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Untitled, from the series “Capitalism Is Killing Us/Black Utopias” by Aisha Shillingford
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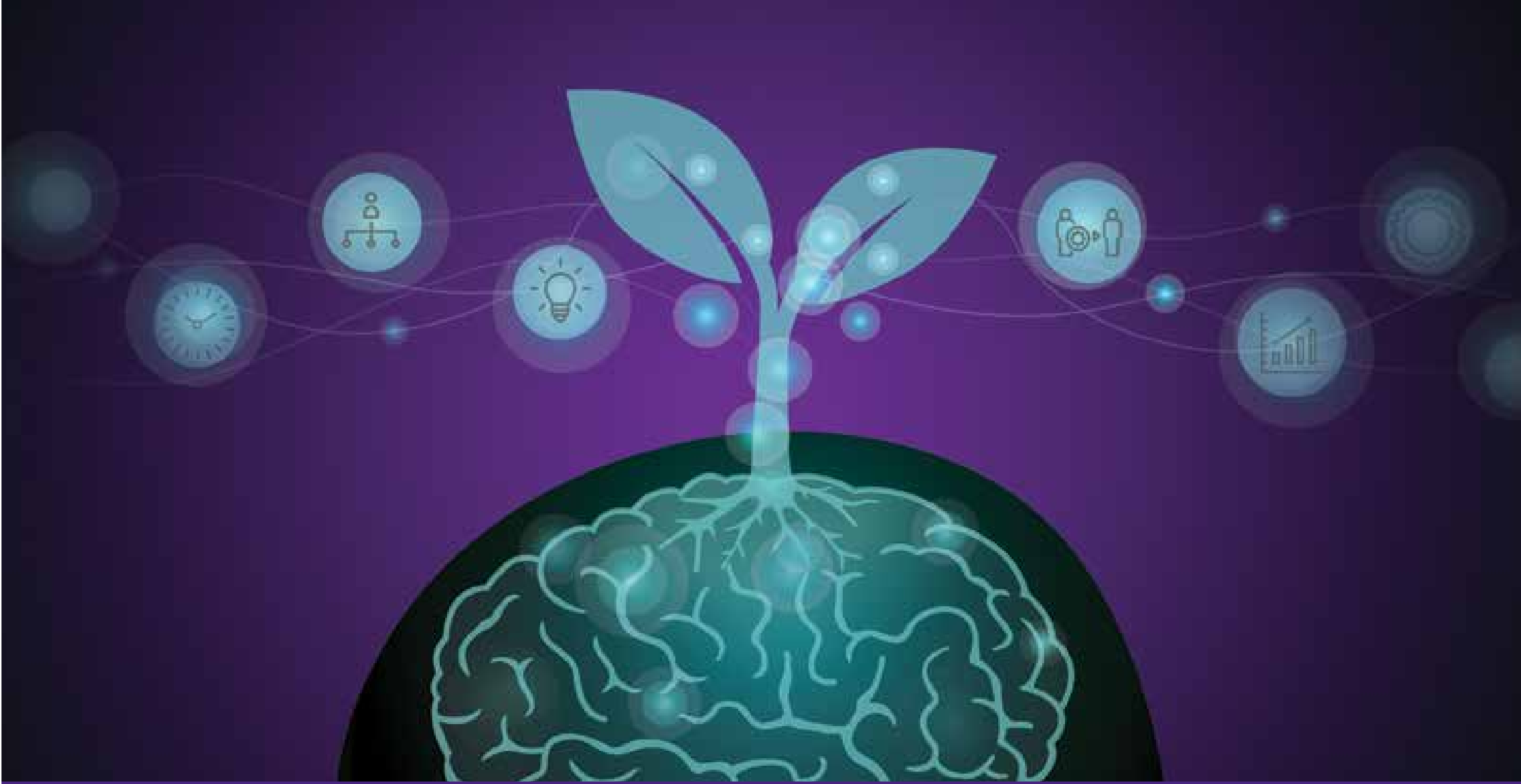

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WELCOME

Dear Readers,

Can we envision a new economy rooted in justice?

NPQ's economic justice work is predicated on the belief that economics is too important to be left to economists, and that it is our charge to critique current practices, review economics policy with a critical eye, and uplift alternatives that promise more just outcomes. In so doing, we look at the intersections among different social structures, including race, class, and gender.

It would have been very easy to focus this entire edition on critique. The COVID-19 recession has been devastating for low-income workers and workers of color. Unemployment for workers in the lowest quartile remained above 20 percent—Great Depression levels—long after it came down for others. Meanwhile, billionaire wealth in the United States has increased by more than one trillion dollars. Businesses owned by people of color have suffered and often shuttered, while much of corporate America has thrived. The pandemic, in short, deepened preexisting divides.

But this edition instead shines a light on emerging positive models, with a focus on a set of articles that outline principles, practices, and strategic directions for developing what has come to be called a *solidarity economy*, curated by Emily Kawano, cofounder of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network and a member of *NPQ*'s economic justice advisory committee. In these articles we highlight the intersections of a solidarity economy with the arts, climate change, mutual aid, and the movement for a universal basic income, as well as Kawano's vision for creating imaginal cells that, as with the caterpillar, ultimately lead to transformation.

We focus on the solidarity economy because this approach both identifies how capitalist processes impede economic justice and provides an open forum for considering how to build a just economy in a world freed from those constraints. As Kawano and her colleague Julie Matthaei wrote in *NPQ* last year, "For those working for system change, clarity is imperative. In its absence, the default is likely to be to 'reform' capitalism, without even considering the possibility of building an economy and world beyond it."[1]

Elsewhere, we feature articles that set forth the case for reparations in both Black and Indigenous communities, and an article on food sovereignty from an Indigenous perspective. We also include two articles on public policy, both of which focus on the 2021 debate over infrastructure and the ongoing struggle for a more just social contract. One thing for sure: regardless of how the vote turns out for any specific policy proposal, shifting our economic paradigm and building a democratic economy are part of a longer-term effort to shift ownership and move power into community hands that will require the mobilization of vision, creativity, and institution building.

In all this, social movements have played—and will continue to play—an enormous role. In the previous issue, Editor in Chief Cyndi Suarez spoke of an *NPQ* that ". . . leads the way in restructuring knowledge creation in the field."[2] This is our charge, but it is also a collective project—one in which we hope you too will participate.

May the conversation be a fruitful one.

Steve Dubb
Senior Editor and Director of *NPQ*'s economic justice program

NOTES

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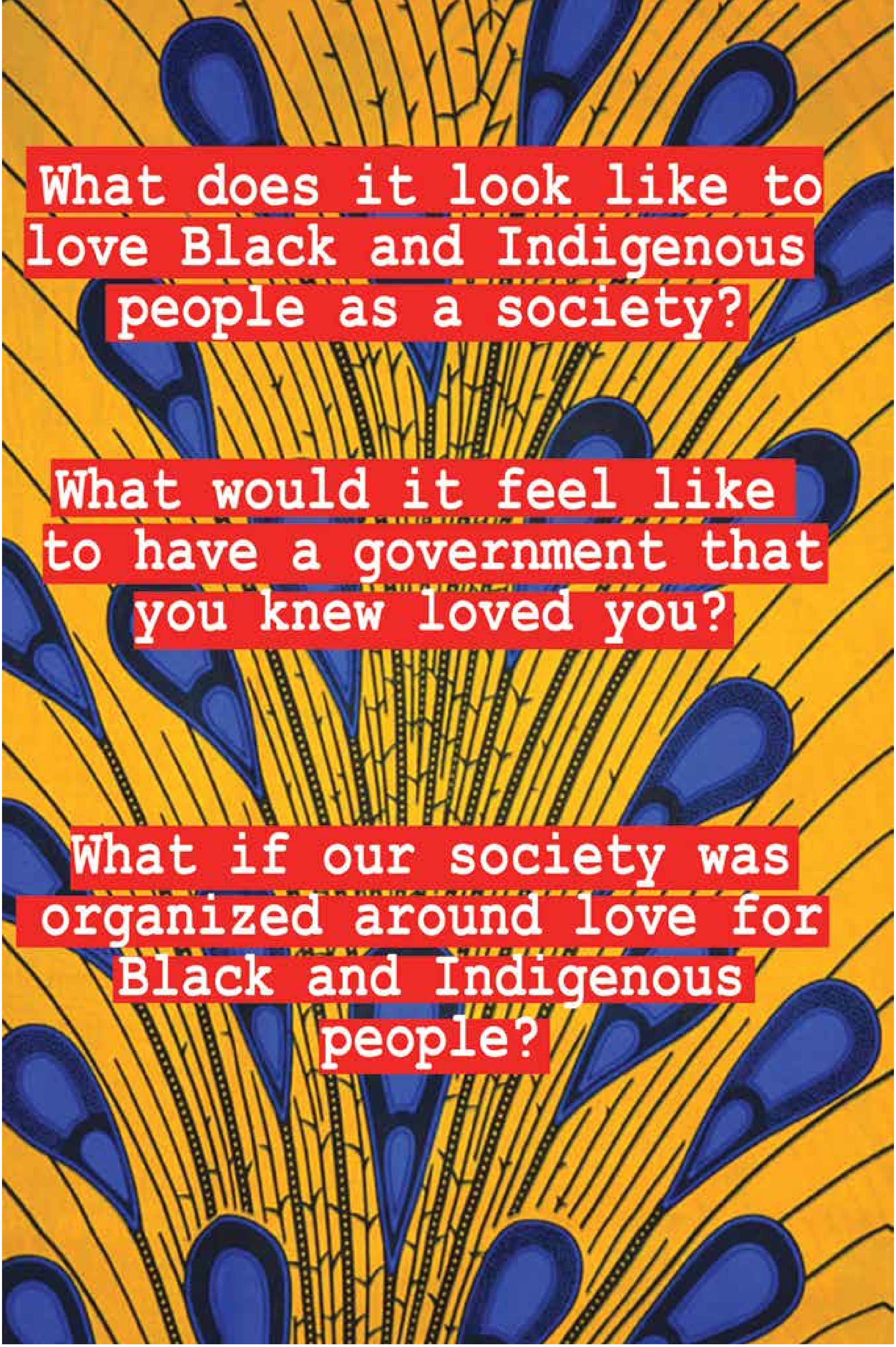
What does it look like to love Black and Indigenous people as a society?
What would it feel like to have a government that you knew loved you?
What if our society was organized around love for Black and Indigenous people?

Can We Reshape the U.S. Social Contract?

by Steve Dubb

Editors' Note: *This article, which appears here with minor changes, was first published online, on May 26, 2021, as "The Biden Agenda: Can It Reshape the U.S. Social Contract?" There have subsequently been many developments. By late June, it appeared that a much smaller "bipartisan" infrastructure bill that jettisons more than half of the original proposed "American Jobs Plan" might make it through Congress. Joe Biden's administration has promised that jettisoned items will be added to the "American Families Plan," and that the latter bill could possibly be passed through "reconciliation." We do not know, however, what will happen. It is possible nothing will pass. It is possible that only the narrow infrastructure bill passes and the American Families Plan bill fails. It is even possible that all of the original items are approved by Congress, just in different packages. If the latter were to occur, there would still remain many hurdles to achieving a new social contract, as this article points out. Even as the old neoliberal paradigm fails, what will replace it remains very much in doubt.*

Whether or not Biden succeeds in 2021, it is surely no accident that his legislation is arriving in the context of an historic uprising against anti-Black racism. Any serious public effort to dismantle structural racism must include, as [Heather] McGhee puts it, measures "to refill the pool of public goods."

This year, the administration of President Joe Biden introduced two of the largest domestic spending bills the United States has seen in generations. Combined, Biden's American Jobs Plan[1] and his American Families Plan[2] aim to spend \$3.3 trillion and provide \$800 billion in tax credits over the next ten years. (For those who follow such things, technically the Jobs Plan programs extend over eight years, while most measures in the Families Plan extend for ten years.)

UNTITLED, FROM THE SERIES "CAPITALISM IS KILLING US/BLACK UTOPIAS"
BY AISHA SHILLINGFORD/WWW.INTELLIGENTMISCHIEF.COM

If you throw the word "trillions" around often enough, most people will understand that means "big."

But how big? The answer, as it happens, is *not as large as it might seem*.

At the same time, the big price tag is deceptive. If you throw the word "trillions" around often enough, most people will understand that means "big." But how big? The answer, as it happens, is *not as large as it might seem*.

First, it's worth appreciating just how large the federal government is. Note that in fiscal year 2019—before the pandemic—the feds spent $4.448 trillion in a single year.[3] (In 2020, the federal response to COVID-19 pushed that number up to $6.55 trillion).[4] Bottom line, even if we assume that federal spending reverts to something close to that 2019 number by 2022, we're still talking about $50 trillion in likely baseline federal spending over the next decade, *even if neither Biden bill passes.*

A simple way to understand the scale of Biden's two proposals is to recognize that they involve roughly a seven-percent increase in overall spending. If compared with gross domestic product (GDP), the expense works out to roughly 1.5 percent of GDP.

What does that mean? It helps to have some historical perspective. The Office of Management and Budget maintains data that indicate that the federal government in 1980 spent 5.1 percent of GDP on domestic discretionary spending;[5] in 2019, that number was 3.1 percent.[6] Biden's plans, if they both passed without amendment, would fall far short of restoring spending to 1980 levels.

Then there's the question of infrastructure specifically. A 2018 report by Jeffrey Stupak of the Congressional Research Service finds that "nondefense gross government investment (federal, state, and local) in the United States has largely been in decline since the 1960s, falling from above four percent of GDP to about 2.5 percent in 2016."[7] A return to 1960s levels would require $3.5 trillion over the next decade for infrastructure alone.

It should be noted too, importantly, that there is a cost to *not* spending money. Stupak observes, "Infrastructure is understood to be a critical factor in the health and wealth of a country, enabling private businesses and individuals to produce goods and services more efficiently. With respect to overall economic output, increased infrastructure spending by the government is generally expected to result in higher economic output in the short term by stimulating demand and in the long term by increasing overall productivity."[8]

The converse can also be true. That is, a *lack of infrastructure spending may impede economic development*. Over time, productivity growth goes up and down for many reasons. In the United States, that rate fell in the 1970s, probably due to rising energy costs, and rose in the 1990s and early 2000s, due to new computer technology. But it is hard not to notice that between 2007 and 2020, U.S. productivity growth, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, was 1.5 percent a year compared to 2.8 percent a year between 1947 and 1973.[9] This poses an interesting question: Might declining infrastructure investment already have become a drag on the U.S. economy?

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

A 2019 paper by Yale economist Ray Fair sets forth the following conundrum:

> Infrastructure as a percent of GDP began a steady decline around 1970, and the government budget deficit became positive and large at roughly the same time. The infrastructure pattern in other countries does not mirror that in the United States, so the United States appears to be a special case. The overall results suggest that the United States became less future oriented beginning around 1970. This change has persisted. This is the interesting fact. Whether it can be explained is doubtful.[10]

But what might have led the United States to become less "future oriented" around 1970? Is the answer really all that mysterious? A recent book published by Heather McGhee, who chairs the board of Color of Change and used to direct Demos, suggests that the explanation might not be so hard to figure out after all.

While the numbers look impressive, the expansion of social and economic rights implied remains limited.

McGhee's book is titled *The Sum of Us*.[11] In that book, she notes that, time and again, when public services became integrated during the civil rights movement, white support for public spending plummeted. In other words, after integration, white voter willingness to support public investment in the country's future fell.

This behavioral shift could first be seen at the local level. For example, when a court ordered the city of Montgomery, Alabama, to integrate its public swimming pools, city officials instead moved to close all the pools down. Later, St. Louis, Missouri and Jackson, Mississippi followed suit. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Jackson's public pool shutdown decision in the 1971 case of *Palmer v. Thompson*.[12]

Of course, public pools were hardly the only institutions affected. Support for public education fell, too. As McGhee points out, "When the public meant 'white,' public colleges thrived."[13] More broadly, McGhee notes, "While racial barriers were coming down across the society, class barriers went up."[14] In general, the United States experienced the "pricing up and privatization of public goods"[15]—and that, in turn, led to a defunding of both public infrastructure and social spending.

Whether or not Biden succeeds in 2021, it is surely no accident that his legislation is arriving in the context of an historic uprising against anti-Black racism. Any serious public effort to dismantle structural racism must include, as McGhee puts it, measures "to refill the pool of public goods."[16]

WHAT MEASURES DO THE BIDEN BILLS CONTAIN?

So how, to use McGhee's phrase, does Biden propose to "refill the pool of public goods"?

To summarize briefly, Biden divides his initiatives into two packages: the "Jobs Plan" is the infrastructure bill, while the "Families Plan" is the social supports bill. That said, the split is imprecise. Notably, the Jobs Plan contains $400 billion to boost the Medicaid budget for long-term care.[17] There is little doubt this expenditure is hugely important given an aging U.S. population; however, it is also highly dubious to label an increase in an annual operating budget line item as an investment in infrastructure. The following chart lists a breakdown of proposed Biden plan expenditures, as originally submitted to Congress:

Basics (housing, water, broadband, power grid, schools)	$689 billion
Transportation (airports, rail, roads, transit, ports, electric cars)	$621 billion
Research and development, manufacturing, workforce supports	$580 billion
Total infrastructure	**$1,890 billion**

Paid family leave (12 weeks)	$225 billion
Child care	$225 billion
Education (pre-K, Pell Grants, community college, etc.)	$508 billion
Anti-poverty (nutrition, child and earned income tax credits)	$645 billion
Long-term care	$400 billion
Healthcare subsidies	$200 billion
Total social spending (including $800 billion in tax credits)	**$2,203 billion**

While the numbers look impressive, the expansion of social and economic rights implied remains limited. As *NPQ* has noted before, the child tax credit could significantly reduce childhood poverty—by at least 40 percent—but the bill only funds that benefit until 2025.[18] Universal paid family leave was in the relief bill passed earlier this year, but it was stripped out before passage. If it remains in the legislation this time around, the United States might at long last become the 180th nation in the world to offer paid family leave.[19] Universal pre-K and zero tuition community college would also be important gains.

Many of the other expenditures, however, are really down payments on social benefits—more money for child care, but no universal coverage. The same is true with long-term care subsidy dollars. Another notable example: more money to subsidize healthcare, but no Medicare for all, no public option, not even the reduction in Medicare eligibility age to sixty that Biden endorsed in his campaign.[20]

As for assessing infrastructure itself, that's even more complicated. It is clear, however, that at best the Biden expenditures will make up only part of the shortfall. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that the nation's core infrastructure gap will total $2.59 trillion over ten years, and calls for increasing infrastructure spending from 2.5 percent of GDP to 3.5 percent of GDP by 2025.[21] The National Association of Clean Water Agencies puts the cost of building clean drinking water and wastewater infrastructure at $750 billion over twenty years.[22]

Then there is the question of the global climate emergency. During his campaign, Biden pledged $1.7 trillion over ten years.[23] His infrastructure bill, no matter how you count the numbers, falls short of this mark. During the 2020 presidential campaign, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) pledged the much higher $16.3 trillion over ten years (along with offsetting tax measures, including taxes on fossil fuel companies).[24] A bill introduced in April 2021 by Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) and Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI) based on the research of University of Massachusetts economist Robert Pollin proposes $10 trillion over ten years.[25]

The obstacles to a larger package in the current political environment are enormous—but these analyses have the benefit of basing expenditures on need rather than political salability. Some of the data from individual line items give a good sense of what drives the gap. For instance, Sanders estimated that a "smart" electrical power grid would cost the nation $526 billion; the Biden plan offers $100 billion.[26]

A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT?

As the numbers make clear, the Biden proposals are significant, even if they fall far short of making up for longstanding infrastructure and social support gaps. Among the most important measures, in addition to the investment in infrastructure and a greener economy, are the child tax credit (to reduce child poverty), universal pre-kindergarten, paid family leave, and tuition-free community college.

If these measures become law, this would easily be the most significant extension of social benefits since the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. At the same time, the many holes in the Biden bills are not hard to identify. The underinvestment in addressing the climate emergency is obvious, as are the gaps in the buildout of social support—no increase in the minimum wage, no forgiveness of student loans, and no expansion of public health insurance, for instance. And there is nary a mention of more far-reaching measures, such as universal basic income or reparations.

What is clear at this point is that the U.S. regime of neoliberalism that has dominated public policy for the past forty years has been dislodged. What remains less clear is what will replace it.

Of course, establishing a new social contract could never be expected to be easy. It's worth recalling that many of the original New Deal's most fundamental measures (such as Social Security, the Wagner Act for unions, and the Works Progress Administration public works suite of programs) did not even come into being until 1935, more than two years after Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president. The Fair Labor Standards Act, establishing the nation's first minimum wage, did not pass until 1938.

When covering the relief bill, *NPQ* noted that "most proposals for structural changes are postponed for another day."[27] With Biden's two follow-on bills this spring, more steps in the direction of structural change are visible.

The political and cultural task of establishing the "who" of U.S. society as explicitly multiracial...

is central to the long-term project of building a truly democratic economy that sustains social solidarity.

Nevertheless, despite trillion-dollar-plus price tags, these are modest steps. What comes afterward remains unknown; Biden might stall out, we might see a period of more thoroughgoing reform, or we might even experience truly transformative, systemic change.

Whether the nation can achieve a new policy equilibrium that sustains a more equitable and democratic economy depends on many things, including social movement organizing and the outcome of the 2022 midterm elections. History has not been kind to the party in power during midterms, but there are exceptions, including—critical for those who follow New Deal history—the midterm elections of 1934.[28]

But this shift is about more than elections. As McGhee reminds us, white supremacy and racism ultimately stopped Great Society liberalism in its tracks. These forces largely explain the *why* of the past half-century's sustained decline in U.S. investment that Fair, the economist, found so puzzling.

Achieving a different outcome this time will depend critically on whether, as McGhee puts it, a "nation founded in racial hierarchy truly rejects that belief" and at long last casts aside the great lie of white supremacy. The political and cultural task of establishing the "who" of U.S. society as explicitly multiracial, in short, is central to the long-term project of building a truly democratic economy that sustains social solidarity.

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STEVE DUBB is a senior editor at *NPQ*, where he directs *NPQ*'s economic justice program and pens *NPQ*'s Economy Remix column. Dubb has worked with cooperatives and nonprofits for over two decades, including twelve years at The Democracy Collaborative and three years as executive director of NASCO (North American Students of Cooperation). In his work, Dubb has authored, coauthored, and edited numerous reports; participated in and facilitated learning cohorts; designed community building strategies; and helped build the field of community wealth building. He is the lead author of *Building Wealth: The Asset-Based Approach to Solving Social and Economic Problems* (Aspen, 2005) and coauthor with Rita Axelroth Hodges of *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads* (Michigan State University Press, 2012). In 2016, he curated and authored *Conversations on Community Wealth Building*, a collection of interviews of community builders conducted over the previous decade.

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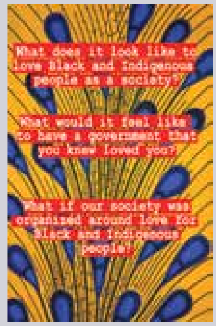
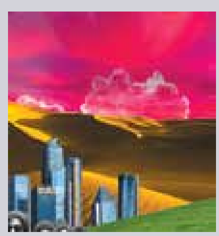
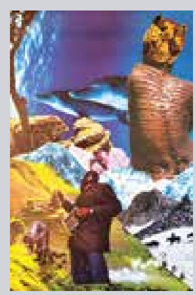
About the Artist: Aisha Shillingford

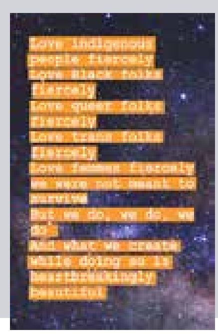
Aisha Shillingford (she/her) is the artistic director and coprincipal of Intelligent Mischief, a creative studio unleashing Black imagination to shape the future. Intelligent Mischief's work boosts invention and imagination, realigns action logic, and experiments with new forms of culture and civil society to create atmospheres of change. Intelligent Mischief creates spaces where Black folks can imagine beautiful futures grounded in love, regeneration, abundance, and interdependence.

Shillingford is an artist, writer, and design strategist, originally from Trinidad and Tobago. She has been a spiritual and cultural organizer and network weaver for social movements and is a collage and installation artist and sometime graphic designer. She is currently an inaugural Fellow at the Race Forward Butterfly Lab for Immigrant Narrative Strategy, a member of the New Museum Incubator for Art, Design, and Technology, and an inaugural artist in residence at The Black Mecca Project's Petit Marronage Artist Residency program, based in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. She is also an alumnus of the Laundromat Project Creative Change Fellowship. Shillingford's work explores themes of hybridity, fugitivity, utopia, and solidarity economics at the intersection of histories and futures of the Black Atlantic.









America's Infrastructure Needs: Community Development Leaders Weigh In

"No panacea will address all the inequities that have stifled growth and stability in our communities. That said, we have an opportunity to come together as a collective and galvanize and fortify our resources and expertise to maximize this moment. Just as a rope is made of separate strands working together, we are weaving together our collective knowledge and power."

–Marietta Rodriguez, NeighborWorks America

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In 2021, a lot has been written about President Joe Biden's American Jobs Plan and its Neighborhood Homes Investment Act component—aka his infrastructure plan—but much of the discussion focuses on the politics of the bill, rather than on the nation's infrastructure needs. So, to add substance to the discussion, we asked a group of community development CEOs to share their reactions. Tony Pickett of Grounded Solutions Network, Marietta Rodriguez of NeighborWorks America, Lisa Rice of the National Fair Housing Alliance, and Dr. Akilah Watkins of the Center for Community Progress are members of an informal cohort of leaders of color who meet periodically and who, over the past few years, have gained leadership roles in national community development organizations, many of which had previously maintained all-white leadership.

As prompts, we provided three questions: (1) What is the most transformational aspect of the infrastructure bill? (2) What is missing from the bill that is important to include? (3) What conversation should we be having about infrastructure that we are not having? Respondents were invited to answer these questions directly or use them as a launching pad to go in whatever direction they chose.

WEAVING TOGETHER OUR COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

by Marietta Rodriguez

"In the post-pandemic recovery period, it has never been more critical to implement cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing the needs and bridging the gaps—socially and economically."

What comes to mind in thinking about the possibility of any infrastructure investment is the need for a comprehensive and coordinated response. As much as everyone is actively strategizing to develop the most appropriate plan to address the myriad challenges that regions and communities face, the results are still too fractured. Unfortunately, disparate agendas and insufficient funds have fostered a siloed implementation environment with more problems than working solutions. It's been too long since we have seen such positive movement [as Biden's plan] toward national investment in infrastructure that speaks to the diverse needs associated with systemic change. NeighborWorks is optimistic. It's refreshing to see and feel this kind of discussion around comprehensive investment. It will be vital to our post-pandemic recovery—strengthening capacity and ensuring long-term sustainability for communities.

What's missing and the conversations we should be having are the same. In the post-pandemic recovery period, it has never been more critical to implement cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing the needs and bridging the gaps—socially and economically. No panacea will address all the inequities that have stifled growth and stability in our communities. That said, we have an opportunity to come together as a collective and galvanize and fortify our resources and expertise to maximize this moment. Just as a rope is made of separate strands working together, we are weaving together our collective knowledge and power. We should be talking about how we get everyone to the table to talk about prioritization, planning, and supplemental support. It's going to take a cross-section of government, business, and nonprofits working together to turn the tide by stabilizing the economy, bridging health and education gaps, and fostering future generations of wealth through homeownership and stable affordable housing.

***Marietta Rodriguez** is president and CEO of NeighborWorks America. For more than forty years, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, a national, nonpartisan nonprofit known as NeighborWorks America, has striven to make every community a place of opportunity. The NeighborWorks network includes nearly 250 members in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.*

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF FLEXIBLE LOCAL COMMUNITY FUNDING

by Dr. Akilah Watkins

> "Writ large, the Biden administration's American Jobs Plan (AJP) embraces an expansive view of 'infrastructure' that recognizes housing, neighborhoods, and community as essential."

Writ large, the Biden administration's American Jobs Plan (AJP) embraces an expansive view of "infrastructure" that recognizes housing, neighborhoods, and community as essential. A key component within the bill with massive transformational potential is the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (NHIA).

NHIA is a targeted tax credit designed to spur rehab and development by filling the appraisal gap in "weak market" communities. In so many small and midsized cities, the cost to acquire and rehab—or build—a home exceeds its value when built. The NHIA tax credit is designed to fill that gap, eliminating a significant economic barrier that has kept nonprofit and for-profit developers alike from working in weaker housing markets and scaling up their operations. That said, this tax credit is only accessible in targeted geographies,[1] is capped at 35 percent of the total project cost, and requires the homes to be sold to income-qualifying owner-occupants.[2]

The Center for Community Progress has been actively involved in the NHIA coalition, and we were there on the ground in Erie, Pennsylvania, when it secured its lead Republican House sponsor in 2019. So, it's really encouraging to see the Biden administration recognize the need to revitalize communities and expand the toolkit for equitable community development.

A powerful tool missing from the bill is the Restoring Communities Left Behind Act.[3] This $5 billion federal investment would support customized community revitalization strategies designed by local partnerships working on the ground in those communities. This would be flexible money that partnerships (through a broad set of uses including land banking, shared equity ownership, and support for existing homeowners) could use to tackle historic challenges like closing the racial homeownership gap and expanding access to safe, affordable housing in the disinvested small and midsized cities with the greatest need. This bill has been building momentum since its introduction in February 2021, and we are hopeful that congressional leaders will include this program as the actual infrastructure legislation takes shape.

***Dr. Akilah Watkins** is president and CEO of the Center for Community Progress.*

DESIGNING INFRASTRUCTURE WITH A DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE AND HOLISTIC APPROACH

by Lisa Rice

"The Biden administration and Congress have a chance to invest in all communities through the preservation, retrofitting, or new construction of housing while simultaneously spurring new transportation, environmental, energy, and clean water projects that benefit us all."

Congress hasn't reached an agreement on the final infrastructure package; but to be transformational, first the bill must correct the harm to communities and people of color caused by previous infrastructure bills like the National Highway Acts.[4] Second, the law must include housing as a fundamental component of our nation's infrastructure.

Our nation must reckon with its legacy of racism and government-sponsored discrimination. Much of that has manifested through biased policies incorporated in previous infrastructure projects that provided resources and benefits to whites, enriching them while simultaneously denying opportunities and amenities to people of color. Previous infrastructure packages provided majority-white communities with updated sewer systems, storm and flood protection systems, roads, broadband, green spaces, clean air, fresh water, and other amenities, while robbing people of color of their land rights, isolating them in concrete-laden spaces, contributing to residential segregation, exposing them to climate hazards and increased pollution, and resulting in systemic disinvestments for Native American, Latino, Black, and Asian communities. As a result, people of color are twice as likely to live in areas without potable water or proper sanitation,[5] and redlined communities are on average thirteen degrees hotter than other neighborhoods.[6]

By crafting the bill through an equity lens and recognizing housing as an essential component of infrastructure, the Biden administration and Congress have a chance to invest in all communities through the preservation, retrofitting, or new construction of housing while simultaneously spurring new transportation, environmental, energy, and clean water projects that benefit us all.

What is missing from the bill? The Biden administration and Congress must ensure that there is a general requirement that federal grants, tax programs, and other initiatives be implemented in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing and community opportunity in accordance with civil rights statutes. They must expand the housing supply and enable people to access housing opportunities.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 requires that all federal funds be used to dismantle the vestiges of government-sponsored discrimination and promote the development of healthy, well-resourced communities.[7] This provision must apply to the infrastructure plan to rectify the impact of past government-sponsored disinvestment, segregation, and other harms. Much in the same way that the federal government has an obligation to repair roads and bridges on which the public relies, it must also repair the deep scars in marginalized communities inflicted by inequitable infrastructure projects.

The bill must also require meaningful accountability mechanisms. All federal agencies, including the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Commerce, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), must work together to meet these important goals.

Congress and the Biden Administration must see this package as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build strong, healthy communities and connect infrastructure investments to equal housing opportunities. It is critical to not see this bill through the lens of a zero-sum game but rather to understand the wisdom in ensuring that everyone will benefit from an infrastructure package that supports our collective well-being.

A conversation we should be having about infrastructure that we are not currently having? We are not talking enough about how our nation's history of biased infrastructure policies, knack for favoring poorly designed projects, and lack of innovation have created a built environment that is largely inaccessible to people with disabilities. Going forward, it's imperative that we take a disability-inclusive and holistic approach to addressing infrastructure needs. Past infrastructure programs and policies have not only often devastated communities and displaced entire neighborhoods but also excluded any consideration of the needs of people with disabilities. Since our founding, our country's investments in agriculture, national and regional transportation networks, water and flood control systems, and housing developments have not equitably served people with disabilities—and have often harmed them.

Roughly 26 percent of the population has a disability.[8] To rectify past failures, the disability community must be intricately involved in designing what our society looks like and how people are able to be connected to physical spaces as well as critical amenities like broadband, transportation, jobs, and housing.

Lisa Rice is president and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance.

INFRASTRUCTURE AS A ROAD TO REPARATIONS

by Tony Pickett

The Biden administration has defined a $2.3 trillion jobs, infrastructure, and green-energy proposal that has the potential to reshape the U.S. economy for generations. But our public discourse remains largely focused on specifics—for example, the magnitude of impact for drinking water, clean energy, transportation, manufacturing innovation, housing, broadband access, and human services. Our national conversation should instead focus on clearly illuminating this rare opportunity to direct public investment with a racial equity lens, simultaneously expanding access to wealth and economic vitality for future generations.

Tony Pickett, continued from page 21

> "Rather than merely debate the types and costs of proposed infrastructure spending items, our leaders should focus on repairing decades of damage to Black and Brown communities."

Realizing that vision requires bringing organized political will and pressure to bear on congressional approval of the proposed spending and associated corporate tax increases. The prosperity of our cities, suburbs, and rural communities depends on a layered collection of supportive services, systems, and related decisions regarding their benefits and burdens. While highways and rail corridors help move people and goods, they can also disrupt, divide, and destroy communities. During the decades of planning for and construction of our national Interstate Highway System, many historically Black communities across the nation suffered massive residential displacement, Black-owned assets were devalued, and generations of Black people contracted chronic respiratory illnesses resulting from poor air quality. Documented examples of damage to Black communities range from the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul, Minnesota, where a freeway demolished seven hundred homes and forced three hundred Black-owned businesses to close,[9] to Alabama's decision during the height of the civil rights movement to route the I-85 through—and thus divide—Montgomery's wealthiest Black neighborhood, which contained the home of Ralph David Abernathy.[10] Instances of this particular type of environmental racism are still being inflicted on communities of color today—for instance, the widening of I-70 in Denver, Colorado, displacing Latinx residents of Elyria-Swansea.[11]

The Biden proposal is an unprecedented opportunity to repair past racial injustice while simultaneously creating greater access to future wealth and economic prosperity for communities of color. At Grounded Solutions Network, progressive planners and transportation advocates are supporting the direct linkage of public infrastructure redesign and improvements to innovation in democratic forms of land ownership and community benefits. Transportation for America has announced an ambitious policy proposal for using land banks and land trusts to secure communal land ownership, housing, and wealth creation opportunities for Black and Brown communities.[12] The coalition declares:

> To ensure that neighborhoods around the highway receive the benefits of its removal or modification, the project sponsor for any award under this program should be required to establish a land trust or land bank that would receive initial ownership of any property that becomes developable through activities supported by a grant under this program. The land trust would help locals buy the property, preserve and build affordable housing, support the opening of locally-owned small businesses, and preserve greenspace and parks. A $5 billion federal investment could support 1–2 dozen land trusts for five years.[13]

Rather than merely debate the types and costs of proposed infrastructure spending items, our leaders should focus on repairing decades of damage to Black and Brown communities. The proposed federal transportation infrastructure expenditures should be viewed as only the first wave of public investments contributing to reparations, reducing the racial wealth gap, and achieving economic justice for communities of color.

Tony Pickett is CEO of the Grounded Solutions Network.

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Land Back:
A Necessary Act of Reparations

by Nikki Pieratos and Krystal Two Bulls

Land Back needs to happen so that all other aspects of Indigenous livelihood can return with it. As a metanarrative, Land Back can serve as a multi-issue and long-term approach for movement-building work to unify Indigenous peoples.

Last summer, millions of people mobilized worldwide to demand change to the policing system that continues to brutalize and murder Black people with little to no consequence. The massive protests have led to a period of reckoning of systemic racism in the United States. Suddenly, many white-led organizations and white individuals have begun to take a much greater interest in the history and experience of people of color. Books about racial inequality have been flying off the shelves. Diversity and inclusion consultants are in high demand. Many nonprofits have felt pressure to make statements about their commitment to the movement for Black lives.[1]

At the root of this fight for racial justice is the demand to undo the systemic oppression Black people face, and demand reparations to Black people for the harms caused by slavery and ongoing and current racist policies and practices. At the root is also the demand to undo the systemic oppression Indigenous peoples face, and demand reparations to Indigenous peoples for the genocide and other ongoing and current racist policies and practices perpetuated by white settlers.

Reparations is one part of the process of restoring justice for the land theft, genocide, and enslavement committed in the spirit of capitalism, because the generational privilege is still real and the harm to our communities and peoples persists. For Indigenous peoples across the globe, the Land Back movement is at the center of this fight for reparations. Today, over a quarter of Indigenous

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Land Back addresses the root of colonization—the theft of Indigenous lands…

people in the United States—1.4 million—live below the poverty line;[2] and we are still shouldering the burden of yet another pandemic that has only widened the educational, health, and economic disparities that already existed. These inequalities are not by accident; they are by design—the result of continued systematic racism and the coordinated erasure of our existence by this country's most powerful institutions. Even the studies that examine all such socioeconomic dimensions leave out Indigenous people, which further contributes to the erasure of our issues and needs. There is a real effort to keep Indigenous people invisible.

The collective consciousness that emerged over the past year is focused on creating transformational systems centered in racial, economic, climate, and health justice, and there are critical roles to play and allyship to put into action for philanthropists, elected officials, business owners, nonprofit leaders, and individuals toward this effort. There is also a slower-paced but growing recognition that those closest to the pain need to be in charge of the solutions.

For those who have benefited from white supremacy, support for the Land Back movement can take many forms, including finding ways big and small to pay reparations, divesting from oppressive and exploitative systems, and making direct investments that support Indigenous self-determination.

LAND BACK AND ITS ORIGINS[3]

The concept of Land Back, let alone its practices, can be a struggle for non-Indigenous (and even at times for Indigenous) people to understand. Fundamentally, Land Back is the intersectional movement for racial justice by Indigenous peoples, with the end goal of having our lands returned to Indigenous stewardship. Land Back addresses the root of colonization—the theft of Indigenous lands (including their destruction through resource extraction), the violence committed against Indigenous peoples to build capitalism across the country, and the effects that our communities still experience today. The movement for Land Back began over a decade ago. No single group owns or controls the movement, which has spread throughout Turtle Island—the Indigenous name for the lands of North and Central America—and surrounding island Nations. The phrase *land back* emerged from culture bearers and artisans popularizing the idea through artwork.[4] After ten years of organizing, our movement is becoming visible to people in the United States and Canada.

Like Black Lives Matter, Land Back aims to unite many other narratives and provides understanding of myriad issues—in this case facing Indigenous peoples—clearly and accessibly for both those within and outside our communities. Land Back is about reclaiming Indigenous spheres of influence and sovereignty. It is about extending our values to result in better stewardship of ecological, political, and economic systems. Land Back also harmonizes well with the political discourse on reparations and land-centered issues for our Black relatives.

Land Back needs to happen so that all other aspects of Indigenous livelihood can return with it. As a metanarrative, Land Back can serve as a multi-issue and long-term approach for movement-building work to unify Indigenous peoples. The lack of an umbrella for the myriad social, economic, and environmental crises facing Indigenous peoples is one of the biggest obstacles to our collective liberation. Therefore, we need to invest to build capacity and self-determination. Grassroots organizations are often underinvested in and subject to the bureaucracy of the same systemic structures that caused the harm in the first place; to transform and shift the power balance back to oppressed peoples, Indigenous movements must be able to mobilize in multiple domains and sectors.

Today, we believe that Land Back is the most expedient way to support our self-determination, because we understand that (1) increasing visibility by itself is not the answer, because we could lose this moment over time, and (2) nonprofits can kill movements, so we must position this work to be generational, not bound to any one organization, and adaptable to the changing sociopolitical dynamics around us. Under this unifying and organizing metanarrative around Land Back, many voices and movements can become one.

What many do not understand is that colonization today is still steeped in violence against Indigenous peoples.

ROOTS BACK TO THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

The basis for stealing Indigenous lands was rooted in the "Doctrine of Discovery," which comprised a series of religious decrees by the Catholic Church that established legal, spiritual, and political justification for seizure of land not inhabited by Christians. The Doctrine of Discovery impacted Indigenous peoples worldwide, encouraging explorers, conquistadors, and settlers from the Western world to colonize lands previously inhabited by autonomous Indigenous peoples. In the United States, the Doctrine of Discovery fueled "Manifest Destiny"—the settler notion that God gifted lands in America to Christians alone, and that it is the responsibility of said Christians to take over lands wrongly occupied by the "merciless Indian savages."[5]

The Doctrine of Discovery also binds us together with our Black relatives, many of whom are the descendants of enslaved African peoples stolen by European traders to build the national economy of this country. Reparations are about righting the injustices and continued harm experienced by those hurt most by the founding of this nation.

We will not attempt here to truncate centuries of resulting federal policies, actions, and the socioeconomic impacts on Indigenous and Black peoples. Our main points are (1) that the United States has been a perpetrator of genocide and land theft; and (2) that while it has many different political, legal, and economic levers to *move toward* justice (because it cannot rectify history), it fails to take urgent national action time and time again to both end the abuse by and transition from the country's racist laws, policies, and practices.

FOUR DEMANDS OF THE INDIGENOUS LAND BACK MOVEMENT

For hundreds of years, the federal government has violated its own treaties and not provided the economic compensation codified in its contracts with Native Nation governments for use of our lands and resources. In the Indigenous context, reparations are not just about financial restitution but upholding the "supreme Law of the Land" and following through on federal trust (and debt) obligations. Consider this: The United States signed nearly four hundred treaties and broke nearly all of them. The restitution we are talking about here would be in the trillions of dollars—and this is only taking into account economic compensation and not the other promises made and not kept.[6]

What many do not understand is that colonization today is still steeped in violence against Indigenous peoples and is still driven by reasons of economy and greed. Other injustices—whether perpetuated on our homelands, in cities, in schools, in foster care, in bank lobbies, or in prisons—are rooted in the violent theft of our lands and natural resources. The colonial tactics develop over time, but the overarching strategy is the same, and the system is still gamed as oppressor and oppressed.

Even existing laws that attempt to preserve Indigenous rights are not effective. Although we have multiple treaties in place guaranteeing the right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) before anyone enters our land, those treaties are rarely respected—as can be seen by the continued illegal operation of the Dakota Access Pipeline and Line 3 on sacred Indigenous land.

The core of the Land Back movement consists of four straightforward demands that address the systemic changes and physical and financial reparations needed:

1. Return all public lands back to Indigenous hands.
2. Dismantle the structures that forcibly removed us from our lands and continue to keep our peoples oppressed.
3. Defund white supremacy and the mechanisms and systems that enforce it and that disconnect us from stewardship of the land, including the police, the military, border patrol, and ICE.
4. Move from an era of consultation into a new era of policy around free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), as specified in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.[7]

There is not a one-size-fits-all strategy for reparations for Native Nations or Indigenous peoples.

The first two demands are dependent on the last two being met, and all are intertwined. Free, prior, and informed consent means we are truly consulted about who can enter our land, and what is done to it—and that when we say no, the response is to respect our decision and stay away.

The constant overriding of our right to FPIC came to a head last summer, resulting in a peaceful demonstration by Indigenous land defenders on July 3, 2020, in response to a political rally being held at Mount Rushmore Hills, which required consent by Lakota peoples under multiple treaties. When we defended our rightful land, we were met with force by the local police department and the National Guard, and twenty-one protestors were arrested and faced spurious charges. So long as elected officials freely violate both federal and international law and rely on militarized police forces to back them up, we will not truly have ownership over our lands.

The economic benefits of FPIC being respected are far-reaching. When Indigenous people have a real say in what happens on our lands, we institute sustainable practices around food, water, education, healthcare, housing, and more—counter to the destructive ones employed by current developers of the land. We build systems based on the health and well-being of people and the planet, which will continue to be upheld for generations to come and won't disappear with a drop in the stock market or the change of a U.S. president.

REPARATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INDIGENOUS LAND BACK MOVEMENT

There is not a one-size-fits-all strategy for reparations for Native Nations or Indigenous peoples. Reparations can take the form of national park lands being returned to Native Nation governments, obtaining FPIC in economic development projects, land trusts to return lands to tribes and in some cases individuals, direct grantmaking to Indigenous communities and organizations, investing in physical infrastructure on Tribal lands, and more.

While the case for reparations leans heavily on national policy, there is also a case for philanthropy, as it is both a product and driver of wealth inequality. Ironically, philanthropy often reinforces economic exploitation and extraction by forcing grantees to operate within the rigid rules of white supremacy. It is an enlightening exercise to dive into the history of your local and national foundations to identify their sources of wealth and where their current endowment originated: the blood, sweat, and tears of Indigenous and Black peoples.

Being a concrete part of the push for reparations begins with decolonizing our minds, but we cannot sit quietly in reflection while taking no action in the meantime. Leaders of nonprofits, private companies, elected officials, and philanthropists must apply historical analysis and recognize the reality of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color today. Decisions to repair generations of harm cannot be made in a vacuum; they must be made in partnership with communities every step of the way.

We have the solutions and strategies to get there, but we are looking to the current holders of power to redistribute their wealth, resources, and decision making to move this work forward.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

As Indigenous peoples, we need to reclaim—and in some cases redesign—our governance systems, the systemic expressions of sovereignty, the ways in which we relate to one another, and the ways in which we relate to our lands. This is essential to successfully retaking our rightful lands and creating a world that is grounded in equity and justice for all peoples and the planet.

For our allies, here are some action steps that you can take:

1. **Pay rent.** This can be done on an individual basis by setting up a relationship with the Native Nation's government on the lands you occupy, as over fifteen thousand and counting have done with the Duwamish Nation in Seattle, Washington, under the banner of Real Rent.[8]

2. **Contribute to land trusts.** Some nonprofit organizations acquire land so as to protect it

Philanthropists can support racial justice and the Land Back movement if they give up power and invest money, time, and social capital.

and, in some cases, return it to Indigenous peoples. Contributions via a voluntary land tax are one way to fund land buyback. This example is especially powerful in urban areas, in terms of creating a presence for Indigenous peoples. An example of this strategy in action can be found with the Sogorea Te' Land Trust in Oakland, California.[9]

3. **Support efforts to return national public lands to Indigenous stewardship.** There are millions of acres of land across the United States that were illegally seized, in violation of federal law. However, individuals and grassroots organizations have long supported the return of national public lands to Indigenous hands, and we have achieved some victories along the way. In 2020, for example, Congress voted to return 12,000 acres of Chippewa National Forest to the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in northern Minnesota.[10]

THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY

We hope our words spur passion and a few pathways for philanthropy to join and support the Land Back and reparations movement.

There are many resources philanthropy can access. One ally of ours, Resource Generation (a community of young wealthy inheritors committed to the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power), has developed a Land Reparations and Indigenous Solidarity Toolkit to help donors progress in their journey.[11]

Philanthropy is both a product of wealth inequality and a driver behind it. The metrics of success for philanthropy are rooted in capitalism and a settler mindset, which means that fights for real liberation are often underresourced and even opposed by foundations.

Nonetheless, philanthropists can support racial justice and the Land Back movement if they give up power and invest money, time, and social capital to support organizers, with no strings attached. Indigenous peoples need to uplift our solutions without a paternalistic eye watching our every move and pulling money the moment our ideas deviate from funder notions of what success looks like.

Of course, philanthropy by itself will not ensure the centering of Indigenous practices needed to build a more resilient world and forge the practices necessary for Indigenous survival and flourishing. We need the federal government to recognize the continued harm being inflicted on us when they side with corporations and use taxpayer money to force us off our rightful land.

We know we're a long way from our goal.

We recognize that shifting federal mindsets and policies will require pressure through many channels, including media presence, lawsuits, calls-to-action, changing mainstream narratives, electing Indigenous officials, and more. Philanthropy cannot move government on its own, but philanthropists can support activities that will change policy by helping to resource the Land Back movement. In turn, we can shift what the public deems acceptable in terms of the federal government's relationship with us, and, at long last, begin to restore right relationship to our lands.

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NOTES

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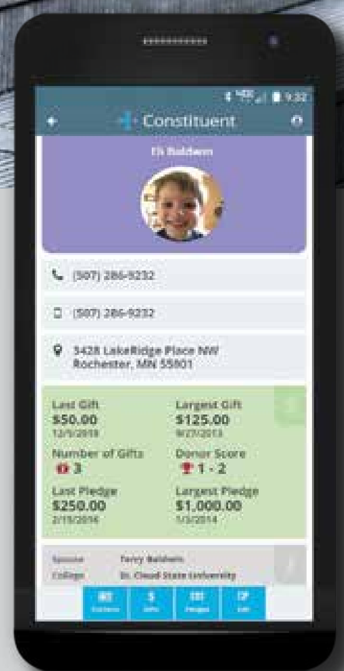

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Resurrecting the Promise of 40 Acres:
The Imperative of Reparations for Black Americans

by William Darity Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen

Editors' Note: *This article is excerpted from* Resurrecting the Promise of 40 Acres: The Imperative of Reparations for Black Americans *(Roosevelt Institute, June 4, 2020), with permission.*

Some reparations commentators are concerned that money is not enough, but we believe that money is exactly what is required to eliminate the black-white wealth gap—the most glaring indicator of racial injustice in America. Ultimately, respect for black Americans as people and as citizens—and acknowledgment, redress, and closure for the history and financial hardship they have endured—requires monetary compensation.

In the final chapter of our new book, *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century,*[1] we include the following epigraph from a quote by Malcolm X:

> If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, that's not progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. The progress comes from healing the wound that the blow made. They haven't even begun to pull the knife out . . . they won't even admit the knife is there.[2]

In the context of an ongoing social injustice, "pulling the knife out" ends the harmful act. It is a desirable and essential step, but it is only an act of suspension. Insofar as it does not "heal the wound," it is not an act of restitution, remediation;[3] therefore, "pulling the knife out" is not reparations. Reparations require the culpable party to make amends for the harm inflicted on the victim, which demands remediation.

In *From Here to Equality*, we advance a general definition of reparations as a program of acknowledgment, redress, and closure. **Acknowledgment** constitutes the culpable party's admission of responsibility for the atrocity. Admission should include an enumeration of the damages inflicted upon the

THE CASE WE MAKE FOR BLACK REPARATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES CENTERS ON THE PROVISION OF COMPENSATION FOR A SPECIFIC COMMUNITY THAT CONSISTS, TODAY, OF APPROXIMATELY 40 MILLION AMERICANS.

victims and the advantages appropriated by the culpable party. **Redress** constitutes the acts of restitution, steps taken to "heal the wound." **Closure** constitutes an agreement by both the victims and the perpetrators that the account is settled. Representatives chosen by members of the aggrieved community can communicate with the culpable party to establish the point at which restitution is adequate for the debt to be paid.[4] Thereafter, the victims will make no further claims for compensation, unless a new atrocity occurs or an old atrocity recurs.

ELIGIBILITY: BLACK AMERICAN DESCENDANTS OF PERSONS ENSLAVED IN THE UNITED STATES

The case we make for black reparations in the United States centers on the provision of compensation for a specific community that consists, today, of approximately 40 million Americans. In *From Here to Equality*, we advance two criteria for black reparations eligibility. First, an individual must establish that they have at least one ancestor who was enslaved in the US.[5] Second, an individual must demonstrate that they have self-identified as black, negro, or African American on an official document—perhaps making public the self-report of their race on the US Census—for at least 12 years before the enactment of a reparations program or a study commission for reparations, whichever comes first.[6] In short, the reparations plan we put forward designates black American descendants of US slavery as the target community.

This community's claim for restitution anchors on the US government's failure to deliver the promised 40-acre land grants to their newly emancipated ancestors in the aftermath of the Civil War.[7] That failure laid the foundation for the enormous contemporary gap in wealth between black and white people in the US. If the land allocation had been made to the freedmen and freedwomen, and had that ownership been protected, we speculate that there would be no need to consider the case for black reparations today.[8]

Though the government's decision to deny black Americans this equity stake has led some contemporary pundits to refer to "slavery reparations," the case we make does not center exclusively on the horrors of American chattel slavery. Instead, we argue that three historical phases of atrocities merit incorporation into the criteria for black reparations. First, of course, is slavery itself, the crucible that produced white supremacy in the US. Second is the near century-long epoch of legal segregation in America—or American apartheid—that we refer to colloquially as the "Jim Crow" era. Finally, there are the ongoing atrocities associated with the period following the Civil Rights Act of 1964: mass incarceration; police executions of unarmed black people; sustained credit, housing, and employment discrimination; and the immense black-white wealth disparity. Black American descendants of US slavery have borne and continue to bear the undue burden of the cumulative effects of all three of these phases of the nation's trajectory of racial injustice.

CALCULATING WHAT IS OWED

We view the black-white wealth gap as a blight on the nation. While the 40 million eligible recipients of black reparations constitute about 13 percent of the American population, they possess less than 3 percent of the nation's wealth. This translates into an average (or mean) differential, per household, of about $800,000 in net worth.[9]

PRIORITIZING THE MEAN OF THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP

To eliminate the racial wealth gap in its entirety, it is essential that the *mean* gap be erased, rather than setting a far less ambitious goal such as closing the gap at the black-white *median* differential:

> Although, the usual discussion of wealth gaps focuses on median differences because the median captures the typical condition for American households, targeting the median will leave the racial wealth gap largely untouched. The fact that 97 [percent] of white

FINANCIAL EXPERT JOHN TALBOTT HAS SUGGESTED COMPUTING A PRESENT VALUE PREDICATED UPON A 9 PERCENT INTEREST RATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE AVERAGE RETURN ON AN INVESTMENT IN THE US STOCK MARKET FROM 1870 TO 2020. THIS RESULTS IN AN ESTIMATED REPARATIONS BILL OF $16.5 TRILLION.

> wealth is held by households with a net worth above the white median ($171,000) makes any policy that seeks to close the racial gap at the median a policy that discounts, overwhelmingly, the largest proportion of racial wealth inequality.[10]

Indeed, the magnitude of the black-white wealth gap that requires erasure should not be constrained by the fact that there is a highly unequal distribution of wealth among white Americans. In fact, there is a similarly highly unequal distribution of wealth among black people over a disproportionately, far smaller total.[11]

Ultimately, a well-designed reparations program could have a powerful impact on producing greater wealth equality among black Americans. Consider the median-to-mean ratio.[12] Suppose all black households received an additional $800,000 to make up for the mean deficit. As of 2016, the black median-to-mean ratio was $17,600/ $138,000 or approximately 13 percent. If the black mean rises to the same level as the white mean through the provision of an additional $800,000 to each black household, the intra-group black median-to-mean ratio would change dramatically to $817,600/$938,000, or approximately 87 percent.[13]

Eliminating the black-white (pre-tax) wealth differential should be a core objective of the redress component of a plan for reparations. We estimate that this will require an allocation of between $10 and $12 trillion in 2016 dollars to eligible black Americans. That allocation should serve as the *baseline* for black reparations in the twenty-first century.

THE COSTS OF SLAVERY

Another approach to calculating a formal bill entails measuring the costs of slavery to the immediate victims. As a basis for measuring the damages of slavery, some estimates have focused on what was, *de facto*, unpaid labor under the coercion of enslavement. Professor Thomas Craemer, however, has argued that slavery involved the theft of the full 24 hours of each day in the lives of the enslaved. In today's dollars, he arrives at an estimate of $14 trillion for the cost of American slavery to the enslaved.[14]

However, this may be an *underestimate* of the total costs, as Craemer's assessment does not account for the psychological trauma inflicted on the enslaved, nor does it account for the accelerated mortality and morbidity consequent upon the system. A potential justification for treating the $14 trillion sum as transferrable to today's descendants of the victims of chattel slavery is the argument that there has been an intergenerational transmission of the harms, uninterrupted because of the neglect of the provision of the promised 40 acres.

THE PROMISE OF 40 ACRES

The 40-acre land grants themselves afford another route for calculating the size of a potential black reparations bill. The conventional interpretation has it that the promised allocations were to have gone to households comprised of those newly emancipated. If a typical household consisted of four persons, the allocation would have amounted to 10 acres per person. With four million emancipated persons at the close of the Civil War, the overall distribution of land to the formerly enslaved would have come to *at least* 40 million acres. With an average value of an acre of land set at $10 in 1865,[15] the overall value of the allocation would have been $400 million. The present value compounded at a 6 percent interest rate (the average rate of return plus an inflation adjustment) amounts to $3.1 trillion. Financial expert John Talbott has suggested computing a present value predicated upon a 9 percent interest rate, consistent with the average return on an investment in the US stock market from 1870 to 2020. **This results in an estimated reparations bill of $16.5 trillion.**[16]

Though we are open-minded about a variety of strategies for *calculating* the size of social debt that is owed, our central argument here is that the elimination of the black-white wealth gap should provide the foundation for the magnitude of redress that this stark American racial injustice demands. After all, the racial wealth gap is the economic

SO, WHO SHOULD PAY THE BILL? IN *FROM HERE TO EQUALITY*, WE ARGUE THAT THE CULPABLE PARTY IS THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

measure that best captures the cumulative effects of the full trajectory of American white supremacy from slavery to the present.[17] Given that the disparity began with the wealth that white people accumulated through extraction from enslaved black people, which grew exponentially with each generation, closing the gap requires *direct* redistribution.[18]

CULPABILITY: A MATTER OF NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

So, who should pay the bill? In *From Here to Equality*, we argue that the culpable party is the United States government. "Authority is constructed and contextual," and all three phases of the atrocities cataloged here were products of the legal and authority framework established by the federal government.[19] Often, the federal government further sanctioned racial atrocities by silence and inaction.

In turn, this means that local or piecemeal—little by little—attempts at racial atonement do not constitute reparations proper. In the past several years, many states, localities, and individual institutions have begun to consider "reparations."

But these are insufficient for a several reasons. First, many of these "reparations" efforts do not involve restitution. Second, most states, localities, and individual institutions do not have the resources to repay on anything like the scale we are suggesting. Finally, and most importantly, black reparations are not a matter of personal or individual institutional guilt; black reparations are a matter of national responsibility.

In many instances, local initiatives labeled "reparations" are not that at all. Whether at the state or municipal level, many efforts frequently constitute acknowledgment, admitting that atrocities were committed. These measures are often followed by inadequate attempts at redress—the allocation of funds for research or the construction of memorials, for example—rather than substantial compensatory payments to black Americans. While these scattered steps to take some type of action may begin to pull the knife out, they do not heal the wound produced by the harm; typically, they fail to provide any compensatory payment.

Even if they do afford a compensatory payment, a series of local initiatives is highly unlikely to match the minimum bill for black reparations. As noted above, this debt will require at least $10 trillion to eliminate the black-white wealth disparity. Taken separately or collectively, there is no evidence that local "reparations" will come close to addressing the full scope of the measured harm or achieving an appropriate level of restitution.

[...]

LEARNING FROM OTHER CASES: PRECEDENTS FOR REPARATIONS

Valuable insights for how to best execute a national program of reparations can be gained from previous experiences with plans of restitution. Here, we focus on five precedents, two overseas (German reparations for victims of the Nazi Holocaust, and reparations in post-apartheid South Africa) and three in the US (Japanese American reparations after World War II, post-9/11 reparations for victims' families, and post–Sandy Hook reparations after the 2012 school shooting).

These cases are disparate. The German, South African, and Japanese American cases are all instances of state actions against an ethnic, racial, or religious minority. The 9/11 and Sandy Hook cases stem from external crimes. Three groups—victims of the Holocaust, the 9/11 attacks, and Sandy Hook—received redistributive justice soon after the period of victimization. Reparations for Japanese American people required many years of debate around and pressure for payment and justice. The South African case is one in which the goal, as stated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was insufficiently ambitious. *All of them* demonstrate how, in the aftermath of unfathomable incidents, people—both government officials as

LEADERSHIP FROM WITHIN THE COMMUNITIES MOST AFFECTED IS ESSENTIAL TO IGNITE ACTION AND ENSURE THAT RESTITUTION IS COMPREHENSIVE AND SUFFICIENT.

well as those leading private charitable efforts—attempt to come to terms with placing a value on and compensating for lost lives and lost livelihoods, ultimately reaching closure for all concerned.

Key lessons include:

- Leadership from within the communities most affected is essential to ignite action and ensure that restitution is comprehensive and sufficient;
- Movement pressure outside of the political system is effective when it is combined with consenting formal political leadership (e.g., prime ministers, members of Congress) and high-profile bipartisan or multi-party commissions;
- Political commissions must have the proper mandate, focused not on repayment for demonstrable individual atrocities but on the comprehensive costs of social systems of oppression;
- Significant payment and restitution can be achieved even when reparations are politically unpopular;
- An enumeration of contingencies must be made to ensure the payments are made under challenging circumstances;
- Work performed by a study commission for reparations must be completed in a timely manner, within a maximum horizon of 18 months;
- Financial goals of a reparations project should be met within a decade;
- Valuing human life and coming to agreement on "sufficient" payment is difficult, but, within limits, identical payments are ultimately preferable; and
- Financial outlays should be combined with educational, historical, and narrative efforts to ensure that the case for reparations is well understood in the public ethos.

[...]

PRECEDENTS FOR HR 40: LESSONS LEARNED

Some specific recommendations for an African American reparations commission follow. [...] The Commission to Study and Develop Proposals for Reparations for African Americans, designated in HR 40, could perform such a function.

However, given the unique aspects of the black American case, HR 40 is not adequate in its current form and requires revision. Unlike the original text that uses 1619 as the starting point, we designate 1776 as the point of origin for the case for black reparations. The culpable party is the United States government, and it did not exist in 1619. While the current version of HR 40 distributes appointment of the commissioners between the executive and legislative branches and unspecified "grassroots organizations," the commission should be appointed by Congress as well—since, ultimately, legislation for black reparations must be enacted by Congress.

The core charge for the commission must be providing Congress with a detailed template for legislation that will activate a comprehensive plan for black reparations. This will include specifying criteria for eligibility for black reparations consistent with the standards described at the start of this report and specifying precisely how the amount and deployment of a reparations fund will raise black net worth sufficiently to eliminate the (pre-tax) black-white wealth gap within a decade.

To mitigate conflicts of interest or any appearance of wrongdoing, the commissioners should not receive a salary, although they should receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses associated with the fulfillment of their responsibilities. Nor should any organization to which they belong receive any funds from the budget assigned to the commission. On the other hand, there must be a salaried professional staff of sufficient size and skill to support the commissioners' efforts. Additionally, the commission should be directed to produce its report within 18 months of its inception.

And while closure is one of the imperatives of any reparations program, arriving at closure does not mean forgetting

WHILE CLOSURE IS ONE OF THE IMPERATIVES OF ANY REPARATIONS PROGRAM, ARRIVING AT CLOSURE DOES NOT MEAN FORGETTING THE RECORD OF ATROCITIES.

the record of atrocities. Thus, a key dimension of a black reparations program must be the development and application of a rigorous and accurate curriculum, fully integrated into public school instruction across at least three generations at all grade levels, telling the story of America's racial history. Germany's efforts to maintain an authentic memory of the Holocaust is instructive and should serve as a model for this initiative.

To prepare its report, the commission must also hold public hearings and maintain a variety of mechanisms to ensure that eligible recipients' voices are heard, including having regional offices across the country. The commission should draw upon specialists in American history, economics, sociology, politics, psychology, medicine and public health, and law and litigation, particularly those who are knowledgeable about constitutional law. Ideally, the commissioners themselves will possess such expert knowledge. Notably, these appointees should be well-versed in the history of slavery and Jim Crow, employment discrimination, wealth inequality, health disparities, unequal educational opportunities, criminal justice and mass incarceration, media practices, political participation and exclusion, and housing inequities.

[...]

CONCLUSION

As we have previously stated in other works, monetary restitution has been a centerpiece of virtually all other cases of reparations, both at home and abroad.[20] Some reparations commentators are concerned that money is not enough, but we believe that money is exactly what is required to eliminate the black-white wealth gap—the most glaring indicator of racial injustice in America. Ultimately, respect for black Americans as people and as citizens—and acknowledgment, redress, and closure for the history and financial hardship they have endured—requires monetary compensation.

Moreover, an emphatic message that "the murderers cannot inherit" will be delivered. This message reminds us of the American government's promise of land to the formerly enslaved. In 1865, under the authority of President Abraham Lincoln, the process of allocating 40-acre parcels to each black family of four on affordable terms—land that had been abandoned by and confiscated from the Confederate rebels—had begun. Lincoln's successor, President Andrew Johnson—and in our estimation, the country's most villainous president—asserted his authority and reversed Lincoln's orders, ultimately allowing the murderers to become the heirs. Reparations for living black Americans would enable the descendants of the enslaved to receive the inheritance that was properly theirs all along. Today's black-white wealth gap originated with that unfulfilled promise of 40 acres. The payment of this debt is feasible and at least 155 years overdue.

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Mehrsa Baradaran, Kendra Bozarth, Hasan Jeffries, Spencer Overton, Anna Smith, and Felicia Wong for their thoughtful comments and valuable insight throughout the development of this report.

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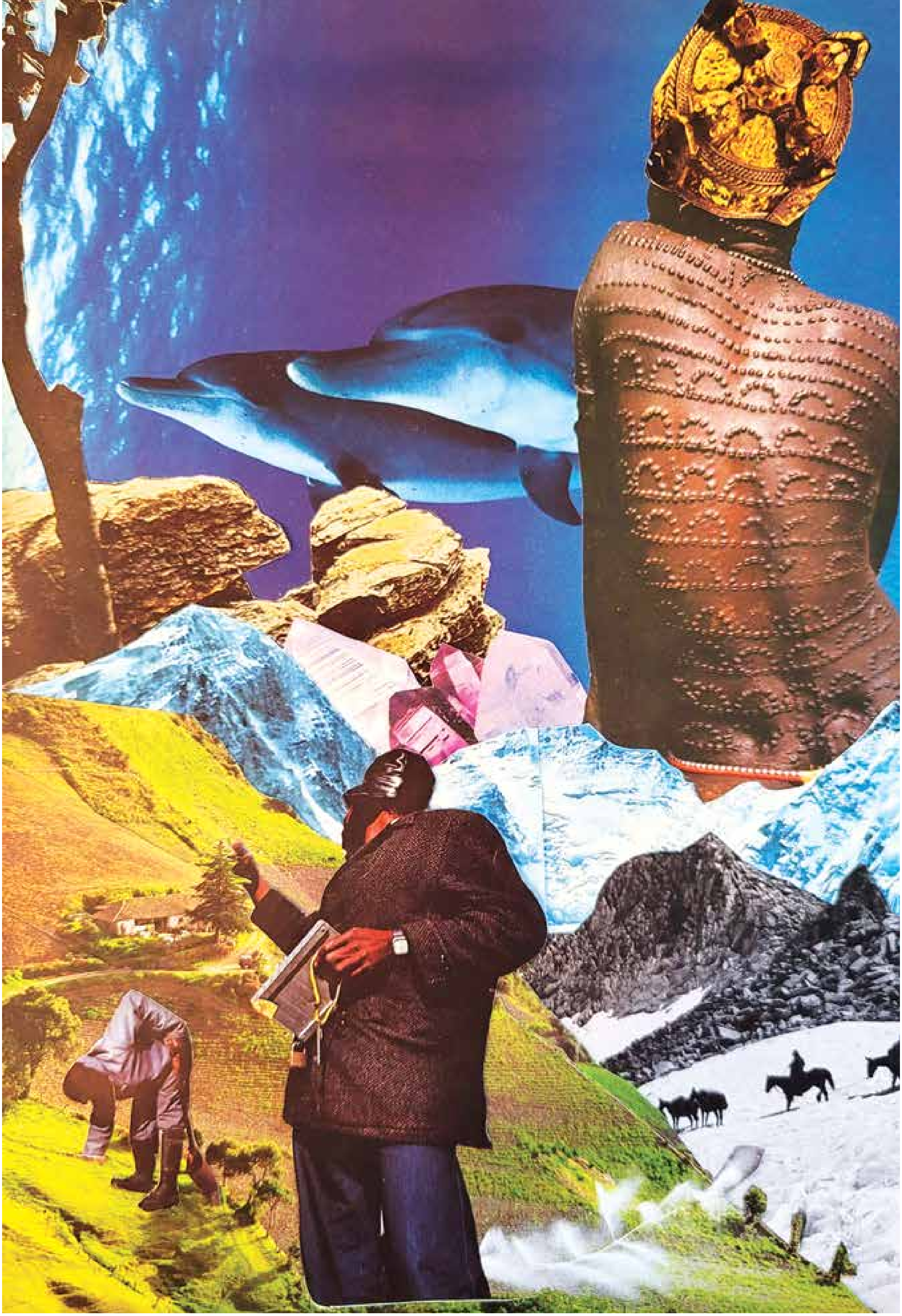

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NOTES

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4. We further outline the proposal for an elected Reparations Supervisory Board that would determine when closure is achieved, while also fulfilling other ongoing tasks; see Darity and Mullen, *From Here to Equality*, 267.
5. This standard, of course, will create substantial business for genealogists, but the agency administering the reparations program can facilitate the process by subsidizing genealogical research support for applicants.
6. Parental eligibility can dictate qualification for minors who are at least 12 years of age. Proof of paternity or maternity at least 12 years before the enactment of a reparations program or a reparations study commission—again, whichever comes first—would have to be established. Children will be able to receive reparations payments when they reach legal adulthood; in the meantime, funds would go into a federally secured trust account for them.
7. Walter L. Fleming, "Forty Acres and a Mule," *North American Review* 182, no. 594 (May 1906): 721–37.
8. Protection of black property would have required the Union Army to maintain its presence in the former secessionist states for at least a generation and/or directly arming the freedmen. Under General Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15, 400,000 formerly enslaved persons settled on 40,000 acres of land. Even that allocation, a mere fraction of the full 5.3 million acres specified in Sherman's order, was restored to the former slave holders at the direction of President Andrew Johnson. See Darity and Mullen, *From Here to Equality*, 158–59.
9. Lisa J. Dettling et al., "Recent Trends in Wealth-Holding by Race and Ethnicity: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances," *FEDS Notes*, September 27, 2017, www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/recent-trends-in-wealth-holding-by-race-and-ethnicity-evidence-from-the-survey-of-consumer-finances-20170927.htm.
10. William Darity Jr., Fenaba R. Addo, and Imari Z. Smith, "A Subaltern Middle Class: The case of the missing 'Black bourgeoisie' in America," *Contemporary Economic Policy* (May 2020), 6.
11. Ibid., 3–5.
12. A measure like the variance is not useful in this context; the variance as a measure of inequality is insensitive to the effects of an equal allocation of funds, regardless of the size of the allocation. We use the median-to-mean ratio instead. When that ratio reaches one, there is perfect equality.
13. We offer a possible alternative to the equal allocation approach in *From Here to Equality*, as a method for generating a more equitable distribution of wealth among black people. There is the option of combining a uniform payment to all eligible recipients with the "designat[ion of] a portion of the funds for competitive application, with priority given to the applicants with lower current wealth or income positions" (p. 267). On the other hand, if the concern is the highly unequal distribution of wealth among white Americans, or across all Americans generally, this should be addressed by a separate set of policies distinct from a black reparations project.
14. Thomas Craemer, "Estimating Slavery Reparations: Present Value Comparisons of Historical Multigenerational Reparations Policies," *Social Science Quarterly* 96, no. 2 (June 2015): 639–55.
15. For the $10-per-acre of land in 1865 estimate, see Anuradha Mittal and Joan Powell, "The Last Plantation," *Food First Backgrounder* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1–8.

16. John Talbott suggested 9 percent interest in personal correspondence with one of the coauthors, January 7, 2020.

17. The COVID-19 crisis hardly obviates the need to institute a reparations plan, at least after the worst of the crisis has, hopefully, passed. The adverse effects of extreme black-asset poverty become more apparent in emergency conditions such as the crisis produced by the pandemic. Racial wealth differentials impose a correspondingly high degree of danger and harm on black Americans (see Danyelle Solomon and Darrick Hamilton, "The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Racial Wealth Gap," Center for American Progress, March 19, 2020, www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2020/03/19/481962/coronavirus-pandemic-racial-wealth-gap/). The lack of wealth increases black vulnerability because black people have been disproportionately concentrated in the personal service/contact jobs that have been destroyed by the pandemic, or they are disproportionately concentrated in health service jobs that place them at the greatest risk of exposure to the virus. One message to be taken from the pandemic is that the racialized dangers of the current situation might have been moderated had the racial wealth gap been eliminated already. A second message, evidenced by the federal government's capacity to mobilize resources without taxing first, is that the nation is capable of financing black reparations. See William A. Darity Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen, "The racial disparities of coronavirus point yet again to the need for reparations," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 20, 2020, www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/coronavirus-black-americans-racial-disparities-reparations-20200420.html; and William A. Darity Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen, "Coronavirus Is Making the Case for Black Reparations Clearer than Ever," *Newsweek*, May 5, 2020, www.newsweek.com/coronavirus-making-case-black-reparations-clearer-ever-opinion-1501887.

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19. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," Association of College and Research Libraries, January 11, 2016, www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/framework1.pdf.

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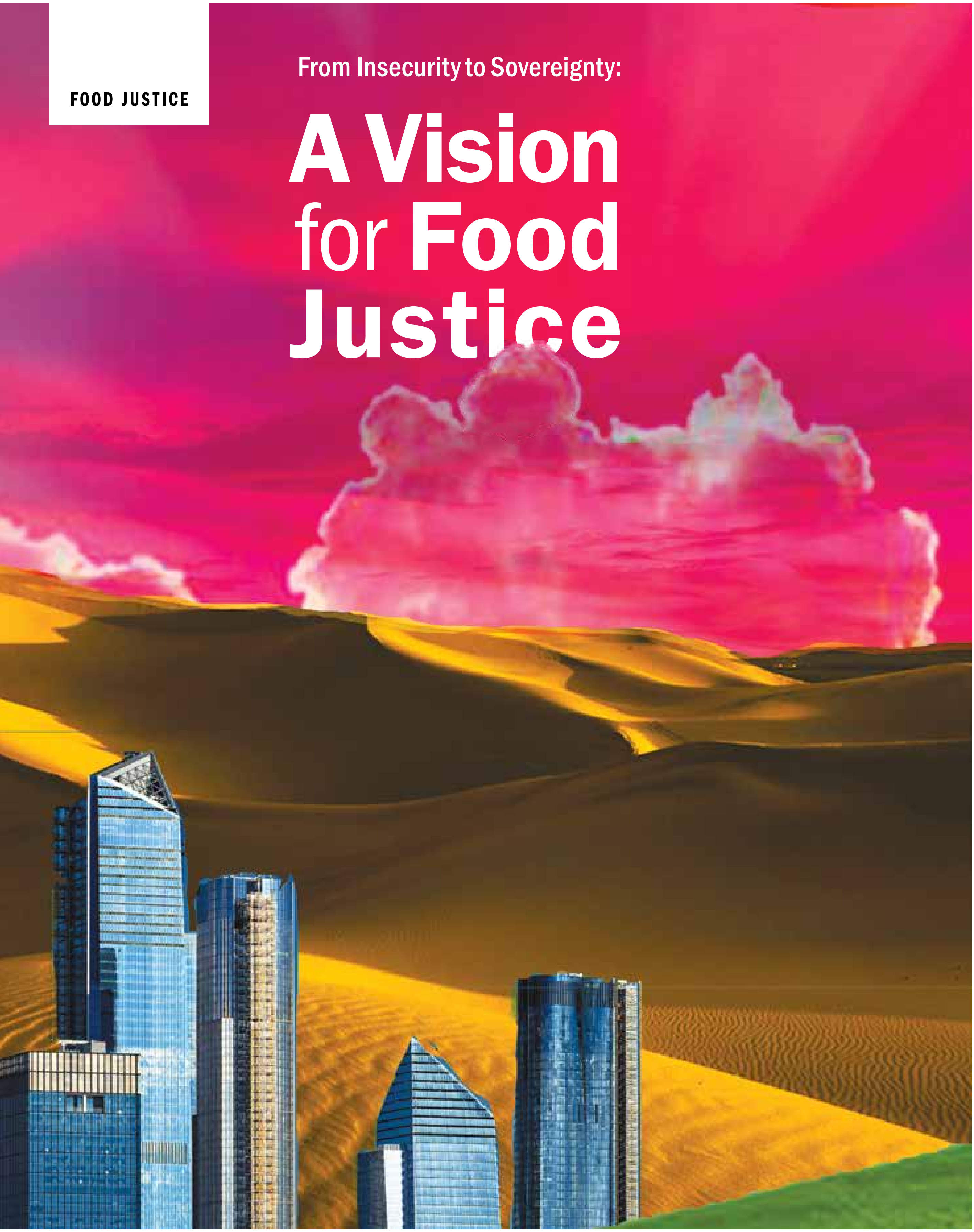
From Insecurity to Sovereignty:

A Vision for Food Justice



It is through telling and listening and retelling the complete, uncensored stories of our human experience that we become empowered to change the patterns of how we order the world, all that supports us in the world, and who develops the narratives that become our collective "history."

by A-dae Romero-Briones

How we tell stories matters. The storyteller. The timing. The word choice. The form the story takes. It all matters, because stories shape how we see the world and how we envision our role in its shaping.[1]

History is often told by the colonizer, yet that is only one perspective. And the story of our food, tied to so many other stories—of land, of war, of sovereignty and lack thereof, of agriculture, of water . . . of all the parts of who we are as people, as communities, as a nation—is rife with the myths, lies, and assumptions of the Europeans who colonized this land. In 2021, as we examine the events and stories of the past year, we need to reconsider, retell, and reinvent the stories told about our food systems, and understand how that storytelling has served to prop up these systems' inherent injustices.

THE STORY

For far too long, the story of the American food system as it is told has begun with Squanto, "the Indians" feeding the newly arrived American Pilgrims, and Thanksgiving. These "Indians" were Wampanoag, who lived in the village of Pawtuxet, but we rarely hear their names.

Thus originated a story of food insecurity—with the settlers being food insecure and "the Indians" the providers—and from this story was birthed a "nation," a holiday to commemorate the relationship between the founding of our country and the land to be renamed "America," millions of pounds of turkey, and the idea that if America is in trouble, there will be some group of "Indians" to save it.

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BY AISHA SHILLINGFORD/WWW.INTELLIGENTMISCHIEF.COM

The land as a living entity/ecosystem, stewardship of the land over long periods of time, systems of people and food management...and accurate historical presentation are not part of the american food systems story as we are told it.

But the story of those events, of course, becomes very different when we hear from the Wampanoag people—who still exist, live in their homelands, and practice traditional food gathering, hunting, and fishing. The Wampanoag remain among us,[2] despite attempts to erase their names from history in the Thanksgiving story; attempts to take their land base;[3] and the constant barrage from federal, state, and local townships and their citizenry challenging their right to hunt, fish, and gather in their own homelands[4]—the same homelands that provided the illusory "first" feast.

The Wampanoag story covers a long period of interaction with Europeans that includes slavery, genocide, decimation by European-borne disease, and century-long (and counting) struggle.[5] The storyteller and what information is omitted matter.

The traditional Thanksgiving story provided a mythical foundational depiction of relationship between peoples. It has been further leveraged as evidence of the righteousness and inevitability of colonization even today, despite the untruth of the whole story. Now that we have recognized the lie, we should use it as a lens through which to recognize the patterns of storytelling about American food, the environmental and economic systems that support that food system as it evolved to what it is today, and solutions to the food injustices these systems have perpetuated.

THE TABLE IS SET

Much like the mainstream version of Thanksgiving, the story of American food systems begins with a table already set, with food already prepared. Similarly, the story of agriculture and food systems begins with the idea of an American "pioneered" farm, row cropping, anthropocentrism, and the inevitability of long, technically driven supply chains. In the same vein, solutions to food insecurity are usually of the short-term, unsustainable kind, described as creating "efficiencies" in production or the supply chain, instead of recognizing the foundation of the supply chain itself as a problem.

The land as a living entity/ecosystem, stewardship of the land over long periods of time, systems of people and food management, life and growth cycles, preparations and processing, and accurate historical presentation are not part of the American food systems story as we are told it. In the Wampanoag version of the story, food storage caches, hunters' knowledge of game counts and seasonal fowl, growers' understanding of harvest seasons, yields, and excess that could be spared from winter storage play starring roles. More important, the Wampanoag story is rooted in empathic values—recounting, for example, gifts of food to those in need over long periods of time—despite the Wampanoag's own need of sustenance for survival during hard winters. Time lines matter. The Thanksgiving story isn't about one meal on one day in one community. The story encompasses an entire era of settler colonial and Indigenous relationships.

RESETTING THE TABLE

While we often think of ourselves as knowing better and doing better today, we see the same historical drama of food storytelling unfolding. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, when much of the country was experiencing food shortages—and more vulnerable communities like Tribal Nations were experiencing *extreme* food shortages—there was a strong focus on moving food around within the supply chain (food is already on the table) quickly (time lines should be short and focused) for vulnerable communities (there is one perspective, one storyteller).

Food security in this context describes activities, policies, and actions, often external to the community meant to be served, to create food shipments for populations who are experiencing "caloric deficiencies." This approach often results in more production, overproduction, and/or reallocation strategies—regardless of the capacity of land, farmers, or labor force—and, in times of emergency, cost. We hear this approach in conversations about "food deserts" that describe an absence of retail food availability, and thus focus on creating retail opportunities or

Adapting and adjusting existing food supply chains with an external response focus...maintains dependence on a food system where Tribal communities are still only underserved consumers—if served at all.

moving surplus food to places without. Or we see this play out with approaches that focus on individual education and behavioral change rather than on the systems of production, wealth and land accumulation, and policies that create and support concentrated capital power in some communities while resources are extracted from others.

Meanwhile, the overwhelming response of Tribal and Indigenous program services has been to focus on food sovereignty. Food sovereignty in this context describes the relationships among a person and their community, their identity, their traditional food structures, and their activities of gathering, hunting, and fishing—as well as a person's or community's relationship to policies for food grown, collected, hunted, gathered, or fished for the purpose of feeding people within that community.

Countless communities reinstituted and redoubled efforts to rebuild or create community gardens and artisanal meat production;[6] they also returned to traditional gathering, hunting, and fishing.[7] We saw this when Tribes like the Oneida Nation used their own long-standing food system approaches that include buffalo herds and meat processing and logistical food planning to serve not only their own Tribal population but the entire Green Bay community.[8] The Traditional Native American Farmers Association, located in Tesuque Pueblo, along with other Indigenous seed keepers and seed banks, sent traditional, Indigenous, heirloom seeds to communities labeled "food insecure."[9]

Overwhelmingly, Tribal citizens like those in Cochiti and Kewa Pueblos or White Mountain Apache or Turtle Mountain or Standing Rock create their own networks of care. This includes checking on elders, feeding children, making supply runs, and reallocating existing supplies to meet their own community needs. Tribal Nations have existed and continue do so because we know how to care for one another and how to execute those care networks in our greatest moments of need. It is our way.

The Tribal response is the meaningful systemic change that will enable sovereignty, community, and environmental well-being. Adapting and adjusting existing food supply chains with an external response focus, no matter how transformative this may look at first glance, maintains dependence on a food system where Tribal communities are still only underserved consumers—if served at all. In contrast, a focus on food sovereignty strategies that incorporate identity, community action, Indigenous history, and cooperation activate skills that allow communities to respond and meet their own needs independently.

As COVID-19 continues to devastate Indian Country and as America continues to build COVID-19 recovery plans, there are takeaways. When we examine what passes as food security in this country, we find that the market-based system and accompanying solutions have inherent weaknesses: (1) the food supply chain can only reach as far as the dollars stretch, leaving communities without cash resources food insecure; and (2) food security is dependent on individual (or individual business) control and action. Yet it was community that created resiliency during COVID-19. It was community that responded to, cared for, and ensured that people were safe and fed, even in isolation, with existing resources available in their own community. *That* is food sovereignty.

To reexamine and retell the story of our American food system, we often must return to the beginning of the story and listen closely to the story being conveyed. In the case of Thanksgiving, we should be asking ourselves why we don't hear the Wampanoag version of the same story—and follow up with actions to ensure that the Wampanoag version becomes commonplace.

It is through telling and listening and retelling the complete, uncensored stories of our human experience that we become empowered to change the patterns of how we order the world, all that supports us in the world, and who develops the narratives that become our collective "history." In terms of our food system, if we limit our solutions to the existing structures, we are giving power to structures that depend on consumption—if not overconsumption—and pay little heed to the extractive, unsustainable, and unjust characteristics of these systems.

The table is *not* set. We can challenge and determine what we have at the table. When Tribal communities focus efforts on seed saving, community and local production and operations, intergenerational traditional food gathering and processing, community feeding programs, small and local artisanal meat processing, and locally controlled and networked food pantries, and when they bring their own Tribal laws to bear vis-à-vis their food systems and peoples, we are offering an alternative to the production and agricultural systems that have resulted in, among many other harms, ongoing food insecurity.

Legitimizing and retelling the unexpurgated food story—the story that includes the narrative of the land, the people, the natural resources, the relationships and ecosystems, the learning and management, instead of consumption only—opens up possibilities for solutions from unheard perspectives and results in dollars spent on these solutions *in* and *with* community rather than *for* communities.

And isn't *that* a much better story?

NOTES

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The Transformative Promise of a Solidarity Economy

We're drowning in exploitation and capitalism and degradation and anti-environmentalism. And we are not going to make it as human beings, we're not going to make it as any of the societies that we care about, if we continue along that road. So, we need the high road, the road that is about not just human survival but human liberation and human dignity."

—Jessica Gordon Nembhard

"'We Need the High Road'—The Transformative Promise of a Solidarity Economy," nonprofitquarterly.org/we-need-the-high-road-the-transformative-promise-of-a-solidarity-economy

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SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Imaginal Cells of the Solidarity Economy

by Emily Kawano

The convergence of the multiple crises that we are facing today has created a rare opportunity to push for a new system beyond capitalism.

The discovery of imaginal cells, or discs, goes back to the 1600s, but the metaphor of imaginal cells was popularized by Norie Huddle in her 1990 book *Butterfly*. The story of a butterfly's metamorphosis provides a lovely and useful metaphor for the metamorphosis from a system of capitalism to a postcapitalist system: the solidarity economy (SE).

Awakening to a Different Vision

When a caterpillar spins its chrysalis around itself, a magical process begins. First, its body starts to break down into a nutrient-rich goop. Within this goop are imaginal cells, which were present all along within the caterpillar but had been dormant. These imaginal cells begin to express a genome inherited through evolution, a genome that is different from that of the caterpillar.[1]

These imaginal cells, in other words, have a different *vision* of what they can become. They are so different, in fact, that what remains of the caterpillar's immune system views them as foreign interlopers, and attacks and destroys them.

Common Vision and Clustering

Yet, surviving imaginal cells begin to recognize each other as having a common purpose and vision of becoming. They begin to cluster together, and are able to fend off the attacks of the immune system. More and more of the imaginal cells find each other, come together, and survive. The surviving clusters find other clusters, and continue to come together.

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Cooperation, Integration, Emergence

As the imaginal cells continue to coalesce, they start to specialize into their preprogrammed expression. Some develop as an eye, some grow into a leg, some become the body, and some the wing. These pieces work together, each integrating with the others, until what emerges from the chrysalis is an entirely different creature—a butterfly.[2]

WHAT IS THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY?

The solidarity economy (SE) is a big tent that embraces many coexisting visions of democratic, postcapitalist economic systems. The framework, which emerged in Latin America and Europe in the 1990s, rejects state-dominated authoritarian forms of socialism, instead affirming a core commitment to participatory democracy. Furthermore, it is explicitly feminist, antiracist, and ecological, and advocates for economic transformation that transcends all forms of oppression, not just class. In contrast to the narrow self-interest, competition, and struggle to dominate others that are at the heart of racist, patriarchal capitalism, the solidarity economy is centered on a culture of solidarity, mutuality, caring, and cooperation, including social responsibility, economic human rights, and the rights of Mother Earth. SE institutions include cooperatives (worker-owned, consumer, producer), public banks, community land trusts, alternative currencies, and time banks.

Figure 1: What is the Solidarity Economy (SE)?

- A global movement
- A broad set of practices that align with its values:
  - *Solidarity*
  - *Participatory democracy*
  - *Equity in all dimensions*
  - *Sustainability*
  - *Pluralism (not a one-size-fits-all approach)*
- A framework that connects SE practices to articulate a postcapitalist system and world.

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In 2013, the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN) and RIPESS, an international solidarity economy network, led a two-year international consultation process to build a shared understanding of the framework.[3] While there is a tremendous latitude within the solidarity economy to encompass a wide range of approaches grounded in the local realities of culture, language, history, political-social-economic contexts, and environment, there are elements of the definition that apply across these specificities:

- The solidarity economy is a framework.
- This framework connects solidarity economy practices.
- SE practices are aligned with SE values:
  - *Solidarity;*
  - *Participatory democracy;*
  - *Equity in all dimensions—race, class, gender, abilities, etc.;*
  - *Sustainability;*
  - *Pluralism, meaning that this is not a one-size-fits-all approach—or, as the Zapatistas say, it's "a world in which many worlds fit."*
- All of these elements articulate a postcapitalist vision. SE holds that we cannot achieve the just, sustainable, democratic, and cooperative world that we seek by reforming capitalism. We do not reject reforms, but we do insist on the importance of seeing them as part of a long-term process of fundamental systems change. In the absence of this, reforms end up strengthening capitalism.
- SE is an international movement that includes: RIPESS, an international solidarity economy network of continental networks; the ILO (International Labour Organization), which runs an annual Social and Solidarity Economy Academy; the United Nations, which has a task force on the solidarity economy (the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy—or UNTFSSE); Bolivia and Ecuador, countries that include the solidarity economy in their constitutions; and a number of other countries that have national policy frameworks that support the solidarity economy.

AWAKENING THE SLUMBERING POTENTIAL OF A SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

The rich foundation of solidarity economy practices are like imaginal cells. Currently, they are in the equivalent of a dormant stage within the caterpillar of capitalism. However, the convergent crises of the pandemic, climate change, the racism and violence that have sparked the widespread racial justice uprisings, the economic divide, and the alarming slide toward fascism also create opportunity. People's faith in the status quo is shaken. There's a growing openness to new narratives, new models, and new paradigms. In this context, many of the solidarity economy's imaginal cells are shaking off their dormancy, awakening to a different vision of becoming.

What will it take for the solidarity economy's imaginal cells to complete the metamorphosis into a postcapitalist system that operates with a different set of values and logic? We do not need to "wait for the revolution," because SE practices already exist all around us today. Our task is to make these practices visible, and to grow and connect them. Like the imaginal cells, we can think of three phases: (1) awakening to a different vision; (2) recognizing others as sharing a common vision, and clustering; and (3) cooperating, integrating, and emerging.

1. Awakening to a different vision

It is safe to say that the great majority of the people putting into practice the principles listed in Figure 2 do not see themselves as part of a transformative process to build a more just, democratic, and sustainable world beyond capitalism. So how is it that they can be claimed as being part of a solidarity economy?

My view is that we can identify economic practices that align with solidarity economy values—even if imperfectly, and even if these practices and practitioners do not identify with the solidarity economy—in the same way that early capitalists in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries didn't identify as capitalists or with capitalism, since the term didn't even emerge until the late 1800s or early 1900s.[4] Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776 and widely considered to be a foundational treatise on capitalism, never mentions the term.

Figure 2: Examples of Solidarity Economy Practice

SE exists in all sectors of the economy.
***Tremendous* foundation to build on!**

Production/Reproduction
- Worker co-ops
- DIY
- Care work
- Community gardens
- Mutual aid
- Skill shares
- Community production

Distribution & Exchange
- Social currencies
- Time banks
- Fair trade
- Toy/tool shares
- Swap meets
- Gifting

Consumption
- Community land trusts
- Resident-owned communities
- Food co-ops
- Electric co-ops
- Housing co-ops

Finance
- Credit unions
- Peer lending
- Community loan funds
- Direct public offerings
- Public banking
- Family & friends

Governance
- Participatory budgeting
- Community governance
- Public sector, schools
- Policies
- Universal basic income
- Commons

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Just as the seeds of the imaginal cells lie dormant within the caterpillar, it is only when their self-identification as a different creature is triggered that they are able to start finding each other.

Does this mean that the solidarity economy can grow without a self-conscious identification with the framework and vision? Not exactly. I believe we need at least a critical mass across different sectors to self-identify with the solidarity economy, in order to build beyond the siloed activities that we are currently observing.

Many of these solidarity economy practices have existed in different guises and to a greater or lesser extent throughout the course of human history. These practices have persisted despite the tendency of capitalism to marginalize or co-opt them. So, the mere existence of SE practices does not in and of itself lead to system change. Just as the seeds of the imaginal cells lie dormant within the caterpillar, it is only when their self-identification as a different creature is triggered that they are able to start finding each other, coming together, cooperating, and integrating to emerge as a butterfly.

2. Recognizing others as sharing a common vision, and clustering

Once there is self-identification with the solidarity economy, it becomes relatively easy to recognize SE practices in other sectors. This facilitates clustering, which allows for practical/mutually beneficial partnerships. There are many examples of limited clustering between two or three SE practices—for example:

- In Seattle, demands to defund the police combined with participatory budgeting. The city allocated "$30 million to a participatory budgeting process that will give [community members] a say in how the money should be used. Twelve million dollars was directly diverted from the Seattle Police Department, while the remaining $18 million comes from the Mayor's Communities Initiative Fund."[5]
- Municipal public sector support for community land trusts (CLTs) serves to increase the supply of permanently affordable housing. *The City–CLT Partnership: Municipal Support for Community Land Trusts*, a report by John Emmeus Davis and Rick Jacobus on CLT–municipal partnerships, cites three dozen examples of cities providing support through funding, technical assistance, donation of property, staffing, helping with regulatory hurdles, and so forth.[6]
- Some connections are deliberately built to meet a need, as in the case of cooperative loan funds. In fact, the sixth cooperative principle, "cooperation among cooperatives,"[7] encourages connecting, but a solidarity economy framework would extend beyond the co-op sphere.

3. Cooperating, integrating, and emerging

So, we can see that the imaginal cells of the solidarity economy are already clustering, but what will it take to get to the next stage of creating the connections between existing and emergent SE elements and giving birth to a new postcapitalist system? In the United States, there are emerging efforts to build local SE ecosystems through cooperating and integrating. For example:

- Cooperation Jackson in Jackson, Mississippi, is intentionally building a solidarity economy ecosystem with interconnected elements, including a Community Production Center that uses cutting-edge technology such as three-dimensional printers and other forms of digital fabrication. It has also formed a community land trust, which holds a considerable amount of land for affordable housing and farming, and which also serves to preserve important historical sites of civil rights and Black liberation struggles. A community center provides space for gathering, community education and training, and child care. And it is working on purchasing a shopping plaza for a food co-op and other co-op businesses. This "build" work is joined up with grassroots and cultural organizing, as well as political/electoral strategies that are an example of the Resist and Build approach to integrating these strands of work. (See "Organizing

There is enormous untapped potential to activate dormant imaginal cells of the solidarity economy.

the Solidarity Economy: A Story of Network Building amid COVID-19," p. 56.[8])

- Other examples of local efforts to build the solidarity economy ecosystem include: Cooperation Humboldt, Eureka, California; Solidarity Economy Initiative, Massachusetts; Boston Ujima Project; CEANYC (Cooperative Economic Alliance of New York City); and MASEN (Massachusetts Solidarity Economy Network), the first statewide SE network in the United States.

WAYS FORWARD

There are a number of sectors, some quite sizable, that in general are quite distant from self-identifying with the solidarity economy and the principles upon which it was founded. But there is enormous untapped potential to activate dormant imaginal cells of the solidarity economy—for example:

- Electric co-ops: In the 1930s, most rural areas lacked electricity, because private utilities did not find it profitable to deliver power to these areas. The Rural Electrification Administration was created to support the development of electric cooperatives to bring power to rural areas. Today, there are more than nine hundred electric cooperatives serving forty-two million people and covering seventy-five percent of the land mass of the country.[9] Although they are owned by the members they serve, there are complaints that some of them operate in a way that is not transparent, democratic, or aligned with the interests of their members. "'Most electric co-ops are boys' clubs that re-elect the same people, that develop policies that favor their children or their buddies,' says Tom 'Smitty' Smith of the consumer rights advocacy nonprofit Public Citizen."[10] Cooperative members are fighting back, educating members about their rights, encouraging members to challenge the old boys' network by running for board seats, and creating report cards to hold the boards accountable.[11] Southern Echo, in Mississippi, and Appalachian Voices are working to address overcompensation for board members who receive such payments as $50,000 a year for attending a couple of meetings a month, and office staff who, for one example, earn $180,000 a year, in areas where the median income is $20,000 to $25,000.[12]
- Agriculture co-ops: The Grange is the oldest agricultural organization in the United States. Established in 1867, the Grange grew out of a populist movement of small farmers who fought against cattle barons and against banks and railroad monopolies, railed against corporate domination of the government, and supported farming cooperatives.[13] The modern-day Grange operates in 2,100 communities in thirty-seven states.[14] The National Grange has in some ways lost touch with its roots, siding with big agribusiness and resisting the shift among its younger members toward sustainable, organic, and non-GMO farming. Numerous Granges are shutting down as their members age and their numbers dwindle. And a fierce battle has erupted in California between the National Grange and the local and state Granges:

> The entrenched powers fear that if the California Grange vision infects the other states, they will no longer be able to maintain power and control. They won't be able to lead, because they lack the expertise and the progressive populism that the new relevancy demands. . . . Young people don't want to join an organization that is run by a Good Ol' Boy Network.[15]

The conflict is not over. A number of lawsuits and counter lawsuits are being fought out in court, but there are lessons here about the potential for new

While there is still much more that needs to be done to achieve systemic clustering of SE's imaginal cells, we are seeing the emergence via metamorphosis of a solidarity economy.

and younger members to disrupt the old boys' network and push an organization to rediscover its radical roots.

OTHER STRATEGIES TO AWAKEN DORMANT IMAGINAL CELLS

What are other strategies that could motivate dormant imaginal cells to embrace a transformative vision?

- Narrative shifting: Mainstream a new narrative of our economy through a wide array of media, including articles, videos, podcasts, workshops, social media, memes, events, celebrations, word of mouth, and so forth. In 2007, when the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network formed at the U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta, Georgia, the term was virtually unknown in the United States. Now, it is increasingly moving into the mainstream, and there is a thirst to learn more, as reflected in over one thousand registrations for an online SE 101 workshop in 2021.[16] The Resist & Build SE Narrative group meets every two weeks to leverage this historic opening to push a narrative shift. (See "Organizing the Solidarity Economy: A Story of Network Building amid COVID-19," p. 56.[17])
- Sectoral education and engagement building: It is important to directly engage different sectors of the solidarity economy. For some sectors, it is relatively easy to advance identification with the solidarity economy. For example, USSEN's board includes, or has included, key sympathetic national associations representing sectors such as the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives, the National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions (now, Inclusiv), the National Community Land Trust Network (now GroundWorks), the Rural Coalition, and Shareable. These sectoral organizations have the ability to message their members and encourage engagement. The foundation world is starting to pay attention to the solidarity economy, as evidenced by the arts and solidarity economy report commissioned by Grantmakers in the Arts.[18] (And see "The Art Worlds We Want: Solidarity Art Economies," p. 72.[19])
- Power building: This historic moment has crystallized demands for racial, social, and environmental justice. Solidarity economy, with its core values of equity, democracy, sustainability, and solidarity, is well aligned with these demands. Building solidarity economy practices centering antiracism, anti-oppression, and sustainability is a form of building power. At the same time, we are doubling down on the need to create strong relationships with social movements led by those most affected by systemic oppression; political and policy strategies; and a cultural shift toward solidarity economy values. We use the concept of "resist and build" to encompass these interrelated spheres.

The convergence of the multiple crises that we are facing today has created a rare opportunity to push for a new system beyond capitalism. There is a solid foundation of imaginal cells that already exist within the current system, and new ones are emerging all the time. Many already see themselves as part of a transformational process. These cells are increasingly connecting with each other and in some cases beginning to build explicit solidarity economy ecosystems. While there is still much more that needs to be done to achieve systemic clustering of SE's imaginal cells, we are seeing the emergence via metamorphosis of a solidarity economy.

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Organizing the Solidarity Economy:

A Story of Network Building amid COVID-19

by Steve Dubb

"We see our work as providing as many opportunities as possible for people to practice everyday activities that would lead us to postcapitalism and a solidarity economy . . . we are actively building this every day."
—Nia Evans, Boston Ujima Project

Early in 2020, the board of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN) called on like-minded organizations that were engaged in economic justice and systems change work to gather at a Resist and Build summit at the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tennessee. The center, founded in 1932, has played an outsized role as a movement-organizing space, known for helping to train labor organizers in the 1930s and civil rights organizers in the 1950s and 1960s.[1]

The call to action in the event invitation read: "This is a critical moment in history. We face multiple crises: environmental, growing social, economic and political divides, and a slide toward fascism, economic instability and war. There is an urgency to both *resist* these trends, and to *build* an alternative system for a just and sustainable future."[2]

The goals of the gathering were three-fold:

1. Articulate our collective position on connecting resist and build.
2. Sharpen the analysis of what system change we're working for: post-capitalism versus reform capitalism. Model a constructive dialogue about differences and aim to identify areas of collaboration/common interest.

DETAIL OF UNTITLED, FROM THE SERIES "CAPITALISM IS KILLING US/BLACK UTOPIAS"
BY AISHA SHILLINGFORD/WWW.INTELLIGENTMISCHIEF.COM

In the crucible of COVID-19, a stronger movement emerged.

3. Figure out how to work together by working together, for example, messaging on resist and build, strategizing, and implementing concrete actions.

This was prior *to* COVID-19 and spoke to long-term trends of wealth and income inequality that long preceded the pandemic, leading to increasing questioning of neoliberalism, as *NPQ* covered at length back in February 2020.[3] These trends were publicly visible. Indeed, in late February, Bernie Sanders won a landslide victory in the Democratic Party's caucuses in Nevada.[4] Yes, soon Joe Biden would dominate the path to the Democratic nomination and, in November, win the presidency; but the world of early 2020 was one in which nominal prosperity was offset by increasing depths of despair, mounting student debt, and growing economic precarity.

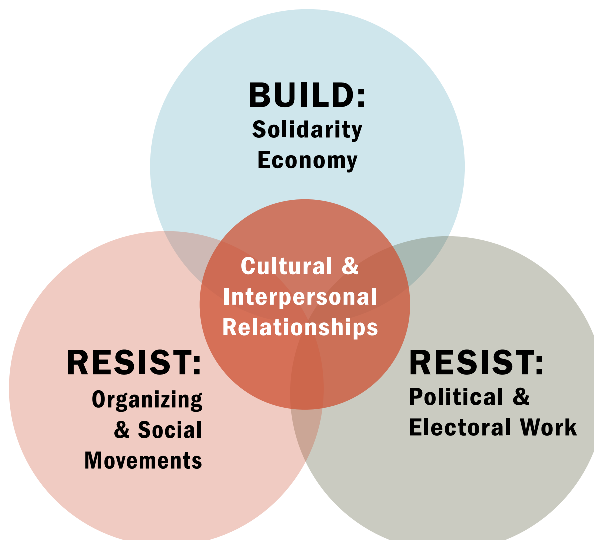
This was the context in which the Resist and Build summit was called. But then came COVID-19, which not only dramatically altered the political and economic context but also made in-person events exceedingly difficult to hold. The three-day solidarity economy summit was expected to be a small gathering that brought together leading national economy justice groups working on system change, including the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network, New Economy Coalition, The Democracy Collaborative, Climate Justice Alliance, Center for Economic Democracy, Common Future, Transition US, Green Eco-Socialist Network, and a smattering of local initiatives on the USSEN board. Scheduled for March 19–22, it was cancelled on March 13.

What emerged in its place, however, proved to be far more significant. First, in lieu of the in-person conference, a series of two- to three-hour Zoom gatherings were held in March, April, May, and June. There have since been follow-on virtual gatherings, in October 2020 and March 2021, along with the development of an ongoing working-group system.

In the crucible of COVID-19, a stronger movement emerged.

GETTING GROUNDED

The first virtual Resist and Build gathering, held on March 20, 2020, had originally been envisioned as the first full day of the in-person summit. A large part of the meeting was about participants and the different organizations in the virtual "room" getting to know each other better. This was also a time to introduce the framework that motivated the original summit in the first place. The summit's explicit purpose was to align building strategies (i.e., strategies that support the development of co-ops and myriad other forms of democratic, collectively owned initiatives) with resistance strategies (both community-organizing-based and electoral) and culture-building work. A Venn diagram was displayed that sought to illustrate the interconnections among the different efforts:



At the first gathering, virtual breakout groups were held around four themes based on participant interest—building a solidarity economy narrative about COVID-19, creating a tool kit to guide local mutual aid efforts, supporting funder and capital organizing, and developing resources for online popular education.

It's worth recalling just how new the pandemic-induced shutdown was at that point. The previous day, the U.S. Department of Labor had issued its weekly report on new unemployment claims for the week ending March 14; the

The challenge, noted one participant, was to move from a "charitable framework" to one rooted in principles of community self-care, solidarity, and support.

number of claims was a modest 281,000, only a 70,000-person increase from the week before. A week later, that number would jump to 3.28 million.[5]

Even so, very early on in the pandemic, the need for mutual aid was evident. The challenge, noted one participant, was to move from a "charitable framework" to one rooted in principles of community self-care, solidarity, and support.

CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF SYSTEM CHANGE

A month later, when the group reconvened on April 17, the initial shock of the shutdown had subsided somewhat, but the severity of the crisis had come into fuller view: 22 million Americans had received layoff notices in the intervening month.[6] One conference organizer referred to the experience as "feeling a new normal of overwhelm."

A central focus of the second gathering was to consider what is meant by economic system change and compare reformist progressive or "social democratic" policies with a more transformative, postcapitalist approach that reorganizes the entire economy along principles of solidarity, equity, participatory democracy, and sustainability.[7]

Participants were divided into four groups and were asked to imagine two alternative scenarios: one, a social democratic response, in which "a government following Keynesian/FDR/Bernie Sanders–type policies had been in power when the pandemic broke"; and another, in which the "capitalist structure itself had been replaced" by a solidarity economy model. Participants were asked to consider how each would have dealt with the pandemic differently from the actual U.S. policy response.

A central theme that emerged was that a social democratic/New Deal–type response that, for example, kept people on payroll, would have been better than, say, the chaotic rollout of the Paycheck Protection Program.[8] But, as one participant noted, reformist efforts like the New Deal are "inherently unstable as long as capitalism is still the predominant economic system." The reasons are not hard to discern. Indeed, U.S. history of the past few decades illustrates the ability of corporations to organize to cut regulatory controls and reduce their tax burden, undermining the ability of the public sector to finance social services.

At the same time, the challenges of developing a solidarity economy—not just as an idea but a living reality—were widely acknowledged. On the one hand, the crisis posed by the pandemic enabled people to "imagine things we couldn't imagine and critique things we wouldn't have critiqued before," noted one participant. On the other hand, as another person cautioned, "Crises can always cut both ways. Yes, it opens space for radical imaginings, but it also can make people long for what was before. It will also rely on countless one-on-one organizing conversations. Crises are collective problems that require collective actions. The system that we live in is brilliant in guiding people into individualistic solutions to resolve tensions of the system."

One conference organizer added, "A question we need to grapple with is that white supremacy predated capitalism and is a broader cultural and ideological container. How do we ensure our solidarity economy movement is also effectively undoing white supremacy patterns, systems, institutions, ideologies, etc., which are very much present?"

It was clear that there remained much work to do. As one participant noted, "We have a Next System Project," referring to a program of the nonprofit The Democracy Collaborative that seeks to promote the study and discussion of economic alternatives. "We don't have a next system movement. We need to build that."

CASE STUDIES OF LOCAL ACTION

The third virtual gathering, held May 15, sought to lift up local organizing efforts in Massachusetts; Humboldt, California; and Jackson, Mississippi. In Massachusetts, Ariel Brooks of the Center for Economic Democracy[9] and Emily Kawano of USSEN outlined how a statewide solidarity economy network was built in 2019 to buttress and connect local community land trust and cooperative organizing, and how that network had been mobilized during the pandemic to direct financial support to mutual aid and solidarity economy groups.

One participant pointed out, "One of the connections that is really important is to understand that the way the United States responded to the pandemic is itself a form of state violence."

In Humboldt, California, David Cobb of Cooperation Humboldt outlined some of the group's efforts in Humboldt County, a community of 135,000.[10] Among their efforts is an "honor tax" campaign that earmarks 1 percent of revenues for unrestricted funding for the native Wiyot nation, and support for a range of cooperative development initiatives.[11] The group also participated in a 2018 campaign led by a local Latinx group that led to the passage of a countywide immigrant sanctuary resolution.[12]

In Jackson, Mississippi, Kali Akuno talked about the work of Cooperation Jackson, which launched in 2014.[13] Akuno identified five focus areas of the group's work: mutual aid, organizing the unemployed, co-ops, political education, and food sovereignty. Akuno also talked about the group's efforts to engage in small-scale community production as a pathway to greater community economic self-sufficiency. "We think small-scale industrial capacity is important," Akuno noted. He added that the goal is to "mix that in" with urban agriculture to "attain a level of food security and food sovereignty." Amid the pandemic, Akuno added, mutual aid and developing solidarity economy supply chains were of the utmost importance.

WEAVING THE THREADS

The last of the monthly gatherings took place on June 19. In the intervening month, George Floyd had been murdered, and a global uprising against anti-Black racism had resulted. The central discussions at this gathering hinged on two key organizing questions: (1) What seems possible now that wasn't there before?; and (2) How does it connect with the solidarity?

More broadly, to paraphrase Septima Poinsette Clark—who, at Highlander, had led the development of citizenship schools to enable African Americans to vote during the civil rights movement—participants sought to be "weavers of threads" and identify areas of connection.[14]

One participant pointed out, "One of the connections that is really important is to understand that the way the United States responded to the pandemic is itself a form of state violence." Reopening where the virus is growing, noted this participant, was a form of state violence that was ravaging BIPOC communities in particular.

A report back from a breakout group emphasized that the rise of Black Lives Matter offered a chance "to raise conversations around reparations and Black community wealth . . . the prison-industrial complex cannot be reformed, just like capitalism [cannot be]. That is a connection."

Another participant added, "Defunding the police and the military-industrial complex are vital demands, because they help make possible the major transfer of resources needed for social transformation. . . . As we ask, 'What are the police for?,' the solidarity economy movement can provide some answers. The alternatives proposed are centered in values of 'caring, mutuality, solidarity.'"

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

After June, the four-stage virtual conference had ended; but the network-building effort has expanded to include other organizations, both sectoral and local, working on systems change, and continues through working groups around the arts, education, mutual aid, narrative change, politics, and policy, among other themes. The different work groups have met twice: in October 2020, to hear from the Southern Movement Assembly and reconnect in regional breakout sessions, and in March 2021, to reflect on the new political environment shaped by the Biden administration (but also the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol). Most of the network-building work happens between meetings. (This edition of the *Nonprofit Quarterly*, for example, is one of the many products of the ongoing network-building work.)

In April 2021, the Resist and Build network, led by Cooperation Humboldt, convened the Post-Capitalism Conference. At one session, Nia Evans, who directs the Boston Ujima Project, spoke of the step-by-step work needed to build an economy rooted in racial and economic justice and solidarity.[15] "We see our work," Evans explained, "as providing as many opportunities as possible for people to practice everyday activities that would lead us to post-capitalism and a solidarity economy . . . we are actively building this every day. This is real. This is reality. We will win. We are winning in different ways every day."

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How Universal Basic Income Can Help Build a Solidarity Economy

by Rich Whitney

I am now convinced that the simplest approach will prove to be the most effective—the solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income.—Martin Luther King, Jr.[1]

By raising and supporting the demand for UBI at a level sufficient to eliminate poverty, solidarity economy activists would be siding with the 140 million-plus workers suffering from poverty or near-poverty today. It is difficult to imagine any other single act of solidarity that could rival that in magnitude.

At a time when humankind and the global ecosystem confront overlapping existential crises,[2] growing numbers of us realize that *systemic* change is essential, and that we must agitate for an expansion of social ownership and democratic workers/community control of our economy.

These conceptions of a new social system go under many names: *eco-socialism*,[3] *cooperative commonwealth*, *pluralist commonwealth*,[4] among others. Here I will use the broad term *solidarity economy* as shorthand to describe these various visions of a postcapitalist organization of society.

Although these visions have important differences among them, they are all predicated on the notion that better options exist than either continuing to accept the capitalist status quo or supporting the twentieth-century "command economy" alternatives to capitalism that, like it or not, have been popularly associated with the terms "socialism" or "communism." Solidarity economy advocates insist that it is not only possible but also imperative for working people to organize to bring the economy under genuine democratic control to meet their needs and restore health to our contaminated environment.

UNTITLED, FROM THE SERIES "CAPITALISM IS KILLING US/BLACK UTOPIAS"
BY AISHA SHILLINGFORD/WWW.INTELLIGENTMISCHIEF.COM


BOTTLE OPENER

Around the world, people are organizing democratic, community-based organizations to meet their material needs.

The exciting theoretical and systems-design work is being undertaken by organizations that include The Democracy Collaborative[5] and its Next System Project,[6] Democracy at Work,[7] and the Green Eco-Socialist Network.[8] But this work is not being conducted in a vacuum. It reflects, and is aligned with, developments at the grassroots level. Around the world, people are organizing democratic, community-based organizations to meet their material needs. These institutions include but are not limited to worker-owned or producers' cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, public banks, community land trusts, alternative currencies, and time banks. In many communities, advocates for these institutions have formed coalitions or networks of mutual support, such as Cooperation Jackson,[9] Cooperation Humboldt,[10] and the Chicago-based Kola Nut Collaborative.[11] These efforts are backed by such national networks as the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN),[12] the Center for Economic Democracy,[13] the New Economy Coalition,[14] and Transition US.[15]

I have argued elsewhere that the solidarity economy movement must enter the terrain of electoral politics and seek to win some measure of state power.[16] A full exposition of the reasons for doing so is beyond the scope of the present article, but there are three principal reasons:

1. It will be extraordinarily difficult for the solidarity economy movement to overcome capitalism by competing head-to-head with the established banks and corporations that now predominate, unless the economic playing field is altered.
2. A strategy of just "building more co-ops" and the like without embracing a goal of social reorganization will not be sufficient to overcome the internal logic and destructive practices of capitalism as a system. In other words, we do not want "democratic worker control" of oil and natural gas extraction, private health insurance, prisons, or financial trading.
3. There are categories of reforms that can help facilitate the growth of solidarity economy institutions—for example, legislation to create public banks; monetary reform; making it easier for co-ops to organize; reforms to help redirect labor to environmental restoration like the Green New Deal; and taking on the military-industrial complex.

To this list, I would add a fourth reason, and the focus of this article: There are categories of reforms that can help unify and empower the working class and give it the breathing space it needs to build systemic economic alternatives. I submit that universal basic income (UBI) falls into this category.

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME?

Initiating a comprehensive series of papers on UBI for the Great Transition Initiative, founding member and honorary copresident of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) Guy Standing has provided a concise definition of UBI:

> A basic income system would aim to assure basic economic security to all, independent of employment, by providing every legal resident of a country with an equal monthly sum of money, without conditions, as an economic right. Such *unconditionality* is what distinguishes a basic income from other welfare programs. A modest basic income would be paid to individuals as individuals, regardless of household arrangements, work status, or prior contributions. Importantly, it would be guaranteed to all regardless of other income, thus bypassing the stigmatizing and exclusionary means-testing intrinsic to many welfare programs.[17]

The Chicago Resilient Families Task Force, which aims to launch a pilot UBI program in that city, has provided a useful set of criteria or design principles that distinguish UBI from similar proposals (although it uses the term *guaranteed income* rather than UBI):

- The amount of income provided should support a basic standard of living.
- The income is a regular fixed amount.
- The income is distributed at regular intervals.
- The income is provided for a sustained period of time.

The potential for building solidarity could be enhanced if a movement-based demand for UBI were to include a component for paying reparations.

- The income is given with no strings attached; it is unconditional.
- Eligibility is usually simple—recipients simply need to be a resident in a predefined geographic region, such as a city or a state. Otherwise, it is unrestricted.[18]

To this I would add only that the criterion of "sustained period of time" should encompass programs that are intended to be ongoing or of indefinite duration, and that the "geographic region" contemplated should include programs of national and global scale. Considering economies of scale and the federal government's unique capacity to create money, the focus should be to establish a UBI program at the national level.[19]

PRINCIPAL (AND PRINCIPLED) REASONS TO SUPPORT UBI

UBI would not *directly* create a postcapitalist society. In fact, insofar as it would alleviate human suffering under the capitalist status quo, an argument could be made that it might help preserve capitalism, much as the New Deal was intended by FDR to "to protect the system of private property and free enterprise by correcting such injustices and inequalities as arise from it"—that is, to "reform" in order to "preserve."[20] The fact that UBI was embraced by such libertarian/neoliberal economists as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman[21] and is being given serious consideration by the International Monetary Fund[22] does nothing to allay this concern.

Of course, the argument that UBI should be rejected because it might help preserve capitalism could be applied to virtually any type of social-welfare measure. Applying the same logic could lead one to the untenable proposition that perhaps activists should advocate for dismantling existing remedial programs like unemployment insurance, SNAP, and Social Security, on the theory that greater immiseration will help "speed the revolution." No serious advocate for social progress would support such a strategy.

Even granting the possibility that UBI could help prolong the existence of capitalism, there are some compelling reasons why solidarity economy advocates should support UBI:

I. UBI is consonant with core solidarity economy principles and will help build the solidarity essential to a successful transition to a postcapitalist economy.

As defined by USSEN, the solidarity economy "constitutes an alternative development framework" that is "grounded in practice and the following principles:

- solidarity, mutualism, and cooperation
- equity in all dimensions: race/ethnicity/nationality, class, gender, LGBTQ
- the primacy of social welfare over profits and the unfettered rule of the market
- sustainability
- social and economic democracy
- pluralism and organic approach, allowing for different forms in different contexts
- and open to continual change driven from the bottom up."[23]

UBI surely fits within this set of values. It promotes solidarity, since every member of society would be entitled to its benefits. UBI would especially help improve conditions for and help liberate marginalized peoples—for example, women, and especially women of color, who tend to be disproportionately engaged in unpaid care work, and women trapped in abusive or oppressive relationships for economic reasons—as was noted in the initial findings of the Stockton [California] Economic Empowerment Demonstration.[24]

The potential for building solidarity could be enhanced if a movement-based demand for UBI were to include a component for paying reparations. In other words, the level of income support provided in a UBI program could be adjusted to provide additional income—a reparations sur-payment, if you will—for descendants of enslaved people, Native Americans, and others directly harmed by colonialism and structural racism.

By its very nature, capitalism exploits all workers, but it has systematically oppressed some more than others. Therefore, all should be able to unite around a demand that the same ruling class that has accumulated obscene

It is shameful—and it speaks volumes about capitalism—that poverty and human suffering persist, and in some respects have grown worse, in the richest nation in the world.

levels of wealth from the exploitation of wage labor should begin to make amends to all workers—while at the same time recognizing that some merit additional compensation for additional layers of historic brutal oppression and subjugation.

Perhaps most important, activists should embrace the demand for UBI because it would directly and substantively address one of the principal reasons for the solidarity economy movement's existence—ending senseless and avoidable human suffering. We want a solidarity economy because we want a society and governing bodies that *care* about people and that will put an end to privation and suffering as a first order of business.

It is shameful—and it speaks volumes about capitalism—that poverty and human suffering persist, and in some respects have grown worse, in the richest nation in the world. Official poverty in the United States, which notoriously understates the actual level of poverty, has fluctuated between 10 and 15 percent for over fifty years.[25] A deeper analysis of Census data by the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights & Social Justice and the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival concluded that 43.5 percent of the U.S. population—*140 million people*—are poor or low-income in the United States today.[26] That number has surely grown larger during the pandemic-induced recession.

The wealthiest nation in the world should be able to guarantee a basic "floor" for its people. A fundamental purpose of any government worthy of public support is to ensure the economic security and well-being of its people. UBI is a simple and straightforward means of fulfilling that purpose.

Moving forward, UBI would help address the growing crisis caused by the ongoing mass displacement of labor from productive and gainful employment into the ranks of the unemployed or underemployed. Computerization, automation, and robotization are continuing to eliminate industrial and even some service employment, consigning more and more workers to lower-paying jobs in the "guard labor" sector,[27] the gig economy,[28] or other marginal employment.

UBI would not only help working people survive periods of unemployment immediately, it would also stimulate the economy. Applying a Keynesian macroeconomic model to a hypothetical UBI of $1,000 a month to all adults in the United States, economists Michalis Nikiforos, Marshall Steinbaum, and Gennaro Zezza of the Roosevelt Institute conclude that it would expand the economy by 12.56 percent over the baseline after eight years, and that "even when the policy is tax- rather than debt-financed, there is an increase in output, employment, prices, and wages."[29]

As a side benefit—but one underscored by COVID-19—a real UBI program (unlike the paltry relief checks that Congress reluctantly sent out to most Americans) would allow society to respond much more effectively to public-health emergencies, allowing workers to shelter in place as needed without major suffering.

Ending poverty, homelessness, and hunger is a moral imperative. By raising and supporting the demand for UBI at a level sufficient to *eliminate* poverty, solidarity economy activists would be siding with the 140 million-plus workers suffering from poverty or near-poverty today. It is difficult to imagine any other single act of solidarity that could rival that in magnitude.

II. Since UBI would both reduce unemployment and reduce workers' need to rely on the sale of their labor power in the capitalist economy as their sole means of survival, it would allow them to devote more time to caring for loved ones, education, and doing work to advance a solidarity economy.

Contrary to the shopworn myths that UBI, like other social-welfare programs, would promote laziness, real-world experience demonstrates that the opposite is true. In the Stockton experiment, for example, only 28 percent of recipients had full-time employment at the inception of the program, but the percentage rose to 40 percent after one year, a level substantially higher than gains realized by the control group.[30] Standing writes that "Finland's basic income experiment found that removing the condition that the unemployed had to search for jobs made no difference to employment. In fact, recipients had slightly more days in

There is no factual basis for the canard that UBI would somehow rob people of ambition. What it *would* do is give working people more and better *choices* as to how they opt to spend their productive time.

employment than the control group."[31] Other studies have shown, at most, only slight decreases in paid work time—with most of those decreases accounted for by recipients devoting more time to such pursuits as providing family care, education, or searching for better employment.[32]

In short, there is no factual basis for the canard that UBI would somehow rob people of ambition. What it *would* do is give working people more and better *choices* as to how they opt to spend their productive time. Tim Hollo, executive director of the Green Institute, writes,

> [At] heart, what UBI does is decommodify us. Labor is the central commodification in our economy and society, and it commodifies everything else by ensuring that the vast majority of us are kept too busy to engage in non-market activities—growing food, sharing and repairing, building social connection, taking part in collective decision making. If we transform that relation of power, what we will do is create space for the non-market economy to flourish. [...] Fundamentally, if we are to transform our society away from its extractive basis, we must sever the connection between paid labor and the capacity to survive. The clearest way to do this is through some form of UBI or social dividend.[33]

Hollo also points out that, whereas stringent means-tested social-welfare programs—or, "Targeted support, with the necessary punitive and surveillance-based mechanisms to apply that targeting"—are "inherently divisive," trials of UBI have "shown that people feel (correctly) that society wants to include them, and they repay that inclusion through contribution and participation. Universalist approaches breed trust by demonstrating trust."[34]

Jeremy Lent, founder of the Liology Institute, reaches a similar conclusion:

> A true UBI would transform the relationship between labor and capital and weaken the power of the wealthy elite to control the population.
>
> [...]
>
> Work is not something people try to avoid; on the contrary, purposeful work is an integral part of human flourishing. If people were liberated by UBI from the daily necessity to sell their labor for survival, they would reinvest their time in crucial parts of the economy that, as Kate Raworth outlines in *Doughnut Economics*, have mostly been hidden from view—the household and the commons. They would care for loved ones, build community, and dare to do whatever it is that inspires them. The domination of the economy by the market would inevitably decline while those other, life-affirming sectors would be strengthened.[35]

In sum, although UBI does not directly aid the transformation of the economic basis of society from capitalism to a solidarity economy, it can indirectly aid that transformation in two respects: (1) It can give some workers badly needed breathing space, so that they can turn some of their attention to social issues and organizing for social change instead of having to devote all of their time and energy to a daily struggle to survive; and (2) it can give workers more freedom in how they use their productive time, allowing them to refuse jobs that are socially or environmentally destructive or wasteful, accept employment in the solidarity economy sector or in positions that are otherwise socially beneficial (if less remunerative), and/or devote more time to productive pursuits outside of formal employment, including education and caring for others.

III. UBI would be an immense improvement over existing, means-tested social-welfare programs.

Because it would be universal, UBI would allow government to eliminate a great deal of the wasteful bureaucracy and the time-consuming and often humiliating means-testing practices that accompany most current welfare programs.

This is something of a double-edged sword. Some critics raise the specter of UBI being used as an opportunity for right-wing or rightward-leaning legislators to cut existing social-welfare programs.[36] Here again, though, the same criticism could be leveled against any proposed social-welfare reform. Yes, reactionary elites will always have the inclination to intentionally underfund or otherwise undermine a beneficial reform, but that is not a legitimate objection to advocating for the reform in the first place.

This criticism fails to recognize that the benefits of *any* such reform measure *always* depend upon political will. For example, just because public funding of higher education in the United States has been inadequate for decades, this does not make higher education a bad idea. The public housing system in the United States is horrible, but that does not make public housing a bad idea. The success of any reform always depends, in the final analysis, on sufficient mobilization to not only win the gain but also maintain it over time.

Therefore, the only legitimate aspect of this criticism of reforms like UBI is that the political mobilization needed to obtain it and sustain it over time will divert time and energy from other projects that may more directly advance us toward a solidarity economy. In short, it comes down to a judgment call on whether work on this reform merits the expenditure of time, effort, and political capital needed to secure it versus other projects that would advance the ball.

I submit that it does merit such expenditure, especially considering the dire straits that millions of people are in today, exacerbated by the pandemic-related recession. There is a desperate need in the here and now to "raise the floor" beneath the 140 million-plus Americans who are struggling to make ends meet, and afford them some badly needed breathing space to imagine an economy where principles of solidarity truly become the norm.

There is good news here. The solidarity economy is beginning to emerge as a viable alternative to the status quo for growing numbers of unemployed and low-income workers. But the key word here is *beginning*. To build support, advocates for a solidarity economy would do well to demand UBI. We have an historic opportunity to once again stand with Dr. King and follow his advice from half a century ago to abolish poverty—simply and directly.

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The Art Worlds We Want: **Solidarity Art Economies**

by Nati Linares and Caroline Woolard

To support the solidarity economy with integrity in the United States and beyond, a slow process of relationship building between culture bearers, solidarity economy organizers, public sector workers, and arts and culture grantmakers must begin.

We are two mothers, listening, learning, in a pandemic, writing to you from the United States, on unceded Nipmuc, Podunk, Tunxis, Wangunk, and Sicoag land on the East Coast. Here—and likely where you are—artists and culture bearers are innovating models for liberation. We tuck in our babies, hold their small hands through the virus and tear gas, and continue the intergenerational work. We are Nati Linares and Caroline Woolard—a cultural organizer and an artist—and we believe that every cultural worker should be able to feed their children and pay their rent. We believe that culture is the key to reimagining the collective vision of what's possible. As you read this, we invite you to sense the heartbeats that flow through it. This is one effort among many. This is an invitation to join a long process of transformation—together.

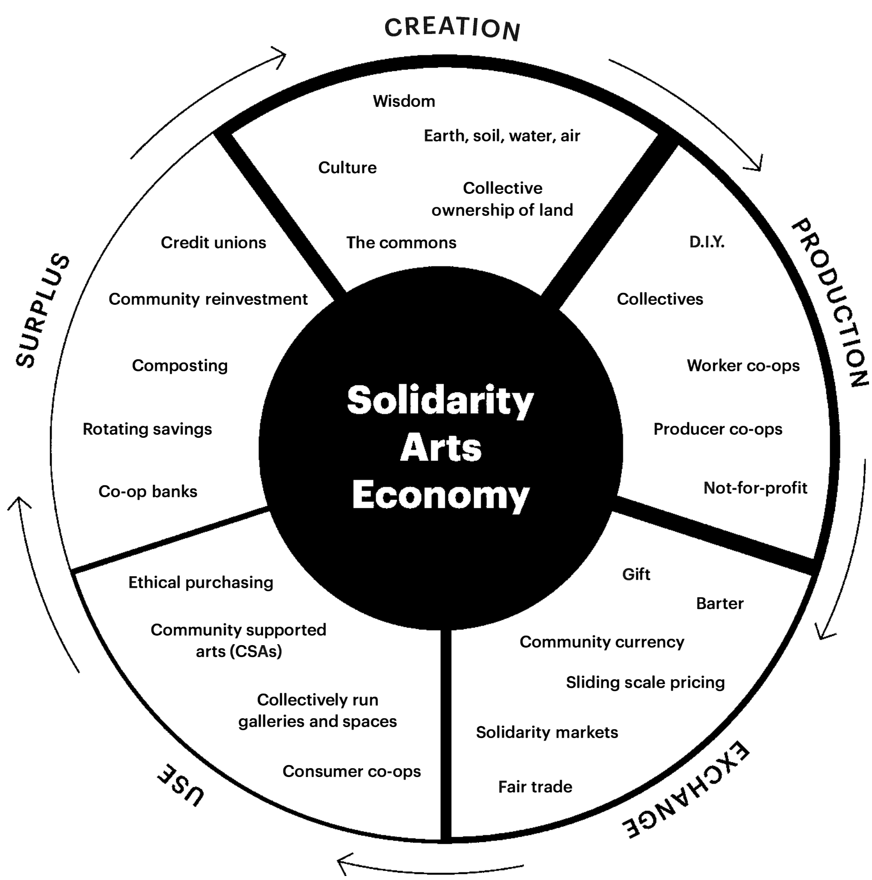
Recently, in an Anticapitalism for Artists workshop,[1] musician Clara Takarabe said: "I have asked, as you have probably asked: Is there a place in this world for me? Today, I would reframe that question as: *Is this the world we deserve?*"[2] Takarabe reminds us that together we can join and organize the worlds we deserve—in the arts and beyond. In fact, the people who have been most harmed by our current system of neoliberal and racial capitalism are creating community-controlled, hyper-local economies that move us beyond capitalism. The systems that artists want are not only possible, they already exist—and they can be strengthened and cultivated with intention.

UNTITLED, FROM THE SERIES "CAPITALISM IS KILLING US/BLACK UTOPIAS"
BY AISHA SHILLINGFORD/WWW.INTELLIGENTMISCHIEF.COM

Why should culture and economic innovation go together? Because, right now, we have a superstar system in which the winners take all and the rest are left with crumbs.

There are many examples. A leading Native artisan co-op in the country, Qualla Arts and Crafts,has been led by culture bearers since 1946.[3] In Boston, a democratically managed investment fund, Boston Ujima Project, places Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) arts and cultural organizing at the heart of its work.[4] A leading national community loan fund that invests in U.S. worker co-ops, The Working World, was started by artists.[5] Artists in Belgium founded Smart, the co-op that gives 35,000 freelancers the benefits of full-time employees (including unemployment insurance).[6] Smart's model is now being piloted in the United States by the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives' Guilded.[7]

Why should culture and economic innovation go together? Because, right now, we have a superstar system in which the winners take all and the rest are left with crumbs. Because, just like art, housing and dignified work are human rights. Because artists are the original gig workers. Because culture making and political organizing go hand in hand. Because we want a world in which everyone's needs are met, so that everyone can participate in the remaking of culture and society. Because an artist living in a community land trust in New York City will have twenty-seven hours a week to make art, compared to an artist in market-priced housing who will have four hours a week for artmaking.[8] Because we must repair centuries of injustice.



The solidarity economy is now recognized internationally as a path to valuing people and the planet over profits.

While practices of equitable and sustainable self-determination and community control are rooted in a myriad of ancestral and community norms, the term *solidarity economy* is relatively recent. The term emerged in Chile and France in the 1980s,[9] gained popularity in Latin America in the 1990s as *economía solidaria*, and then spread globally as an interdependent movement after the first annual World Social Forum in Brazil, in 2001, which popularized the slogan "another world is possible."[10]

The solidarity economy is now recognized internationally as a path to valuing people and the planet over profits and to uniting grassroots practices like lending circles, credit unions, worker cooperatives, and community land trusts to form a base of political power and transform our economy and world. Most people are aware of the discrete practices and models that comprise the solidarity economy, but do not know that there is a framework that holds these concepts together, or that these practices are supported holistically in other countries around the world.

The following are some examples of arts and culture groups and initiatives that are part of the solidarity economy in the United States. It is important to note that *all* networks and infrastructure in the solidarity economy—regardless of emphasis or not on arts and culture—aim to support artists and culture bearers.[11]

LAND AND HOUSING

Community Land Trusts: Community Arts Stabilization Trust; Oakland CLT; Cooper Square Community Land Trust

Permanent Real Estate Cooperative: East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative

Housing Cooperative: Divine House

Cohousing/Intentional Community: MilePost 5

WORK AND LABOR

Worker Cooperatives: Rhythm Conspiracy; Resonate.Is; Akron Devil Strip; Happy Family Night Market; Design Action Collective; Surplus+

Producer Cooperatives: 200 million Artisans; Justseeds

Time Banking: Boston Ujima Project; Metasofa Arts Community; Kola Nut Collaborative

Mutual Aid: NDN Collective; Sol Collective

Barter Systems and Nonmonetary Exchange: O+ Festival

Organizing: Frontline Arts Buffalo; Solidarity Economy St. Louis

MONEY AND FINANCE

Participatory Budgeting: Boston Ujima Project; RUNWAY

Credit Union: Actors Federal Credit Union

Community Currencies: Giving circles; lending circles (Tandas)

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) Funds: The Working World; Seed Commons; First People's Fund; Oweesta Corporation; Zebras Unite; Cooperative Fund of New England

Solidarity Philanthropy and Grantmaking: Center for Economic Democracy; The Weavers Project; Ambitio*US;* NDN Collective; Intercultural Leadership Institute

ENERGY AND UTILITIES

Community Solar: Soulardarity

Community Broadband: Institute for Local Self Reliance's MuniNetworks

Energy Democracy: UPROSE

FOOD AND FARMING

Community Gardens: All community gardens!

Community Supported Agriculture: All CSAs!

Food and Farm Co-ops: Soul Fire Farm; Double Edge Theatre; Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive (CoFED); Acres of Ancestry Initiative/Black Agrarian Fund

Community Fridges: All community fridges!

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Worker-Owned Media: Media Reparations (Media 2070); Associated Press

Community Radio: KOJH 104.7 FM (Mutual Musicians Foundation, Kansas City, Montana)

According to the Brookings Institution, creative workers are experiencing historic precarity.

Platform Cooperatives: Crux; Guilded; Ampled

Solutions Journalism: Solutions Journalism Network

Open Source: Mozilla; Wikipedia

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In this moment of crisis and uncertainty, more and more people are excited to learn about solidarity economy practices and institutions that artists and culture bearers are building to achieve resilience. Patricia Walsh writes in Artsblog that the top three needs for artists are "unemployment insurance, food/housing assistance, and forgivable business loans."[12] This is what all people need, including artists. According to the Brookings Institution, creative workers are experiencing historic precarity.[13] What can be done? Forgivable loans, affordable housing, and dignified jobs—when structured as solidarity-based, cooperative institutions and networks—have been shown to withstand crises because they are built with self-determination and community response from the outset.[14] These entities emphasize self-help, dignified livelihoods, and community well-being instead of profit for external shareholders, and they are underexplored in the United States.

THREE EXAMPLES OF SOLIDARITY ECONOMY SUPPORT

1. Concessionary Loans

As unemployment soars and more and more small businesses—including artists and culture bearers—turn to predatory lenders to cover their basic needs, concessionary loans should be explored. These loans have terms that aim to achieve community benefit by offering low interest rates, generous grace periods, forgivable interest, and zero-collateral lending. Seed Commons, for example, collects donations and then uses them as a collective pool to offer loans well below market rate. Seed Commons acts as a partner with smaller funds, networks, and cooperative businesses, working out flexible but economically prudent loan terms with none of the draconian penalties of conventional finance (such as seizure of collateral). Seed Commons is a community wealth cooperative that takes in investment as a single fund and then shares that capital for local deployment by and for communities, lowering risk while increasing impact. Codirector Brendan Martin says that "each dollar invested in Seed Commons has generated more than $5 in revenues for communities, meaning a $1 million investment can result in over $5 million in income through to communities Seed Commons places capital in."[15]

Seed Commons offers concessionary loans for solidarity economy institutions and networks. Interest rates offered by banks and online lenders for small business loans today typically range from 3 to 7 percent—if you can get them. Many pay subprime lenders far greater interest rates.[16] And these loans carry a high risk of losing one's business if the strict payment schedule can't be met, while interest at Seed Commons is *only due if and when the business is profitable*—and even then tops out at a rate ranging from 2 to 8 percent. This means that for Seed Commons loans, "no greater return than the wealth generated is ever taken, even if that is a negative return."[17]

Further, the movement for nonextractive finance holds the principles of participatory democracy, intersectional equity, sustainability, and pluralism.[18] Seed Commons is part of a growing movement for community-controlled finance that includes the Boston Impact Initiative, The Working World, RUNWAY, Boston Ujima Project, Zebras Unite Co-Op, and the Cooperative Fund of New England.[19] The Working World, which is the oldest cooperative and nonextractive venture capital firm in the United States, was started by artists and inspired by a film.[20]

Seed Commons interest rates	2–8% forgivable[21]	Flexible schedule, forgivable, no collateral, **paid only if the business succeeds**[22]
Bank and FinTech interest rates	Around 3–7% (if SBA guaranteed); subprime rates range from 13 to 71%[23]	Strict schedule, not forgivable, requires collateral, **paid regardless of success and risks losing one's business or other collateral**

Artists and culture bearers are increasingly turning to worker and producer cooperatives—businesses that are owned and managed by the workers—because they provide job security and a meaningful work environment.

Rural, economically disadvantaged, immigrant, and BIPOC communities have a long history of developing collective finance practices as a survival strategy, including susus, rotating loan funds, and mutual aid. The self-help movement laid the groundwork for Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). At least 60 percent of CDFI financing activities serve one or more low- and moderate-income population or underserved community.[24] Since the Great Recession, credit unions have increased their share of mortgage originations fourfold, from 1.9 percent of the market in 2007 to over 8 percent by 2018 (while bank mortgage originations have continued to decline)—and small business lending growth has dramatically outpaced that of banks.[25] The success of the solidarity economy sector depends upon flexible financial vehicles, because these entities often have thin margins, prioritizing low-cost, affordable goods and services and living wages for workers. Worker cooperatives, for example, while being more likely to succeed than conventional enterprises,[26] are often slower to become self-sustaining. On the other hand, SE entities internationally have demonstrated that they are more likely to repay loans than traditional firms.[27]

2. Affordable Space

Both affordable space and housing assistance are a perennial need for the arts and culture sector. In twenty-five cultural districts nationally, artists and those working in the arts field are rent-burdened, with 30 to 50 percent of their income going to cover rent.[28] For example, in 2019, the average monthly rent within a half-mile radius of Fourth Arts Block in the Lower East Side of New York City was $4,660 per month.[29]

This need not be the case. Artists and culture bearers across the country are innovating models for community land trusts: community-based organizations that create affordable housing and commercial space in perpetuity by owning land and leasing it to community members who use spaces on that land. According to Mihaela Buzec, artists are rent-burdened in 80 percent of cultural districts across the United States, with "a rent-to-income ratio of 50% or higher," and half "bearing a rent burden of over 60%."[30] Supporting community land trusts can enable artists to afford to remain in their communities and engage in artistic production for generations. A "typical dancer/choreographer," for example, "who makes $31,200, the annual average earnings for their field *before* COVID-19 hit,[31] will only have to spend six hours a week to cover their housing costs in a community land trust, compared to the twenty-eight hours a week it would take to cover a market-rate rental in the same area."[32]

Cooper Square CLT average maintenance	$360/month[33]	A typical dancer would have to spend **6 hours per week** working to cover housing costs.
Market-rate rent in the area	$1,850/month (artists share an average 1BR $4,660/month rental[34])	A typical dancer would have to spend **28 hours per week** working to cover housing costs.[35]

Arts ecosystem-wide support for permanently affordable housing and commercial space should be explored. The community land trust model is currently being used to support space for artists and arts organizations in the East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative, in Oakland, California, and is a solution to housing insecurity.[36] During the Great Recession, homeowners living in homes they owned on community-land-trust–held property were ten times less likely to be in foreclosure proceedings and 6.6 times less likely to be at least ninety days delinquent, compared with homeowners in the conventional market.[37] The community land trust model is one of many solidarity economy models that are both resilient in crisis and championed by BIPOC artists and culture bearers today.

3. Dignified Work

Artists and culture bearers are increasingly turning to worker and producer cooperatives—businesses that are owned and managed by the workers—because they provide job security and a meaningful work environment.[38] Evidence shows that cooperatives are more efficient than traditional firms and have fewer layoffs during economic crises,[39] because they are able to call upon their community for support, and workers can decide to adjust the

It’s clear that artists need a solidarity economy if we are to overcome our status as exploited workers. Likewise, the solidarity economy movement needs artists if it is to prevail.

hours worked by all employees rather than reducing the number of employees.[40] Cooperatives often succeed where traditional corporations fail because they are developed intentionally in dialogue with their customers and with the community.[41] Cooperative businesses also tend to have lower failure rates than traditional corporations and small businesses.[42] And research suggests that worker and producer cooperatives are better able to weather crises.[43]

Worker cooperatives also provide better and more equitable wages. In many, “the average ratio between the highest and lowest pay is 2:1 compared with 300:1 in large corporations.”[44] In 2019, the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives reported that the average *entry-level* wage paid at all reporting worker cooperatives was $19.67 per hour. This figure is more than $7.00 higher than the minimum wage in the thirteen states with the most worker co-ops.”[45] Further, cooperatives advance gender equity at work.[46] Worker cooperatives today employ more women and pay women at better wages than conventional businesses.[47]

A recent survey of worker cooperatives in the United States found that “58.8 percent of people employed at worker co-ops identify as people [of] color [and] 62.5 percent of workers identify as female and 1.7 percent identify as non-binary.”[48] Worker cooperatives provide a pathway for more diverse and equitable working arrangements because these arrangements are determined by the workers themselves. Currently, Latinx women earn 55 cents for every dollar that white men make,[49] Black women earn 63 cents for every dollar that white men make in the workforce,[50] and women artists of any race earn 77 cents for every dollar that male artists of any race earn.[51] As is often cited, providing equal pay to women in the workforce would cut the poverty rate for all working women in half, and the number of children with working mothers living in poverty would be cut nearly in half.[52] Cooperatives offer a promising model for economic justice when cultivated with intentionality.[53]

Scholars predict that the desire for cooperatives will continue to increase due to demographic, cultural, and technological shifts in the labor force.[54] In December 2020, New York City launched “Employee Ownership NYC, the nation’s largest municipal initiative for education and technical assistance around employee ownership and conversion.”[55] This addresses the need for increased local jobs as well as the needs of business owners who want to retire. Almost half of all business owners are fifty-five years of age or older; according to California Association of Business Brokers, baby boomer retirees (people born between 1946 and 1964) will cause more than $10 trillion in business assets to change hands over the next twenty years, as an estimated 70 percent of privately held businesses will be sold or closed.[56]

To support the solidarity economy with integrity in the United States and beyond, a slow process of relationship building between culture bearers, solidarity economy organizers, public sector workers, and arts and culture grantmakers must begin. Lasting impact will not be made if (1) solidarity economy becomes a buzzword, popular only for a short time, or (2) if newcomers with visibility are supported instead of community-based groups who have been doing this work for decades.

It’s clear that artists need a solidarity economy if we are to overcome our status as exploited workers. Likewise, the solidarity economy movement needs artists if it is to prevail. We believe that culture—visual arts, music, culinary arts, sports, video games, literature, theater, television, Web content, TikToks, and more—is the key to sparking the collective imagination of what’s actually possible when there is community control of our economies and resources. There have never been radical movements without radical artists and creators at the helm—so let’s get busy resisting, building, and *creating*.

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Why a Green New Deal Requires a Solidarity Economy

by *Johanna Bozuwa*

Climate action holds the possibility of actively dismantling capitalism, white supremacy, and imperialism—in short, building a solidarity economy.

When, back in November 2018, Sunrise Movement organizers sat in protest in House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office and called for a Green New Deal, they broke a cycle of stale federal climate advocacy. The Green New Deal caught people's imagination, because it opened a new frame that took us beyond "jobs versus climate" or reliance on market solutions like pricing carbon and toward the idea that tackling climate could build a whole new way of organizing our economy and our society. It could fight parts per million and police brutality at the same time. It could build renewable energy while bolstering the Fight for $15. The Green New Deal, in essence, could help pull us out of the depths of the late-capitalist, neoliberal era of the past few years and into a resilient solidarity economy.[1] Therein lay potential to motivate and mobilize fierce coalitions for change.

Eighteen months later, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world and shifted the playing field yet again by revealing the fragility of our current systems. The U.S. privatized healthcare infrastructure collapsed in the face of the emergency.[2] Millions of people lost their family members, their jobs, and their homes in the midst of a haphazard economic shutdown because of the cruelty of a system engineered to serve an elite class. The exacerbated and racist inequities of economic and health systems paired with extreme police brutality came to a head after the Memorial Day police murder of George Floyd, when communities rose

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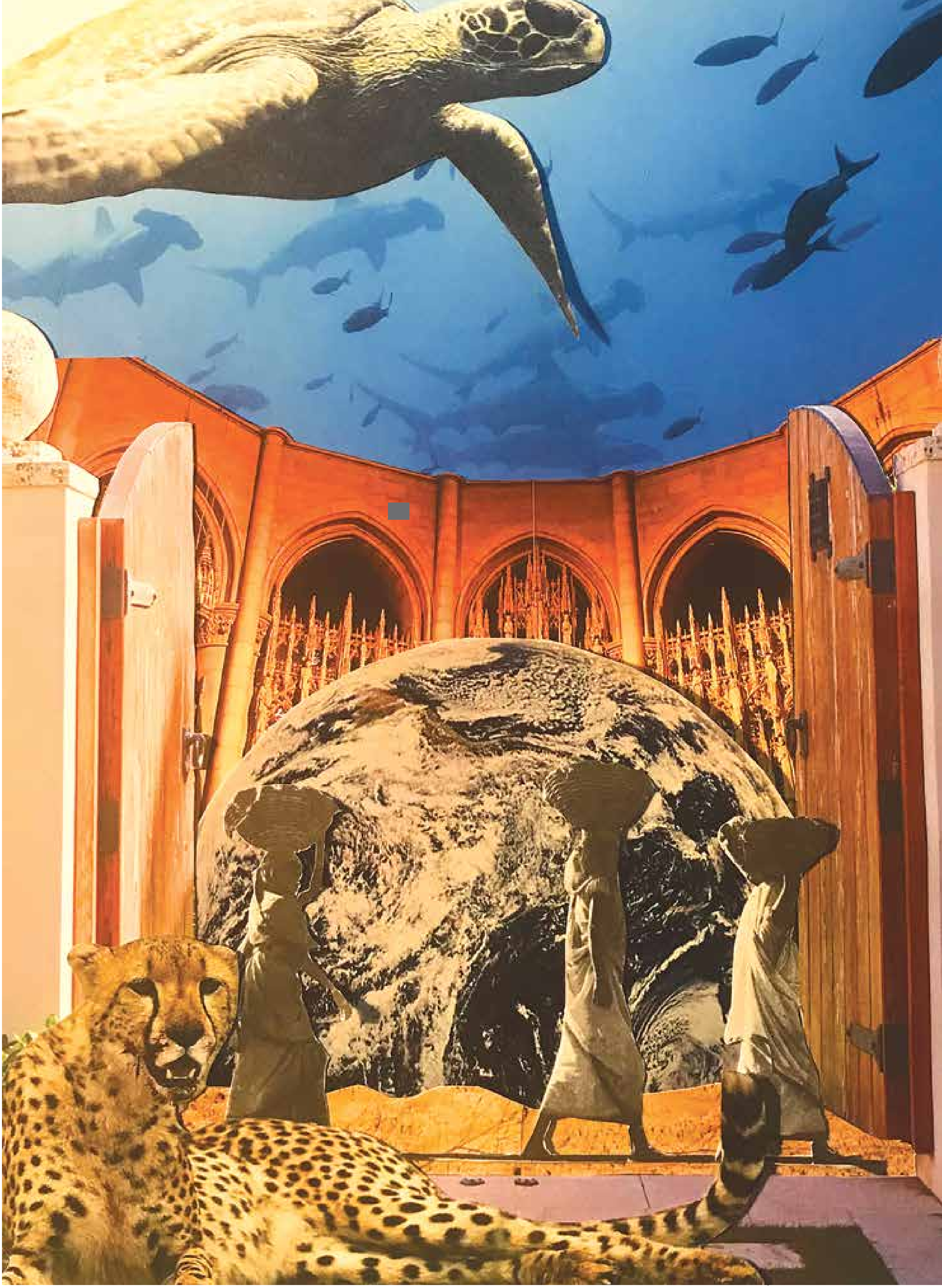

The COVID-19 pandemic not only opened up doors for organizing for a just Green New Deal but also gave us warnings. It made the question of who benefits all the more pertinent.

up in defense of Black lives.[3] The devastation communities experienced in 2020 proved—if further proof were needed—that the United States is in critical need of systemic transformation.

The COVID-19 pandemic also drew the curtains back on some key arguments surrounding the Green New Deal. For instance, almost overnight, concepts of federal spending changed. Before, the Green New Deal had been attacked for the scale and scope of investment that it proposed. But in 2020, the Federal Reserve injected trillions of dollars into the U.S. economy, including direct deposits of cash into people's bank accounts, so that people could survive. So far, fears of out-of-control inflation have proven unfounded, and austerity has become "unfashionable."[4] What's more, the past year also showed that we can still realize another critical tenet of a Green New Deal: the ability to mobilize quickly toward a common goal. Scientists moved faster than ever before to create the COVID-19 vaccine in under a year. Before that, the mumps vaccine was the fastest, at four years of development.[5]

But within this upheaval of U.S. conceptions of spending, scaling, and mobilization that greatly bolstered the case for the Green New Deal, there also lies danger in what the Green New Deal could become. The U.S. government handed over the management of critical programs like the Main Street Lending Program to companies like BlackRock; in turn, many small businesses—particularly those owned by people of color—didn't see a cent, while fossil fuel companies grabbed outsized slices of the pie.[6]

Similarly, while the vaccine development sprinted beyond its predecessors, companies are holding steadfast to the patents and thus stopping mass production of the cure for millions. Pressure is growing, but those patent rights haven't been waived yet, even if the Biden administration in May did shift to a position favorable to waiving some intellectual property protections around the vaccines. This shows the true viciousness of public–private partnerships, with public money funneling into pharmaceutical companies, creating corporate gain and apartheid between the Global North and South: the vaccinated and the dying.[7] With the climate crisis a clear global phenomenon, will technologies and global cooperation fall into the same traps?

The COVID-19 pandemic not only opened up doors for organizing for a just Green New Deal but also gave us warnings. It made the question of who benefits all the more pertinent. For instance, a Green New Deal could enrich a union-busting Elon Musk as, pumped up by public subsidies and incentives, he makes electric cars for the middle and upper class. In doing so, it will have failed at the possibility of transforming the economy into something more humane through climate mobilization.

Climate action holds the possibility of actively dismantling capitalism, white supremacy, and imperialism—in short, building a solidarity economy. But to do so will take intentional investments in alternative models of ownership that return the economy and the means of production to the people, untangling racist policies and practices of the past to build new social fabrics that empower rather than exploit, and engaging in local to international partnership with a frame of a collective future.

The interplay between the movements for the Green New Deal and the solidarity economy is crucial for this sort of shared success. The growing local manifestations of the solidarity economy affirm the models and stand out as exemplars of what the Green New Deal could achieve. Particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, the solidarity economy plugged the cracks when, under the Trump administration, the federal government failed. Mutual aid funds held together families on the brink.[8] Employees, when confronted with office closures or major changes in their workplace, responded by engaging in union organizing drives and pushing for worker ownership, recognizing the power they hold in the workplace as they did so.[9] Local support networks for food and medical help bolstered the uprisings for racial justice. With this experience, communities brought their experiences to federal fights, calling for rent cancellation or for providing direct cash support to families.[10] The growing solidarity movement here has thus acted as a laboratory for more national calls to action, moving the needle toward more transformative politics.

Paramount here is a marriage of scale between large, federal public institutions, policies, and programs and grassroots, place-based projects. For instance, the Green New Deal allows for massive funding that explicitly achieves dual goals of decarbonization and democratizing the economy. In return, the local groups who receive this funding, as members of those communities themselves, can be important connectors to communities who need it most. Furthermore, they can strengthen systems of participation and democratic practice that can, in turn, help keep the federal level accountable and increase democratic participation across the board.

Let's reflect on some examples.

The fight for public control over utilities that has gained steam over the past few years pulls at this tension of scale in interesting ways. In some cases, strategies for community ownership over solar grids or rooftop solar can be put in tension with fights for larger-scale pushes for a state-level takeover of a utility. However, this need not be the case. One of the compelling opportunities in the fight for public power is the ability to take over large swaths of the energy system at once, while also reorganizing the system to bake in concepts of community as loci of decision making. My organization, The Democracy Collaborative, recently launched a report about how expanding and reforming the New York Power Authority (NYPA) could support New York's climate goals.[11] NYPA is an already-operating public power energy generator in New York, created in the early 1930s by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, when he was governor, to counter corporate power; it foreshadowed parts of the New Deal.[12]

One of the compelling opportunities in the fight for public power is the ability to take over large swaths of the energy system at once, while also reorganizing the system to bake in concepts of community as loci of decision making.

The report brings that New Deal institution into the era of the Green New Deal. For instance, it proposes that NYPA take direct public ownership stakes in large-scale renewable energy projects, reorganizing the status quo around these sorts of projects so that they are in partnership with local communities (instead of steamrolling their demands). It proposes regional hubs that operate as democratized spaces for: dialogue with those most impacted by issues of siting; community benefits; jobs; and integrated planning with the larger community, so that development is directly informed. NYPA could also invest in, streamline, and directly fund community-led programs for distributed renewable energy, to build up climate resiliency in the state. Working in relationship with Black-led and climate/environmental justice groups that have deep ties to the community is critical to ensuring that investments flow to those who need it most and can actively engage the community.

Similarly, the fight to nationalize the fossil fuel industry can be seen as an opportunity to use the power of the federal government to take over a hurtful industry while ceding back control to communities. In a recent paper we published as fossil fuel companies' share prices dropped precipitously during 2020, we outline potential opportunities for federal intervention to support ending extraction.[13] The report advocates creating a Just Transition Agency to act

New technologies can contribute to addressing our climate emergency, of course, but fundamentally our global climate crisis is not a problem of technology but rather a social problem.

as a holding company for the acquired fossil fuel companies with the express goal of a phase-out grounded in just transition principles. With federal support, regions and communities could receive funds and expertise to wind down the extractive industries and replace them with a more resilient, more diverse economy. Such a program could even cede land and territory back to Indigenous communities from whom it had been stolen, and thus revitalize the area and the communities.

Another example of how massive shifts in public procurement could be a mechanism for major economic transformation: If the federal government were to mobilize a substantive cohort of the Civilian Conservation Corps to invest in our natural systems (simultaneously creating new economy-wide wage floors) or seek to retrofit every single public building, they would need supplies and manufacturing. By setting clear standards for their procurement that prioritize contracts with worker-owned firms, unionized workplace environments, and places that actively support entry programs for BIPOC workers into sustaining, good jobs, the federal government could create whole new forms of worker control over the means of production. The space could open up even more if coordinated with massive funding for worker-ownership technical support programs or even an employee ownership fund focused on the carbon-free economy. For instance, New York City has developed an audacious Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative to support worker cooperatives as places to build worker autonomy and particularly to support women- or BIPOC-owned worker cooperatives.[14]

New technologies can contribute to addressing our climate emergency, of course, but fundamentally our global climate crisis is not a problem of technology but rather a social problem. A Green New Deal that doesn't cut to the heart of racialized capitalism is certain to be inadequate. Perhaps some technological innovation will keep sea-level rise at bay, but no technological legerdemain will save Black families from crumbling infrastructure or release society as a whole from global resource constraints. A Green New Deal, however, by massively reordering how governments and our largest economic actors function, and by fostering a public culture of mutual caring and support, can be the key to unleashing the full potential of solidarity economies, where power and wealth are rooted in communities.

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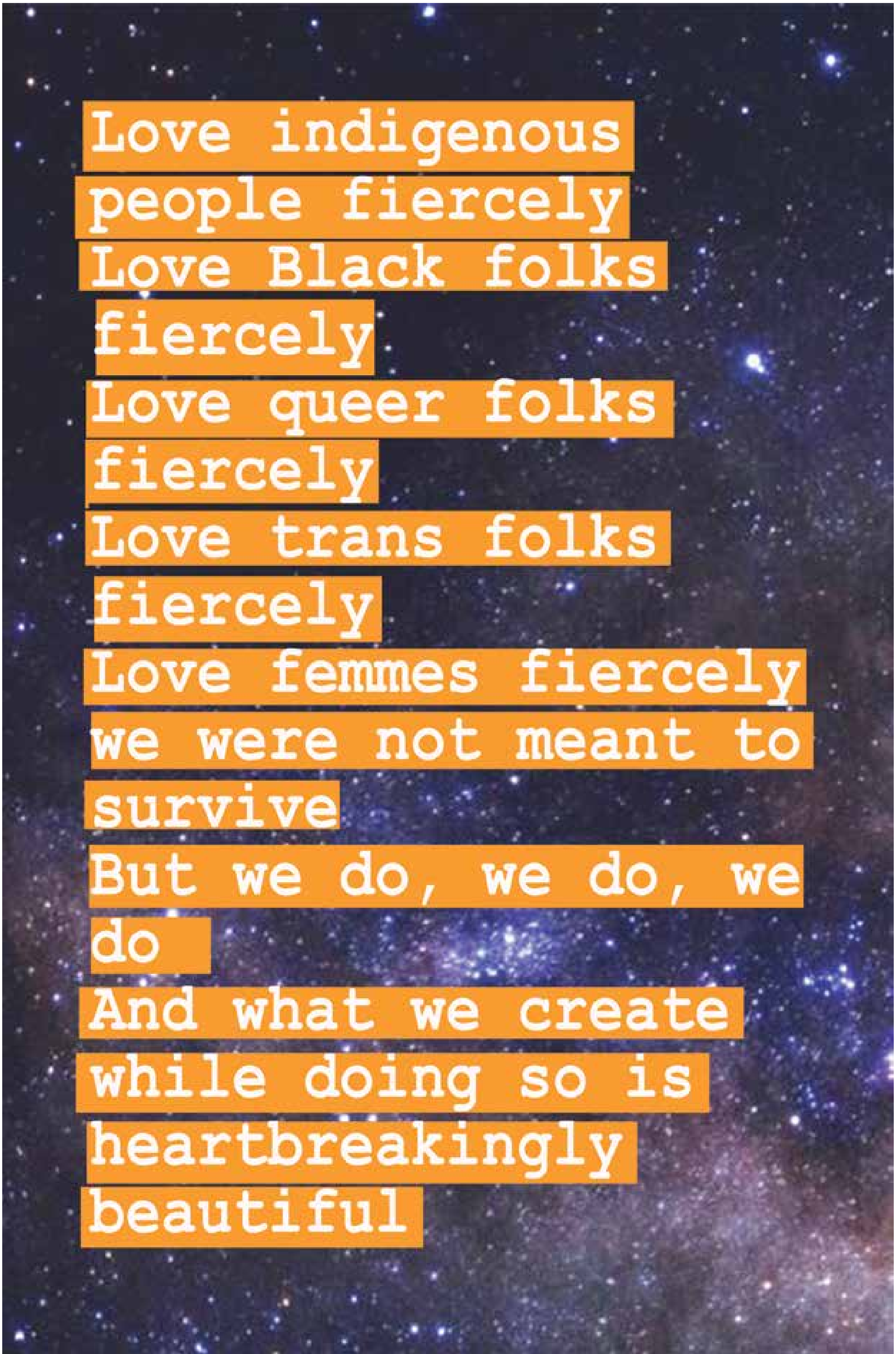

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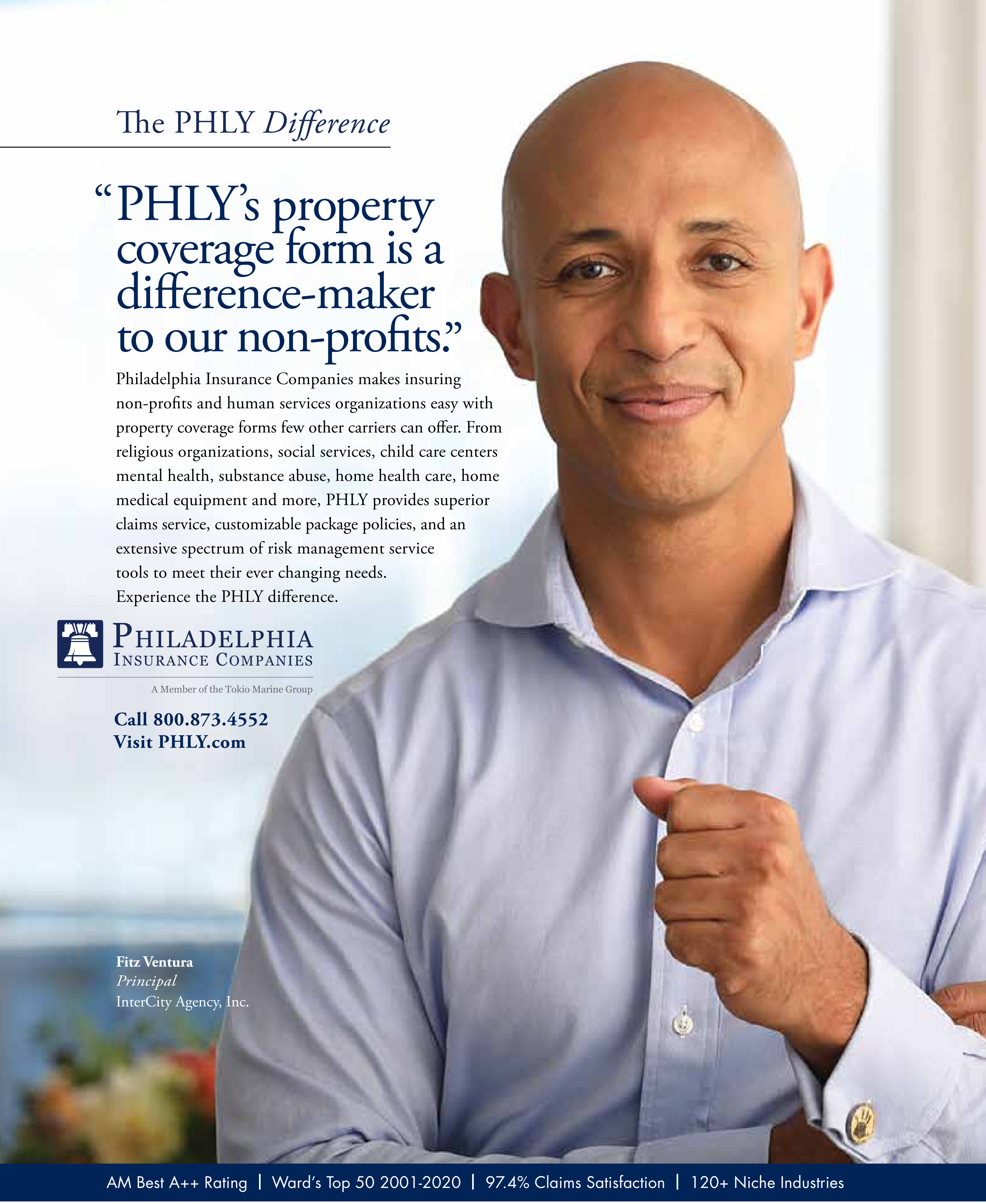

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