

## **Cooperative Journal Podcast**

“Solidarity Economy Shorts” in collaboration with New Economy Coalition

Solidarity Economy Short #2: Cooperation among Cooperatives with Co-op Dayton

### **Featuring:**

**Cherelle Gardner:** Program Director of Co-op Dayton

**Amaha Sellassie:** Co-executive Director of Co-op Dayton

**Ebony Joy:** Host of Cooperative Journal Podcast

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*[Music - Solidarity Economy (Riddim) by MADlines]*

**Ebony Joy:** Welcome to Solidarity Economy Shorts, a collaboration between New Economy Coalition and Cooperative Journal Media. Solidarity Economy Shorts are conversations with frontline organizations and individuals that are putting solidarity economy principles into practice. They're using different strategies to build an economic system where communities are meeting their own needs outside of Capitalism.

New Economy Coalition is a member based coalition representing the solidarity economy ecosystem in the United States. Their members are actively working across economic sectors to shift from individuality and capitalism, to cooperation and solidarity.

Some of the New Economy members will be featured on this podcast to explore land rematriation, cooperation, worker ownership, arts and culture, resource mobilization, and more. We'll share lessons learned, practices, and how you can engage in this liberatory vision.

As you listen you're invited to feel into your body. When do you sense constriction? When do you feel light and expansive? We hope these shorts can be a reminder that we don't have to wait for the future we dream of, it is here now waiting for us to participate.

Co-op Dayton is developing and weaving a network between cooperative businesses that are meeting the needs of their local community. They are using community and worker ownership as a catalyst to transform Dayton's Black and working class neighborhoods. In this episode, Ebony speaks with program and co-executive directors - Cherelle Gardner and Amaha Sellassie.

They begin with defining what a cooperative is and different ownership structures, how cooperative businesses can meet the needs of a disinvested post-industrial city, some of the models they have incubated like T.R.I.B.E a shared-service co-op of holistic perinatal practitioners. They also invite us to think beyond the metrics of success within capitalism, what solidarity and cooperation looks like in our day to day lives, and how we can show up in solidarity.

**Ebony Joy:** Hi Cherelle and Amaha, welcome to the podcast.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Thanks for having us.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Greetings, we're so thankful to be here.

**Ebony Joy:** I'm so thankful that you carved out time in your day to speak with me about Co-op Dayton and the amazing work that y'all are doing for local cooperative development in Ohio. So, before we begin and talk more about what Co-op Dayton is, I would like for you to share - what is a cooperative?

**Amaha Sellassie:** I think cooperatives are an association of people that come together, oftentimes to meet a need that they have, collectively, amongst each other. If it's building a grocery store, or if it's, needing insurance, mutual health insurance, or at one point, even places to bury our dead, cooperatives serve to meet needs in our community that are bigger than one person can do. It's how collectively people can come together and share their resources towards meeting their needs. I'm sure there's more technical examples. So I don't know Cherelle, you want to chime in?

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah, there's definitely more. Lots of technical examples. The simplest one that always speaks to me is a co-op is anything that's collectively owned, controlled, and benefiting its members, usually through profit sharing.

**Ebony Joy:** There's also different types of cooperative models, I don't know if you want to speak to what those are, or maybe specifically ones that you all work with.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah, I've noticed people have different names for them. But the most common that I've seen are producer co-ops where people are aggregating goods and selling them together to get better access to the market. Consumer co-ops where people are collectively purchasing and accessing goods together. Worker co-ops where the co-op is owned by people who are working there, people whose labor is making the business successful, and then multi-stakeholder or solidarity co-ops, which is like some sort of combination of all of those things. Then within those things, there's been some really cool models of different sub sectors. So you'll have like shared service co-ops

where independent LLCs come together to share back office support. So those are some of the models that we've seen, but are also experimenting with here in Dayton.

**Ebony Joy:** That was so succinct, I actually didn't even know about the LLCs coming together to support, I think that that's really important for maybe a typical business model to also be woven into a cooperative type of network with other solo businesses. I also loved what you touched on on Amaha because it reminds me of Collective Courage, this amazing book that Jessica Gordon Nembhard wrote. It really gets down to the roots of the cooperative economy in the U.S. that was created by Black people. There's obviously so many benefits of having a cooperative model, but there's also some critiques. Some people say that they cannot be financially sustainable, that the process to get things done takes too long because of group decision making, and that they can't even survive within capitalism. This book, Collective Courage showed that there's so much resilience and power that comes through cooperative models. So I would also like for you to speak on some of the current ways you see that co-ops are benefiting and how we can dissolve this narrative.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Shout out to Dr. Jessica, she's like a living Shero, as far as providing a Northstar that countless people across the country and world are using as a means of liberation. The key thing that Jessica highlights is that the freedom movement historically has had community transformation coupled with economic development. Over time, that has been separated, where community transformation was seen as community transformation and economic development was seen as economic development instead of realizing that we need both. We need a vision of what we're trying to do, like, what is our collective hope, and then we need the economic engine to drive it and give us the strength and power to make it happen. Especially in Black and brown communities that've been subjected to intense under development, how are we practicing self determination? Bringing those two together seems like really the only way to do it in a holistic and sustainable way. It's the power of collective intelligence, collective decision making, and participation. We are working together, towards whatever the future is we're trying to create, because especially in communities that have been underdeveloped, we are over promised and under delivered which creates a trauma, which hinders our gifts from coming out. So in the process of participation, how are we bringing our gifts out, how are we showing up in our full selves, how do we create communities where our full gifts are in display and interacting with each other? Cooperatives are a vehicle to do that, the hope is that it releases the power that comes from bringing our gifts to the center. To me it's like, how we're building collective hope in the community?

**Cherelle Gardner:** I would also challenge what are the metrics of success we're looking at that tell us that co-ops aren't successful. If you're looking at metrics that are typically

used under capitalism, where it's like, how big can you grow, how fast can you move, how much money can you make. Then of course, co-ops can't compete, because they weren't designed or envisioned to be able to use those as metrics of success but if you look at like, can they produce sustainable jobs for people who live in the community, can they provide me needed resources for the community, can they bring a community together to protect needs and assets then absolutely, co-ops are a better option than your traditional business.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Yeah and I think resiliency, during COVID, or during economic turns, co-ops have been proven to be more resilient than pure, traditional businesses.

**Ebony Joy:** Exactly and also COVID really unveiled a lot of the issues of capitalism, and people were like, oh, my job really isn't giving me that self determination that I need, what are the alternatives. I also try to not use the word alternative, when it comes to co-ops. It shouldn't always be this very niche thing, that cannot become something that is common in a community and so I see it as something that is inherent within us, it's just a remembering process. These corporations are not allowing us to have the participation that we need in our communities that allow us to have collective agency, they come in communities, and they are generally the ones deciding what is best for a community, even though they don't live there. So I think that it's so important to have co-op businesses that are actually ran by the community, owned by the community, and they are part of the decisions of how it is run, how it is developed, and can really remind us of that collective self determination that we have.

**Amaha Sellassie:** You just had me thinking of the extractive nature, oftentimes of corporate businesses when coming into communities, their sole goal is how to make profit. COVID showed this moment that we fundamentally have been operating within a system and an idea that actually is not lined up with reality. How are we building more cooperation? How are we rooting ourselves in love? All these things that are necessary towards building not only the economy, but the future world that so many aspire to around the globe, especially in this hour.

**Ebony Joy:** Definitely, it ignited people's creativity in so many ways and I think that is also a shift from a corporation to a co-op is that a corporation is supporting consumerism and a cooperative is more rooted in what can we create together.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Cherelle, can you talk about our delivery co-op that we propped up during COVID as an example of that?

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah so during COVID, all the restaurants were struggling and we have this neighborhood in Dayton called the Oregon district that has all these bars and restaurants. So they came together and approached Co-op Dayton with could we

imagine a delivery co-op that is competitive or an alternative to like Uber Eats or DoorDash, because that is extracting so much of the revenue that these restaurants are barely surviving off of. So with support of University of Dayton and Co-op Dayton, city, and county funding, we were able to put together a platform called 937 Delivers, that allowed restaurants and the drivers to collectively own the business, and deliver for the restaurants. It was really beautiful, because all the restaurants who had front of house staff and some back of house staff who were under employed, because the restaurants had less business and weren't doing in house service, were able to be drivers for the delivery co-op and help cover some of the hours that they were missing during the pandemic. It was one of those moments where fortunately or unfortunately, the co-op did have to close, it wasn't financially sustainable once we came out of that period but it was an example of sometimes just for a moment, people need something to exist and can come together and build what they need to survive. I'm pretty sure that at least the restaurants and bars that I'm thinking of no one closed since joining the co-op and they're still all operational.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Restaurants were hit hard during COVID and then UberEats extracts so much, it was like 30%, or something like that, it's ridiculous how much money they charged the restaurants and so this provided a way for the restaurants locally to sustain themselves through co ops during a time of great stress.

**Ebony Joy:** Even though the co-op didn't continue to exist, it was probably the backbone of these restaurants sustaining themselves and that's also why I love co-ops, because they're just so adaptable and responsive to the current moment. Since you already started to talk about some of the work that Co-op Dayton does, maybe you can give an overview of what Co-op Dayton is.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Co-op Dayton is a co-op incubator, based off of, to some extent, the Mondragon model. We're still learning and growing on how to adapt it locally. I will say, Co-op Cincy has been a strong guide for us along this journey. We're trying to build a cooperative ecosystem, with our first co-op being the Gem City Market, which is a community grocery store, in an area that had been underdeveloped through redlining. There were 40,000 residents and no full service grocery store. We were birthed out of the need that there were no box stores coming and people had to take two buses to get to the grocery store. So it was like how do we come together to meet our need. Now we have a 15,000 square foot grocery store, with a teaching kitchen, and a community room, and a way to strive to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the community. Then we also have a makerspace, which I will not do justice so I will let Cherelle talk about that, and there's a doula coop called T.R.I.B.E. We're building a

cooperative ecosystem towards the things that we need in our community and self-determination. So I'll let Cherelle expand.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah, I always appreciate hearing Amaha talk about how Co-op Dayton came to be because it started with the idea of how do we address food apartheid in Dayton, specifically West and Northwest Dayton and so they kind of happened upon the co-op model. It was a model that was responsive to what the community was experiencing. It wasn't just a bunch of people who were obsessed with co-ops, it truly met a need. From that, and learning about that and beginning to implement it with the grocery store, they really saw and began to imagine what if there was this interconnected network of co-ops, because to your point of co-ops not being sustainable, it's often because they can't compete under capitalism. But what allows them to do so is being connected to other cooperatives and then working together to provide for the workers and for the community that they're in. So it was under those conditions, of we're starting a market but in order for the market to survive, we need to be connected and a part of something bigger, that Co-op Dayton was born. Also just out of recognition that the cooperative structure in Ohio doesn't allow them to raise philanthropic dollars and so it was like this is a great opportunity to get philanthropy to make a more sustainable business but we can't do it just as a co-op, we have to have more of an incubator model, so that's how Co-op Dayton was born. Since then, we've helped support over 20 businesses, 200 people have gone through our training programs, and as a part of our network we currently have five network members that are across multiple industries. So we kind of see ourselves as a creative, like, we're not really prescriptive, we only do consumer co-ops or we only do worker co-ops. The sector is really a container for the values of the people who are coming together to build that enterprise. So like Amaha mentioned, we have T.R.I.B.E, which is our perinatal co-op. They're the shared service co-op of doulas, yoga instructors, and massage therapists all coming together to share training, peer support, and back office support for their independent businesses. But also open to other people in those industries who need peer support, need training, or want to partner with independent practitioners to provide better services to their clients. We've evolved over the years, we started out like we're the incubator, we're helping to start this co-op, but in order to really support the community in the way that we need to and be a part of the community in the way that we need to, to build a new economy, we can't operate one at a time. There are so many people out there who are talented to where if we just share the lessons that we've learned and help give them the structure that we've built over the years, they can take that and help build their business with our support. So now we have more of a like a medium touch kind of model where we're working with multiple teams at a time sharing our learnings from Gem City Market and other co-ops that we've worked with. Helping kind of guide them through the process, as well as offering capital through fiscal sponsorship and lending in order to help them start and expand their business.

**Ebony Joy:** Wow, you're doing so much! I love the transparency about co-ops to that it's this sense of our success is also a reflection of your success and it's not like this competitive nature. Actually, that's one of the co-op principles, cooperation amongst co-ops. I think that sometimes there's a gap in that from what I've seen, but y'all are doing it and on a local level and even going beyond that of cooperation amongst individual businesses, which generally tends to be even harder for independent businesses to grasp, like, oh, we're not in competition and actually we can support each other to have more success in our businesses. So I love that.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah it's also challenging some of the myths of entrepreneurship, how often we hear, oh, I did this by myself and that is such a small piece of the story. There are so many people who helped you along the journey, so many doors that were open, that you just got to walk through. I think also sometimes people just underestimate their own skill set, which forces them to hoard information. They're like, I can't tell you who my vendor or my supplier is because you'll steal that from me and start a business. It's like that little bit of information is all it took for you to be successful. Then yeah somebody else can restart your business. Often we underestimate and don't see our own value of it took time, it took your energy, it took your creativity, and that can't be duplicated. So we have to take that and be willing to share it with other people, like recognize our own gifts and talents and the complexity of creating a business and this work. When we start to unpack that people tend to be a lot more open to sharing, because they realize like, I can't be duplicated, my skills can't be replicated and neither can this other person's. So if we come together, we're even more powerful in creating what we need.

**Ebony Joy:** Yesss, also on an energetic level, we cannot be duplicated and so the energy that we bring to a collective space as well as our individual businesses are going to be unique and beneficial, it's going to be reciprocal.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Absolutely.

**Ebony Joy:** So can you tell us a little bit about the economic landscape of Dayton. Like, what was it before? How did you all get to the point of living in food apartheid?

**Amaha Sellassie:** Dayton used to be a very industrial town, we were known as having 1,000 patents on, some crazy number of patents, Dayton was known as the city of innovation. But through deindustrialization, we lost the GM plants, we lost NCR, we lost Mead, we lost all of these things. The cash register was made here, the electronic starter was made here, all of these things we lost. Dayton is separated by a river where 98% of all Black folks that live in Dayton live on the West side, and then on the East side is White, Turkish, Latino, and African refugees, right. So that led to this period of deep disinvestment, when the market was starting to be birthed, around 2015, 2016 that

there was no development on the West side. This was that first test in the water of like not only do we deserve more, I think sometimes, we accept the unacceptable, especially when you live in an area that's been underdeveloped for so long. We can go a couple miles away and you'll see two grocery stores on the corner. It was also just saying that we could do this together, you know, I mean, like, so the one thing that I have learned from this process is that change actually is possible, that community does have the power to transform our lived environment, collectively, together. So we started with the grocery store, and we've expanded out, but we have this saying that, it's more than a market, it's a movement. How can the market be just one piece in a larger transformation of Dayton but Dayton as a whole compared to the region is still underdeveloped in some kind of ways. Like our median income, it might be 30 something now, but it was like 26 a couple years ago. It's a very, I would say, economically depressed area, it's on the rise, you know, but I would say that both sides, Black, White, Latino, you know, trust me, we've all been kind of in a state of under development if we look at it on a regional level.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah and I know I have family who's originally from here and so I remember like the stories of Dayton having this thriving Black middle class, mostly based around manufacturing. Even as you look at how neighborhoods are designed, especially in West Dayton, you'll see there's a large, formerly industrial building that's been let go and around it, there's all these housing developments. Neighborhoods were built around these manufacturing companies to house the people working at those businesses and so when they left, it extracted this major resource from the entire community. So like Amaha said, when the NCR left and the GM left, then you see people leave the neighborhood because people want to live around their jobs around their source for funding. So when people left and other resources left, the grocery stores left, the dry cleaner, the bank left. So you have these neighborhoods where you can drive down the street and every other house is boarded up, there's parts of Dayton where you could buy an entire block for a million dollars and redevelop it. So instead of letting outside people come and see this empty space with these opportunities, and imagine it for themselves, how do we use cooperative models to imagine it for ourselves?

Amaha Sellassie: How can cooperatives be a defense against gentrification? How are we the protagonist in our stories, and rewriting our narratives, because like West Side, man, West Side Dayton has all these negative connotations that's been connected to it by stories written outside of ourselves. So how are we writing our own story with us as the authors and the drivers of it instead of just recipients.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Absolutely and we're seeing that happen now, there was a period where nobody was coming here, nobody was coming to provide fresh food to West and



Northwest Dayton and the city was stumped, like how are we going to solve this problem, maybe another dollar general will come and offer TV dinners and snacks for the community. It wasn't until a community came together and built a grocery store, that now there's this resource so now we see people coming in, we see development happening, we see people buying up the homes like, this looks pretty good, I think I'll settle here. How do you protect it and make sure it's for the people who were committed to the neighborhood and to the community to begin with, or for the people who have been pushed out of these neighborhoods, and make this a space where they can come back to?

**Ebony Joy:** That's also I guess, a window of opportunity when there is under development in a community, that it's almost like a blank canvas, where you can dream up and build something different and similar things happened in Detroit, where you could buy houses for \$1, and so many radical initiatives were created from that.

**Amaha Sellassie:** It's a challenge because as development happens who's driving that? Whose cultural values are driving it is the challenge. It requires deep work inside of the community, I think we're still learning as we go. It's almost like once development starts happening, I think the key is who is ultimately driving it, the community has to rise to the occasion. I think being conscious of what we can do, how we can leverage our resources together, is all key.

**Cherelle Gardner:** We're excited to be able to go learn from other peers. Next week, we'll be in Asheville, visiting with our Seed Commons peers, especially PODER Emma, that's doing amazing work around housing and real estate. So they're incredible models out there that we get to learn from, we don't have to figure it all out ourselves.

**Ebony Joy:** Are there any other models you want to talk about that Co-op Dayton is incubating. I know that also, you all support manufacturers to adopt co-op models, which I think is really interesting, especially since maybe there's manufacturers that've been there since it was an industrialized city. So I'm curious how you all are working with them to shift towards a co-op model.

**Cherelle Gardner:** So starting out, in parallel with Gem City Market, there were people on the team who tried to explore conversions of existing manufacturing companies for that exact reason. There are companies that are still here, manufacturing hasn't left our region. It's just smaller and more specialized than it was in the past. So we tried that for several years and didn't have any success. Now we're trying to reimagine what manufacturing could look like for our city, and as much as we would love, just quick plug, we would love for these manufacturing companies to convert to employee-owned companies, but there are people in this city who are experimenting with a new type of manufacturing a new age of it of like the at home people who are starting their own

sewing businesses, the people who are buying laser cutters and personalizing things and selling them on Etsy, the artists who are digitizing their work and making prints and T-shirts. So we want to go where the energy is where the people already are, and show how they can take the business that they've started out of our home, and build that into a co-op that can provide sustainable jobs and some of the products that our community needs. We're doing that through our MakerSpace co-op, which is a co-op that's owned by the community, mostly business owners, who are trying to start their businesses across a variety of different types of small batch manufacturing industries. Our hope is that by experimenting with the co-op model, as member owners while they grow their individual businesses, it'll give them some insight into how they can grow their own business by collaborating with other people who they meet in the space. So maybe you're a woodworker, you're like, I want to make tables and to take it to the next level, I need a metal worker, so maybe the two of you work together and grow into a worker co-op that produces Dayton's first furniture line or something like that. So we're experimenting, and really just creating spaces for people to explore and learn and grow together.

**Amaha Sellassie:** It's just seeing how we're building this next generation that has access to this equipment and opens up these possibilities like how can I see myself in this work and provide possibilities. I love what a makerspace is doing, I'm still learning and growing about how it all operates but it's just amazing to see the power that it has to activate a community and build a local economy, like Cherelle was saying, all the individual houses are now like having a way to come together and to build together and have access to equipment that they didn't have before and so it's like, how do you create the space to allow people to step into their vision and activate their gifts on a higher level and scale.

**Ebony Joy:** It shows the assets that a community has like material assets, but also the skills that they have, and are willing to share with each other to really, like, ignite that creativity within us. Amaha you spoke a lot about, rewriting narratives and how we need to be the ones telling our stories. So what is the story that you all want to create in Co-op Dayton around solidarity economy and cooperative models and what's the story that you envision on a wider scale?

**Amaha Sellassie:** I think that's a great question. I think it's a sense of knowing that we truly are the ones we've been waiting for and it sounds great, but it's like, man, we truly are. If not us, then who? How do we build a world that acknowledges human dignity and how do we build an economy that is grounded in human dignity? Sometimes we see it as separate that, oh, there's human dignity, and then there's the economy, and they're at odds with each other, and that economy is based upon exploitation. How are we building a world that's grounded in fundamental equality and human dignity and then

building out from there? How do we build a space where all our gifts and talents are being utilized, in that process of being utilized, we're building an economy and good paying jobs to move our community forward. For me personally, I believe beloved community is possible. I don't think that is something that we have to wait for. It's all about how we acknowledge each other until a certain extent, how can we create something that shows what's possible, that other places around the globe can also know what's possible. Even as we're looking at other people around the globe, it's like imaginal cells, like different communities are rising up with these different ways that are centered in human dignity, etc, etc and we're learning from each other. This is like the human story and it feels like we're at that point of decision where King would say a chaos or community, but I would also say, status quo, or interdependence. We're at this point of we got to choose. Those that choose community we got to embody community, we got to embody cooperation. There's these fundamental shifts that we have to make and so I think it's inherent that we embody it, that we make it known that it's possible and then by making it possible, then people have a social choice. Like, if you show two glasses of dirty water then how do you choose but the more that we make visible that actually in all of its complexity and messiness, there still is a way. Then that can inspire others, like I can choose if I don't want this dirty water no more or we might not even see the water is dirty until you see clean water, like, damn, this whole time, I've been drinking dirty water, this is clean water over here now so how do I hop over? How do we create these type of spaces locally and globally? The cool thing is, I've been traveling around a lot, it's happening globally, this is not an isolated incident but people are rising up all over the globe and figuring out different ways to work together as community. Then we're coming together as various communities and building up that larger ecosystem, so it's an exciting time to witness this.

**Ebony Joy:** Cherelle, do you want to add anything?

**Cherelle Gardner:** I'm just processing and taking it all in, I love the opportunities to hear and learn from Amaha. I also think about when you talk about rewriting our stories, or reclaiming our stories of the past. Capitalism is a new, how we're functioning and not fully seeing ourselves is interdependent is new. So when we talk to our grandparents, or hear stories of that generation, I remember hearing stories of how everyone had a garden in their backyard, even chickens in the city in their backyard, and they would trade and exchange amongst their neighbors, and how everyone looked out for each other but that story has been stolen from our collective memory, oftentimes. So how do we reclaim that history for ourselves?

**Amaha Sellassie:** I appreciate that Cherelle, because you made me to think of Sankofa, how we look forward as we're moving backwards. Shout out to Dr. Jas from National Black Food Justice Alliance because she talks about how cooperation is our

ancient technology. It's this way that we had of meaning and seeing each other and seeing ourselves in relation to each other. Right now it's like recapturing our culture and so from a Black lens perspective, we're reimagining Blackness, beyond the gaze of white imagination. We've had this whole thing pressed upon us and now we're breaking free and we're using cooperatives and organizing in general, as a way of like, what is this black future that we are creating that is not excluding anybody. We're not denying people's human dignity in the process but how we're moving forward and paving away that generations to come can be normalized in a new space. Frantz Fanon says that each generation has to rise to the occasion to meet the needs of that generation. It feels like we're at this stage of, are we going to pass these intergenerational wounds to future generations, are we going to be the generation that has those tough and honest, hard conversations? I used to say building a shared future from a divided path, but really, our future is always shared. Are we going to be intentional about building that shared future together? I think that's the challenge of this hour.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah and I want to give credit to it still exist in some places, I think we have just been trained not to recognize it. Like solidarity shows up in our families, it shows up in our churches, it shows up in our formal and informal social groups. It's like every moment where your car breaks down, and someone gives you a ride to work, or to the grocery store. We have these practices as a part of our survival, because we would have no other way to survive if we weren't relying on one another. We just have to make that the norm and not just a survival strategy. It is just a way of being in space and in community with one another. Yeah,

**Amaha Sellassie:** I can get real heady but the practical is what she just said, right? Like it's already happening. How do we make visible what's already taken place because we do it constantly.

**Ebony Joy:** Yes, and this was our being long before capitalism, it even was something that we practice much longer than capitalism has existed. So it's crazy how this is something that is the status quo and it's disconnecting us from our source, because our source has lived much longer than capitalism.

**Cherelle Gardner:** And that's what capitalism has to do to survive, it has to make us forget, it has to feel normal. Otherwise, we would do something else that would eventually end capitalism.

**Ebony Joy:** Like you were saying Cherelle, this is already happening in our communities in small ways, what solidarity looks like, so how can people show up to this moment?

**Cherelle Gardner:** Yeah, I think the most important thing, or one of the most important would be recognizing that it's happening, but who gets to benefit off of it. Like we work in solidarity in our workplaces, they tell us to get along and get our work done and work in teams, right, but who gets to profit off of the labor, and the benefit that that produces? It's typically not us unless you work in a co-op. So see how it's happening, and how capitalism and the bosses and people are benefiting off of your solidarity with one another. Think of how do we turn that around, so that we get to benefit off of our own creativity and solidarity and collaboration, so that it benefits us in a way that we need it to.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Ashe, I would triple cosign. I think the other piece to it that she mentioned in the beginning, is how we're moving from aspiration to acceptance, there's a changing of the season happening right now. It's one thing to aspire that one day in the great by and by, it's another to know that it's right now, you know what I mean? The more that we know of the moment that we're in, the more we can act true to that moment. The more that we're acting true, then the more that pathway gets more visible, there are all these people that are like there's a better way, there's a different way. How do we live true to those aspirations in the moment? How to live more fearlessly in the way that we move amongst each other? I'm learning myself, we're walking and crawling into this thing. How do we cast off these things that don't serve us and truly live into the moment and find out what is possible?

**Ebony Joy:** Study is such a good way, collective study is such a good way to know this. Y'all were doing this, with the Economics for Emancipation course, which is a free course that anybody can do, it's self-guided, and it's all around different economic systems. So yes, study, and also, this podcast emerged from knowing that something was wrong and I wanted to figure out what were these other models around the world so that people could be like, oh, if they did that, what can I create in my own community or what can I tap into in my own community? So also, look for the groups that are doing solidarity economy and cooperative type of work, invest in those businesses, put your money in those businesses, maybe become a member, if that's a possibility. There's so many ways to plug in on like, the micro level of how you relate to the people around you, even your neighbors especially, do you communicate with them? Do you know what their needs are? From that, I'm sure there's so much that can be cultivated together. So thank you all so much for this conversation.

**Cherelle Gardner:** Thank you for your work and for creating the space. We're all going to learn together, having all of these different mediums for absorbing this information.

**Amaha Sellassie:** Ashe ashe, you created a watering hole that we can all come and learn together. So appreciate it and the opportunity to share and learn.

*[Music - Solidarity Economy (Riddim) by MADlines]*

**Ebony Joy:** There are many ways you can be in reciprocity with us. If you are, or know of a collective model that aligns, let's connect so we can spotlight the story. Share episodes, especially with your friends and family who aren't aware of collective models but are unfulfilled with this economy. With your support, we can continue archiving the stories that aren't being elevated but are necessary for our collective elevation.