational values. And, then in the closing, we bring them down to sign up for a martial arts program or become a monthly donor, at a minimum providing us that email and phone number so that we can stay in touch with them about future upcoming events. And, if we successfully get one of those three from them, we ask them for referrals with the goal being able to get people who are interested to tell us about other people who they think would be interested. And so then from those referrals, we now start to mushroom our impact through their networks.

st: So what if they don't want to listen to that original pitch? Like how do you get people to listen? How do you capture their attention?

RH: I honor their need and keep talking in hopes that something will resonate with them. Not to disrespect people, but a lot of times people just blow you off real quick. Because the social norm when you go to a store and someone say "hey, do you need help?" The response is "no, I don't need help." Then, usually five minutes later they actually do ask for help. If they really gotta go, we totally respect it. Give them a card that they can follow up with and read at their own leisure. It's a numbers game. It's persistence. That's why people don't like salespeople, because they're very persistent. But that's how you get the data. You get the base. That's how you get the sales. You get the donations by keeping track and then circling back around.

GM: And, rebuttals. So sales people thrive on rebuttals. We have the expectation that you're going to have a negative response. It's not personal against me. It is the overwhelming pressure of the world always asking you to do something or for something. So I want to help you realize that I'm not them. I'm not doing what they're doing. I'm talking about something different. I'm talking about something that's really valuable to you. And you just don't realize that yet because your conditioned response is to tell me, "no." So, I want to overcome that by asking you to reconsider listening to what I have to say for just a few moments. I'm not gonna take a lot of time. It's a misnomer that this has got to be lengthy. What I want to share with you is very brief. I'll leave you with some information and go see the next neighbor.

RH: And I think the average time that we're going to spend at a door is 5 or 10 minutes. In certain cases, we can set up a one-on-one to dive deeper. Have a conversation. Show him the

grounds, maybe let them see some of the martial arts programs. But if we got them to come to a one on one more than likely they're going to be either a donor or they're gonna be part of a base building project because now we got you to do an actionable item. So even if we don't get you to donate, we got you to come. That's like the same thing. If you invited me into your house, if I get in the door, it's almost like a guaranteed sale. In terms of organizing, if I get you to come to a window, then more than likely I can get you to donate some time to whatever kind of campaign we're working on. So it's kind of the same thing of trying to be at the door to do the introduction and to draw out some questions, draw out some answers, and then be able to move them to the next ladder of engagement. This is base building.

st: What's a very succinct definition for base building?

GM: To get new members essentially, to increase the membership. More people participating in the services, programs and activities and by participating finding value in the organization and supporting, accordingly. People have to find the value in it before they support it. And, we do this by first defining the goals. What is it that we want to get? For example, we said we need 200 people to subscribe to \$25 a month to add an additional \$60,000 to Alkebulan Village's budget to provide a salary base that is not contingent on donor base funding. So, we will have immovable people who work here who can be continually working regardless of what program we're receiving funds from. So after identifying the donor base, we approach that group of people to subscribe and participate. For example, Alkebulan Village has a list of maybe 200 people as our donor base. Not all of them will subscribe, but some percentage of them will. And, then, we ask if they could provide the names of 5 people that they know and we don't who may want to support the organizational mission.

st: And, what about the people that would expect something in return for providing those referrals like more of a transactional process? What do you tell them?

GM: I would tell them that the return is sustaining an institution that is over 45 years old and has provided services to over 300,000 children and families. And, they're paying it forward for the future to 300,000 children and families who can be served over the next 45 years.

RH: And, we have to emphasize how we are not a corporation that is making money off of this. The people are benefiting and everybody loves somebody that comes to the room with resources. If we ask people to call 5 people and share resources, they are helping their own network as well. And, that is the reward, helping people.

st: I could see how that would resonate with some and not others.

RH: I want to dive deeper into base building because it's such a loose big word. What is it all about? It all comes down to relationship building. Even when we think about being organized like what is your network? What is your own relationship like? So developing those authentic relationships with individuals and groups is important. Building and rebuilding relationships as part of the base building process is crucial. Some people may know about Alkebulan Village, for instance, but they don't have direct contact so it is our job to go into the community to rebuild those relationships. There are some people with skill sets that can help push the work forward and those people get connected, now we're doing leadership development or leadership building.

GM: When we're going to the community asking, "do you have children or what are some issues you'd like to see change?" we're doing issue identification through base building too. So now you know that X amount of people from this district or this neighborhood are looking specifically to have these things addressed. Now that we know that, we can have specific programming that addresses those things. And, even if it's not Alkebulan Village addressing those things, maybe they know of another Black organization doing it. And, this is where coalition building comes in.

st: Thanks for explaining that. Let's talk about capitalism. How this approach resides in an anti-capitalist framework. So, how do we use this approach that you all are unfolding within a system of capitalism, but also resisting it at the same time?

GM: The key concept in capitalism is exploitation. So what we are really seeking to do is getting cooperation and collaboration going. There's no real essential "product" to it. We get the people onboard by filling in the missing gaps by providing a needed service to the community that is not provided in the home, school or elsewhere in the hopes of making a more resilient community.

RH: There's no ethical consumption under capitalism at all right? This approach is socialist. It's coming from a community standpoint of serving needs.

Capitalism is very individualistic. So when we're saying that we need the help of a community, we're involved in the community. That's in direct competition or direct opposition to capitalism. We're pooling our resources. We're helping the community. We're actually speaking to them. And, we're together, which is the opposite. It goes back to

"Organized dollars and organized people. We're not organizing dollars to exploit people. We're not organizing dollars to make any one person rich. We're organizing our dollars to be able to fight systematic oppression. And, if you don't have the dollars... there's still a space for you."

power, again. Organized dollars and organized people. We're not organizing dollars to exploit people. We're not organizing dollars to make any one person rich. We're organizing our dollars to be able to fight systematic oppression. And, if you don't have the dollars, that's still okay. There's still a space for you. And when we go back to leadership development, we talk about base building we're helping people find their own power with that. So some people say what can I do to a big system, and I live in this type of neighborhood and I don't have that much of an income to really contribute. Well, we tell them \$5 is enough when we talk about having 10,000 people put \$5 together. What can we all get from that? So it's helping people realize the power of each other, and how collectively we can achieve much more with our \$5 than we can individually which is the complete opposite of capitalism, right?

st: And that's the whole emphasis on cooperatives and collectives, the more you pool your resources together, the closer we're getting to beating capitalism at it's own game. And, so I want to end by talking more directly about how this manifests within a spirit of Black cooperativism and collectivity?

GM: So, the more people we can get involved, the more we can network and share resources across multiple categories of activity. It starts with us bringing them together, frequently aggregating small sums of money to support an institution. Once we're all gathered together, we all bring various different things to the table. And, then we have the opportunity to skill share, network, and further the objectives of everybody involved. This synergy balloons into conversations leading to meetings, new initiatives, etc. that didn't exist already. So I just see it as a fertile ground for opportunity.

RH: Yeah and in terms of connecting with the community, we're also asking for them to participate in leadership. We're asking, "what are some things you would like to change, what do you feel needs to happen in the community?" So, we're asking for your participation and also asking if you have any skills that you can contribute. So, that's the part of that democratic participation of us all having a shared voice. And then also, looking at the economics and the social justice part of it. We're collectively doing it for our own social justice mission, which is a more equitable lens than we've seen in any other type of system. Like shakara said, cooperativism is the only way that we can really beat this beast. So making sure that we drive that message to the people as we're talking to them at the door, as we're bringing them in and letting them know that this cooperative or this collective mission is something that can change the system.

GM: It's a way forward compared to this system that has us moving backwards, basically, against our own best interest.

RH: Because one thing that I've noticed is when you talk to people, we all know the issues. Like even the most detached person from African-centered knowledge still knows the issues. Right? They don't know where to go, or they don't know how to act. So if we can have a collective space where you know how to activate being a leader or being in a community with other leaders, then you can find your voice.

st: Good point. What are three action steps that people can use around base building and leveraging Black dollars in the community and organizing?

GM: First step would be to develop a plan for how they want to do that. Start with the plan first, then work the plan and evaluate it. Essentially, that's really what it boils down to. Inside the plan is identifying the goals, defining the donor base, figuring out what the fundraising mix of that donor base would look like, creating the calendar, doing some budgeting, implementing and then monitoring and evaluating. Work the plan. Evaluate it and do it again, learning from what you did to continue to make it better and better and better.

RH: First step is surveys. Do a community needs assessment. When we think about community organizing, political organizing, sales, one of the first things that we all do is ask what is the community need? And, we can do this through a number of ways, meetings or door to door campaigns. You want to find out where everyone's at. What do people want to see changed right? Then, you may want to go into relationship building and engagement and then finding other people who could have skill sets to help build out that campaign to do what we're talking about doing here. Last, then we focus on leadership development and capacity building, which can come through exactly as GMAC was saying. But I think if the first step would be the needs assessment, I think that's key especially if you're looking to find out where people are in terms of the type of food they want and so on.

st: One last question... There are a lot of naysayers out there that talk about the impossibility of rebuilding Black intergenerational wealth through these approaches and others. What do you say to those skeptics?

GM: What is the basis of their skepticism?

st: There are a range of things ranging from money misappropriation, lack of community trust, inadequate wealth in Black communities to create any traction and much more.

GM: There's a whole other set of reasons why people say that won't work. So, it's a well documented fact that Black spending is north of a trillion dollars annually, which is larger than the gross domestic product of small nations like Germany. So there's enough money in the Black community. The Black dollar is the engine of the United States and time period

and the old notion that we don't have wealth is a misnomer. And, the trust has to be dealt with. We've internalized the oppression and to that point, we are doing the wackness that 'the others' would do, like the other groups that seek to oppress and undermine. We have to do better, but I've seen it work. I've seen where us putting our money into something has been a viable way for us to sustain it for us to maintain it. I think the key to it is transparency. So this destroyed the Shrine

of the Black Madonna as a shining example of the aggregation of Black wealth into nation building. At the height of the organization, they had apartment buildings across the country. They had a fleet of cars, they had all of the things that they needed to be a self contained nation. And, then when leadership transitioned, same of that transparency integrity, moral high ground got lost to some degree, and then the whole thing was undermined. But if the transparency and the morality is on point, it can work. We certainly have the money and the trust will come from proof when you buy big buildings and you know acquire large fleets of vehicles and things like that and you show the people who are participating that we are doing what we say we will do so I think we got to show them proof of what's possible.

"...it's a well documented fact that Black spending is north of a trillion dollars annually, which is larger than the gross domestic product of small nations like Germany. So there's enough money in the Black community. The Black dollar is the engine of the United States and time period and the old notion that we don't have wealth is a misnomer."

RH: We've seen people use our attention, our consumption, our dollars to grow extraordinarily wealthy spaces. They have used our collective vote to get in office. Pretty much just misuses it in so many different ways, collectively. So, when I hear people say, "it can't happen." I know it can happen because you see the rest of the world doing it, using us, misusing us. So why can't we internally use ourselves in a productive way? All we got to do is just change how our focus is, being transparent. Yes, it's gonna take a while for trust, right? Because we've always been told through all types of media, not to trust each other. Right? So we can start with the youth. If you're just focusing on youth and teens and what happens when they become 20. What happens when they become 30? They got this whole experience of being raised in a cooperative environment, where now that's part of their inner workings. So, I think it definitely can happen.

st: For sure. How it happens is often the question, for me.

RH: Sterling Heights and Dearborn is funded off of Black dollars. My daughters go to high school in Utica and Auburn Hills. A Lot of their friends at school are Chaldean and happen to ask them, "what do your parents do? She said, "Oh, my dad, has a couple of stores in

Detroit like grocery stores, corner stores, smoke shops, dispensaries." Who is his base? Us! We are the base! We fund a whole \$300,000-\$400,000 mansion out in Utica off of batteries, chips and whatever.

GM: Then, the underground economy, they aggregate the wealth out there in those suburban communities, buy drugs and put it in the hands of brothers and sisters in our community to further degrade the community, the progress of the community needs and strategies. So again, they're parasitically attached to the Black community.

RH: So, know that we got the money, even if we were just able to take EBT benefits, funnel them into one grocery store that's Black owned. Or, even if we own a You Buy, We Fry. You know how many people are getting rich off of those chains.

st: Right. Especially with the "EBT accepted here" sign.

RH: And, all they gotta do is pay a \$1 fry fee.

st: The work we have to do is real. Thank you both for making the time for this conversation. I have a lot of hope and excitement for our community.

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**Gregory McKenzie**



Gregory McKenzie, a life-long Detroit, is a graduate of the Detroit Public School system. He attained an Associates of Arts Degree from Lewis College of Business in 1999, a Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Business Management from Davenport University in 2004 and a Master's in Business Administration (CPA concentration) from Davenport University in 2013. He has worked in accounting in various industries over the past 25 years. As a second generation accountant, Gregory provides accounting and business consulting services through the family owned and operated firm Unicorn Unlimited, Inc. Of notable mention are the experiences gained in the manufacturing and public accounting industries. Through these experiences, Gregory has honed a skill set in material cost accounting, profitability analysis, new accounting system set-up, software training, month and year end closing, and financial statement compilation.

### **Ross Harris**



Ross Harris is ioby's Detroit Action Strategist, where he partners with neighbors and community-minded individuals across Southeast Michigan to create community-driven power and sustainable change. Ross believes that community power comes from the people when they're informed and organized. Over the past 13 years he has committed himself to informing the community in various roles, working as a housing counselor, community organizer, and activist. Racial equity and justice is the motivation that keeps Ross committed to the community he serves. In Ross' spare time he loves to garden, kayak, camp, and spend time with his four beautiful children.

## **LEGAL ADVICE**

# Let's Cooperate Checklist!

*A few tips for new cooperatives from a lawyer who loves you!*



## Recruit Team Members

Cooperatives need committed team members. A strong team will ensure that you have a diverse array of skills and resources to start your business.



## Develop a Business Plan

A solid business plan will prompt you to flesh out and explore your cooperative's vision, mission, financial model, and more in the context of your market and competition!



## Licensing & Certifications

Does your business, or do your team members, need special licenses, trainings, or certifications to operate legally? Different licensing and certification processes can be time-consuming, so think ahead, start early, and be patient with the necessary steps.



## Select a Business Entity

What business entity will your cooperative choose? A cooperative corporation or democratically-governed limited liability company (LLC), for example? Consider issues like limiting the personal liability of yourself and team members, taxes, and requirements that accompany different business entities.



## Check Your Business Name

Has your team thought of a great business name? You'll want to make sure that no other businesses in the area have a similar name that would cause customers to confuse the businesses! You may also consider having a professional help you

trademark your business name or logo to protect them.



## Register Your Cooperative

To create a legal business entity that is separate from yourself, you

will need to file Articles of Incorporation of Organization with Michigan's Dept. of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. You may also need to register your business for sales tax and/or obtain an Employer Identification Number for your business to open a business bank account.





# Let's Cooperate Checklist! (cont.)



## Drafting Governance Documents

Documents that explain how your business operates, profits are shared, decisions are made, and more, are important! You may want to work with a lawyer to draft an operating agreement (LLC) or bylaws (Corp.), agreements between members, and policies addressing procedures for new member trainings and more.



## Insurance & Liability

Does your business own land or property for which it would be liable if an accident occurred? Consider whether insurance for your property or board of directors, for example, would be a good fit.



## Benefits, Living Wages, and Profit Sharing

Will your worker/member owners and potential employees feel taken care of and fairly paid by your cooperative? Consider what benefits, like health insurance, your cooperative may be able to provide, as well as what living wages are for your area.



## Employment and Labor Laws

Our last tip discussed a few items to consider to create a healthy work environment. Consider reaching out to a lawyer to discuss local, state, and federal laws on topics like minimum wage, child labor laws, medical leave, unemployment insurance, and the difference between independent contractors, employees, and worker owners.

## Manage Finances



Do you have a bookkeeping system and a budget? Track expenses for a financially healthy cooperative! Consider working with professional bookkeepers and tax advisors familiar with cooperatives who will set your team up for success!



## Internal Meeting & Communications

Your cooperative will likely develop its own policies and rhythm for team meetings and internal communications. Healthy and regular communication is particularly important for cooperatives and businesses that make decisions equitably and discuss ideas together!



## Launch Time & Spreading the Word!

Consider having a launch event or party! This event will help spread the word about your business, announce your new business structure, build or reinvigorate your customer base, and help you create an email listserv and/or social media presence for marketing and to engage with your customers.

## **GRASSROOTS CASE STUDIES**



The Detroit People's Food Co-op is an African American led, community-owned grocery cooperative. The co-op's purpose is to provide improved access to healthy food and food education to Detroit residents. Meeting the needs of the community is achieved through the democratic control of the co-op by its member/owners. DPFC emerged from the Ujamaa Food Co-op Buying Club (2009-2017) begun by Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN). DBCFSN was founded in 2006 with the understanding that the most effective movements grow organically out of the communities they are designed to serve. Our early goals included:

- Establishing fair and just food policies
- Supporting urban agriculture
- Establishing a food co-op

DBCFSN began working with Develop Detroit to build the Detroit Food Commons that will house the DPFC. The Detroit Food Commons will be a 34,000 sq. Ft, two-story building that will be constructed on the SE corner of Woodward at Euclid. DBCFSN and Develop Detroit will own the building and DPFC will be a tenant in the building. The DPFC will lease the entire first floor of the building.

In June 2013, a community advisory board was established to help DBCFSN think through the process of establishing a retail co-op grocery store. Research began on potential neighborhoods in which to establish the co-op. The North End neighborhood of Detroit was chosen because of demographics and accessibility. Decision was made to build a new building because of the lack of an existing building that could accommodate our vision. In 2014, DPFC became official with a registered name, formally incorporated with by-laws to guide the govern the work. DPFC currently has a 9-member Board of Directors.

Currently, the project is amounted to approximately \$22 million for building construction, staff hiring and other administrative costs. Most of the capital funding thus far is a combination of debt capital, philanthropic grants and Public Related Investments (PRIs). Initial Pre-development Funding included funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Detroit

Economic Growth Corporation and the Fair Food Network. DBCFSN has continued to contribute staff time and office support since the beginning of the journey over 12 years ago.

DPFC will prioritize working with local businesses in order to support the community and keep as much money as possible in Detroit. The co-op will prioritize buying from local growers and producers, service providers and other vendors whenever possible to help the community thrive. Membership is open to individuals who are residents of Michigan and over 21 years of age. The price to purchase a lifetime share in the co-op is \$200 per person (one person per share please). The share price can be paid in one lump sum or spread out over ten monthly installment payments. Benefits of Co-op Membership include:

- Being part of an organization dedicated to contributing to the health and self-determination of our community.
- Having a say in the co-op's activities and future.
- Shopping discounts, deals and potential patronage refunds.
- Opportunities to share knowledge and build community.

Some challenges DPFC has experienced include:

- Financing the project within an environment of rapidly increasing inflation, supply chain disruptions and systemic racial capitalism.
- Facilitating Black leadership vs. Black exclusivity as a Black-led project in a gentrifying neighborhood of the NorthEnd.
- Encouraging more people to get involved by serving on working committees (membership and outreach, fundraising, etc.) to facilitate community ownership to the greatest extent.



The Black Bottom Garden Center is a for-profit co-op founded and led by four Black women in Detroit's North End. The center operates as an LLC at Oakland Avenue Urban Farm. The group participated in the Detroit Community Wealth Fund's (DCWF) North End Co-op Academy and Incubator, a 16-week program launched during COVID in 2020. The garden center grew out of existing friendships and community and arose out of the brainstorming of what businesses residents wanted to see in their community. The name, Black Bottom, references the fertile Black soil that so easily grew things [in the former Black Bottom community], but also in reference to the thriving Black businesses that existed there before the freeway was built through it and took them away. As they navigate inequities for Black-women owned businesses and struggle to attain resources, they affirm common co-op principles of monetary investment and sweat equity carrying the same weight. They

are on the journey of identifying the true business partners, developing trust and care with each other, developing standard operating procedures and overall growing the businesses according to their vision of making all customers “Black Bottom Happy.” They currently sell garden items such as seeds, garden starter plants, houseplants, compost, custom blend potting soils, planting pots, and cultivation tools. Some challenges they have experienced include: identifying competitors through market research, organizing around personal lives, leveraging Black buying power and developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and financial tracking mechanisms.

The logo for the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund is displayed on a solid black rectangular background. The text is arranged in five lines, centered horizontally. The first two lines, 'DETROIT' and 'BLACK', are in red. The next two lines, 'FARMER' and 'LAND', are in yellow. The final line, 'FUND', is in green. All letters are in a bold, sans-serif, uppercase font.

# **DETROIT BLACK FARMER LAND FUND**

The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), Keep Growing Detroit, and Oakland Avenue Urban Farm - are 3 long standing Detroit urban farming organizations. On Juneteenth 2020, the collective food sovereignty and land security work culminated in the creation of the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund (DBFLF). The coalition works to rebuild Black intergenerational wealth for Black Detroiters through land acquisition, infrastructure and equipment readiness, shared resource systems and community support networks. This work is imperative at this critical juncture given the enormous loss of Black-owned land over the decades. Over 3 million acres of Black land has been stolen by white supremacist systems and Black farmers currently comprise about 1% of the total farming population compared to 14% a century ago. Fighting gentrification, speculative development, and outright genocide of our people, DBFLF continues to smash the narrative that the "best use" of vacant land is based on financial worth alone. Black growers save the world, every day.

From expanding their farms and gardens to combat blight, providing produce, meals and knowledge to their neighbors, and courageously growing on land despite being unable to afford it, they lead the charge towards an abundant ecosystem rooted in land security.

Moving towards Black food sovereignty requires practices beyond racial capitalism. Therefore, the DBFLF piloted a grower cooperative in 2022 as a way to build capacity, relationships and power within Detroit's food system. All 9 growers in the pilot were DBFLF awardees from 2020 and 2021. Within the spirit of starting small, the group selected 2 crops to begin aggregating for 2 main buyers. Keep Growing Detroit's (KGD) Grown in Detroit (GID) program and Eastern Market bought tomatoes and collard greens from the group at retail prices. This pricing scale was significant because growers, especially small urban growers selling at specific volumes, are often pushed to sell at wholesale prices. For economic justice, DBFLF advocated for the growers to attain a larger share of the food system profits to increase their farm financial viability. Each grower received a \$500 collective care stipend to fund the variety of farm needs (irrigation, seeds, compost, etc.) to support their participation in the cooperative. DBFLF also provided tomato and collard green transplants and storage bins for harvesting and transporting to the distribution site, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm (OAU). Buyers picked up from the distribution site at selected times that overlapped with growers' drop-off hours. Growers with interest and capacity rotated working the distribution site for hourly compensation and committed to a specific volume throughout the season. DBFLF paid growers for their produce after weekly distributions prior to receiving payment from the buyers to hopefully prevent financial strain waiting for payments from institutions that can take some time. By the middle of the season, 7 growers remained part of the pilot.

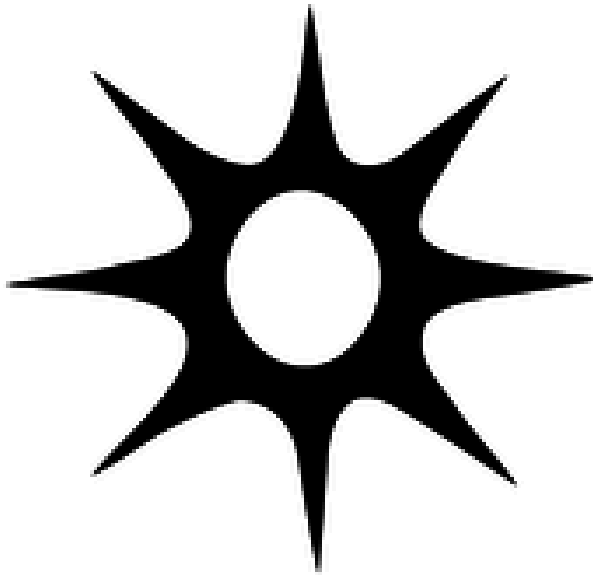
Some challenges learned in the pilot season included:

- Growers meeting agreed upon volumes made to buyers
- Growers remaining accountable to the quality standards for harvesting and timely drop off
- Developing structural processes for weighing in and storing produce
- DBFLF coordinators and growers managing the distribution site accordingly with recordkeeping and spatial organizing.

Some triumphs included strengthening relationships among growers and between the buyers and the entire group and collectively troubleshooting problems that would arise throughout the process. To address these challenges, the 2023 season was planned with significant amendments. The 2023 season opened with 8 growers with the majority of them serving in paid structural roles of developing the work of the co-op. Looking towards the future, the DBFLF co-op intends to explore member and market expansion, individual and cooperative business planning and group certifications.



# Nsoroma Unschool Co-op



Nsoroma Unschool, an African-centered homeschool cooperative in Detroit slowly came together after the Black Education Workshop (BEW) hosted by Alkebulan Village in the Winter of 2022. They are a collection of 7 dues-paying families with children ages 1-8 years old. Launching on the Autumnal Equinox, the groups meets in-person once a week to provide enrolled children with a divinely nourishing educational environment. Parents rotate lesson facilitation, group meals and other responsibilities that are key to sustaining the cooperative culture of the institution. Through a democratic voting process, they selected their name within the spirit of honoring the existing relationships with the Nsoroma Institute Detroit family (one of the key players in the 2022 Black Education Workshop) and the desire to build upon the dynamic legacy that institution has stewarded in Detroit. Nature is a core part of the living curriculum that is ever evolving as the co-op grows. Each weekly lesson aspires to touch on five basic elements for optimal growth of the children: nature (ecology), literacy, math, African history and current events.

The group is guided the following goals:

- Create an educational environment where our children and their families can develop a strong sense of self and community, self and cultural awareness, physical, mental, and emotional confidence and a keen knowing of freedom.
- Develop an educational environment rooted in accountability, trust, open-mindedness, collective care and one African love of which children, parents, teachers, caregivers and supporters are beholden.

- Adopt the praxis of radical unschooling that remains student-led, honors each student's learning style and engages all student age groups.
- Center our relationships to one another, our ancestors and our Creator in all decisions we make and how we do the work.
- Weave a cooperative web of childcare support for all involved families to uplift that every parent, child and family deserves and should have opportunities for individual work, play, reflection and space regardless of access to funds or conventional childcare.

Some challenges include:

- Retaining deep engagement of member families.
- Developing appropriate general structures (curriculum, finance, fundraising, family engagement, etc.), facilitating accountability for equitable participation in role rotation (teaching lessons, clean up after meals, etc.).
- Creating systems across different viewpoints.

Some successes include:

- Growing relationships among families.
- Intimate bonds formed among the children.
- Measurable learning exhibited by the children and optimism of growing into a full-scale school with a building and beyond.

Looking towards the future the group intends to scale out family engagement and membership, hire instructors and adjust meeting schedules to meet family needs.

