

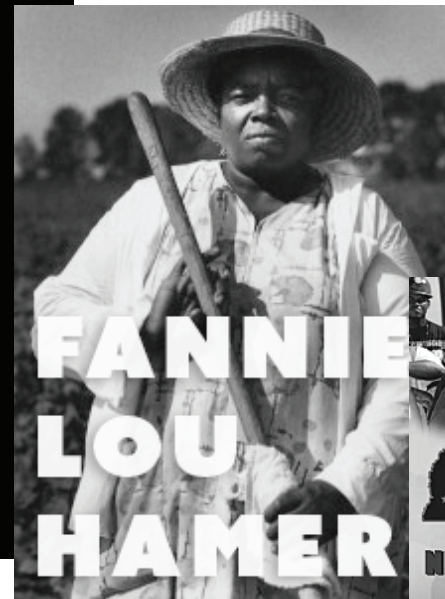
COOP4LIB

COOP ZINE

COOPERATIVES 101 AND THE BLACK TRADITION OF CO-OPS

THIS ZINE REFERENCES THE WORK OF CULTIVATED.COOP AS WRITTEN IN THE "WHAT IS A COOP" ZINE, TESA COLLECTIVE AND "COLLECTING OURSELVES: A COOPERATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CURRICULUM".

MORE INFO:
[KOLA.GROUPS.IO/G/
COOP4LIB](http://KOLA.GROUPS.IO/G/COOP4LIB)



Having completed shared readings of "Collective Courage: A History of African American Economic Thought and Practice" and "Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi", we are breaking from the Study Group to develop projects which have been proposed by the Working Group including a forum, zine, wheat paste gallery, and web series.

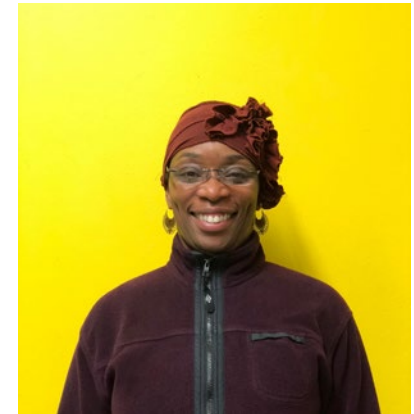
Over the course of 12 weeks, a core group of participants have endeavored to make deep study and exchange thoughts about Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard's work "Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice".

Within this space we sought to learn more about cooperatives and explore examples from the Black tradition of cooperative economics which might inform our use of the tool in this present moment as a means for building social, political, and economic empowerment.

This event builds on previous community forums convened by Joan Fadayiro which have highlighted the relationship between our historical inequities, our present conditions, and imagined the types of institutions which might work best to address community needs.

The goal of this gathering is to understand how Black communities have historically developed cooperatives as a solution to their economic challenges and determine their relevance for changing our current conditions while building powerful movements which can transform our communities.

Each session we seek to expand our imagination and inventory of ideas through dialogue and practical exercises which will move us nearer towards action. Bring your concerns, ideas, and challenges about using these models for cultivating a solidarity economy of interlocking cooperatives, timebanks, mutual aid associations, community land trusts, people's assemblies, and other structures so that we can sort through strategies for supporting their development within the working group.



-Deidra S.

"I have seen Black joy, Black success, Black brilliance, black excellence pictured through the tale of individuals who rise up and out of poverty "make something of themselves" often times brining along their spouse, children and perhaps a few extended family members and friends. In these imaginings of Black thriving, joy is a ship full of money and stable housing that only few escape to, I think of all the others left behind. I also think of this metaphorical money ship as a bandaid to a larger problem, a generational problem, a communal problem. I know that lasting change cannot come from individuals fighting solely for themselves and their immediate family. Cooperatives have presented me with a framework to imagine extending my family beyond blood, beyond friendship to develop kinship that translates into the sharing of space, resources all anchored in trust and love."

-Amina

This zine was produced for the COOP4LIB Forum and Report Back held on Sunday November 18, 2018 at The Breathing Room Space in Chicago.

"The lack of stable jobs & incomes is consistently named as a major contributing factor to the community violence & exodus of Black people leaving Chicago. [The city lost almost 200,000 Black people from 2000 to 2010]. Yet, elected officials refuse to address this need. Cooperatives allow us to implement our own solutions to this major issue--achieving economic development and self-determination." -Joan F.



COOPERATIVES



Wedge Food Coop in Minneapolis (Source: Twin Cities Daily Planet)



"I think that cooperatives are important for Black people now because systemic racism continues to make decent & dignified access to wealth, housing, food, etc. particularly difficult for Black people, and cooperatives are ways to build self-determined access to basic human needs while building community." -Ted M.

A **cooperative** is an independent, self-determined organization of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and/or cultural needs and/or aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. Members usually buy-in through a nominal fee. These institutions allow members to equally share any profits.

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES:

- 1) Voluntary & Open Membership
- 2) Democratic Member Control
- 3) Member Economic Participation
- 4) Autonomy & Independence
- 5) Education, Training, & Information
- 6) Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- 7) Concern for Community

TYPES OF COOPERATIVES



CONSUMER CO-OPS

provide retail products and services for their customer members. Consumers can create a cooperative to provide pretty much anything they want to buy. Their purchases may include groceries, electricity or telephone service, housing, healthcare, or—under the label of credit unions—financial services.



PURCHASING CO-OPS

purchase products and services in bulk to reduce or share costs for individual or organizational members. Functioning as another type of consumer co-op, many of these institutions are owned and governed by independent business owners.



"Cooperatives represent a critical tool in the self determination of economically marginalized Black communities offering us a method for expanding our economic participation in a way which builds community rather than individual wealth. This liberatory strategy enables us to assess our communities unmet needs and drive the development of solutions at the community level rather than petitioning elected officials or surrendering our autonomy to private interests."
-MICHAEL T.S.

ASSESSING WHERE TO BUILD

- Identify areas with a large/ majority Black population, particularly Black working class
- Consider land vacancy that can be claimed/reclaimed
- Respond to local needs & struggles including food access, displacement, systemic disinvestment

LEVERAGING ELECTORAL POLITICS

- Lead the electoral agenda with the people's platform and identify candidates that are accountable to our collective agenda
- Use the governing slots as a mechanism to provide radical alternatives for municipal governance--prioritizing growing public goods & infrastructure; expand public resources, healthcare, invest in cooperatives, secure land, mobilize the public, make technology public utilities

COOPERATIVE STRUCTURES





OBJECTIVE

Describe the political project in Jackson, MS for economic democracy & Black self-determination led by Cooperation Jackson & the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and to share their experiences, knowledge, activities, and proposals for organizing community infrastructure and leveraging electoral influence to address the material needs of our people.

IDEOLOGICAL POINTS

- Illuminate & exploit the contradictions of capitalism: uneven development, ecological limits, productive limits
- Grow working class consciousness
- Reject & dismantle the capitalist disposability of people
- Recognize that controlling the means of production is vital to self-determination

"Someone once said that Black capitalism will never lead to Black liberation and that's a word that we need more than ever. Cooperatives present an opportunity to not only reject individualistic ways of living, working, creating, and earning but also to return to how our elders and ancestors survived." -MASHUSKA M.



PRODUCER CO-OPS

This refers to groups of people engaged in the agricultural arena. Members may be farmers, landowners or owners of fishing operations. They may buy farm inputs, equipment, and insurance, hire workers, market and advertise together, or operate storage or processing facilities or a distribution network.

MARKETING CO-OPS

build markets for members' products and services, improve member bargaining power, facilitate delivery of products to market, and improve product quality.

WORKER CO-OPS

provide jobs for their members and services for their communities. These businesses are owned and democratically managed by the workers, and no one else. Worker-owners often buy into the business through a nominal fee, and equally share business profits.

ABBREVIATED TIMELINE OF BLACK COOPERATIVE HISTORY

COLLECTIVE COURAGE BY JESSICA GORDON NEMBARD

