

Diversity & Inclusion Aren't Enough: Practical Tools for Worker Co- ops and the Worker Co- op Movement

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Thanks & Acknowledgements

- Thanks to CFWC for inviting me and Hazel Corcoran for thinking I have something to contribute to this conversation!
- **Acknowledge:**
- The original occupants/stewards of the land; & my ancestors
- The struggles of enslaved laborers, & all those who labor without just compensation; acknowledge our claim to land and resources.
- Those fallen and killed by police brutality and other forms of anti-blackness...

Co-ops exist in Racist Societies

- Cumulative history of discrimination, exclusion and
- Institutional Racism.
- Cumulative impact on psyche, health, income, economic stability, political efficacy, safety.
- Subtle stereotypes & micro-aggressions prevail
- White privilege

Diversity and Inclusion NOT ENOUGH!

- Tolerance and sympathy are not enough.
- Its not enough to be an ally.
- We must deliberately promote and practice racial equity – resist the normality and acceptance of presumed racial differences.
- We must be proactive about recognizing and rooting out anti-blackness and other forms of racism.

Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Leadership

- Diversity – invite a variety of people to the dance
- Inclusion – everyone gets a chance to dance, is asked to dance
- - but under what conditions?
- Equity – variety of people and stakeholders are not asked to assimilate but get to decide who to invite, cost, what to eat, what music
- The leadership is not tokenized or normalized but is developed from among, respected; and leadership is shared with a variety of people.

How do we recognize the ways that our co-ops perpetuate institutional racism and engage in racist micro-aggressions and exclusion?

- Missing in action
- Individualism, tokenism and invisibility
- Unpacking invisible white privilege (Peggy McIntosh 1989)
- Biased materials; colonialist projects

Where are the Black Co-ops?



Research on African American Cooperatives: Collective Courage

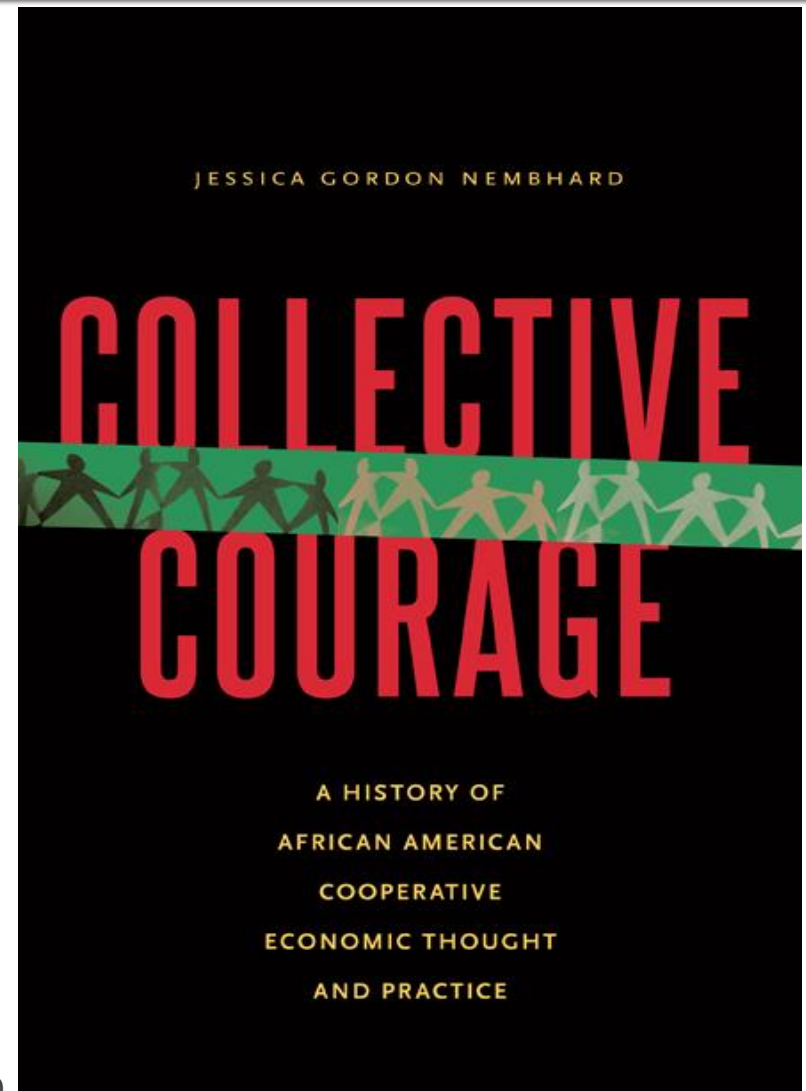
Black Co-ops :

- Survival
- Resistance
- Prosperity

(psuppress.org)

- And this year Esther West's study of Latinx Co-ops.
<https://uwcc.wisc.edu/research/latinx-cooperative-research/>

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More subtle issues:

- Income/wealth assumptions – workers most exploited and marginalized
- Silo-ing – sector isolation, urban v rural;
- education focused internally

Toward Solutions

- Create SOLIDARITY systems: Principles 6, 7 – and 8; multi-stakeholder co-ops
- Be proactive – address our & our co-ops' invisible, systemic racism, and racist practices;
- Create better learning & training;
- Practice better outreach & communications.

Community and Organization Matter

- Importance of organizations: deliberate cooperative development
- Most number of co-ops when have Black organizations dedicated to co-op promotion and education.
- Community support – community involved in starting the co-op; study groups; donate to the co-op; defend the co-op
- Need to connect with BIPOC orgs

More Solutions

- Update co-op materials with BIPOC & co-op practices and case studies in BIPOC communities; more peoples' histories – diversify materials in general
- Rethink and rewrite development strategies with BIPOC, to address BIPOC issues and conditions.
- Diversify the power relations and decision-making inside co-ops and co-op federations.

US Ex:

North Carolina Council 1945-48

- Black state-wide co-op federation worked with state agricultural dept to create manuals & workshops to promote and develop Black credit unions and co-ops.
- Growth: in 1936: 3 Black credit unions - by 1948: 98 Black credit unions, and
- 48 additional Black co-op enterprises: 9 consumer stores, 32 machinery co-ops, 4 "curb markets," 2 health associations and 1 housing project.

Canadian Ex: Progressive Credit Unions

- Affinity Credit Union (SK) -Continued mergers – how to keep local control and local focus?
- District Councils structure for local governance and especially distribution of community funds.
- Assiniboine Credit Union (MB) – board development – SWOT analysis of expertise and representation on Board

**Can't Achieve Social, Political
or Racial Justice**

**Without
Economic Democracy and
Economic Justice.
And
Economic Democracy can't
be achieved without Racial
Equity**

Together We Can Succeed!

Thank You!

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