

Cooperative Journal Podcast

“Solidarity Economy Shorts” in collaboration with New Economy Coalition
Solidarity Economy Shorts #4: **Resourcing Black Solidarity Economies**

Featuring:

Shardé Nabors: Resource Redistribution Director at New Economy Coalition

Erin Backus: Member of the Maternal Health Equity Collaborative and BSEF Working Group

Georie Bryant: Founder of Symbodied and member of BSEF Working Group

Ebony: Host

[Music - Solidarity Economy (Riddim) by MADlines]

Ebony: Hi, my name is 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.

The Black Solidarity Economy Fund (BSEF) was created by the New Economy Coalition to resource, convene, and uplift the work of the Black solidarity economy movement.

The fund is managed by their member-led working group that has the autonomy to make decisions about who receives the grant and how much is awarded. Since 2020, they have redistributed \$730,000 to Black solidarity economy groups across the nation.

In this episode, I speak with former grantees and members of the working group, Erin Backus from the Maternal Health Equity Collaborative and Georie Bryant from Symbodied. They share about their solidarity economy organizing in maternal healthcare and agriculture as well as the ancestral wisdom that informs their work. They talk about the collective regranting process and how it felt to shift from grantee to grantmaker. We also delve into the current barriers to weaving a Black solidarity economy network, the future they envision for a robust Black solidarity economy, and some practical ways to activate this vision.

Before the interview begins, Shardé Nabors, the resource redistribution director at New Economy Coalition, grounds us in defining the solidarity economy, what BSEF is, the intention for starting it, and their plans for expansion.

Shardé: At its core, the solidarity economy is an organizing framework that is revolutionary, democratic, and anti-capitalist. It seeks to create and sustain economies that move in opposition to our current extractive economy, and it's community centered and aims for collective liberation. The term itself came to the U.S. from the World Social Forum in Brazil but the practices have existed long before the term. Solidarity economy frameworks are rooted in indigenous practices that have always existed and resisted capitalism.

Within the context of Black communities, both in the U.S. and throughout the diaspora, we see solidarity economies in things like Susus, co-ops, community organizing, and mutual aid efforts. We're familiar with the grandmas and the aunties, who create ecosystems of care taking care of the kids, cooking for the block, even saving money to buy property or provide help to single mothers. Susus are something that come all the way from the motherland and describe communities coming together to save collectively and redistribute resources to individuals. So as Black folks in the U.S. and around the world have been seen as a commodity, and essentially used to build our current extractive economic systems, Black folks have always created alternatives that disrupt and resist capitalism. Historical gatekeeping from employment and education have essentially required Black communities to build ecosystems of our own, that not only help us survive, but thrive in spite of violent oppression.

The Black Solidarity Economy Fund (BSEF) was created in 2020 when we were all kind of in the middle of this cultural moment when Black folks were demanding to be seen

and heard. So Black staff at New Economy Coalition had been identifying some anti-blackness within the network. You know, it exists in a lot of different spaces, so no surprise. Staff reached out to membership and essentially asked what was needed for Black folks in the network. So BSEF was then created as a space to resource Black leadership within the solidarity economy movement. One of the foundational pieces of the Black Solidarity Economy Fund is that it is a member led space and when we do our grant making those decisions are made by a lot of the folks that are also doing this work deeply. So informed decisions made by the folks that are most directly impacted by the work is super important to not only the way that BSEF does grantmaking, but the way that NEC does grant making overall.

In the first round of funding, we moved about \$150,000 to Black led projects and since then we've moved over \$730,000 into Black led solidarity economy projects.

BSEF has quickly grown beyond a fund and grant making vehicle. In 2023, we hosted a strategic planning retreat in Oakland, where we discussed expanding our work to include programming, convenings, trainings, and more. We are actually currently raising funds to support an in person convening for BSEF grantees, NEC members, and other movement partners this summer. We'll be gathering in Durham, North Carolina to engage in discussion around Black radical democracy and we hope to continue to strengthen relationships and build a shared vision for Black solidarity economy work in our network.

We also are going to open our fourth round of funding in the Fall of 2024, where we hope to move between \$200 - \$300,000, no biggie, to more Black led organizing. Our grantees are continuing to do great work to support alternative economies and Black communities and we're hoping to support them beyond the monetary to continue to grow the capacity of the fund.

Ebony: Now that we've received some context from Shardé, we're going to transition to welcoming Erin and Georie to the podcast. Hi Erin and Georie, thank you so much for saying yes to teaching us about the work you are doing within the solidarity economy movement, and specifically for the Black Solidarity Economy Fund. Let's start with the initiatives that brought you to the fund. Erin, you're a member of the Maternal Health Equity Collaborative, and you all created a Collective Care Fund. I would love for you to share what that is and what sparked its inception.

Erin: Yes, so thank you for having me. The Maternal Health Equity Collaborative is made up of multiple doula, birthwork organizations, and parents support organizations in Central Texas. So basically, our staff is the people providing birth support.

My organization, Black Mamas ATX, specifically, is one of the ones among us who prioritize serving pregnant Black women too. So as like the caregivers for the caregivers, we kind of wanted to start a fund for ourselves, because as you all probably know, nonprofits don't always have the resources to be able to offer benefits that may just come naturally to other profit models of business and everything. So our Collective Care Fund started as a way for us to be able to provide for each other in times where resources we might need might not necessarily be found within the individual nonprofits we work at that make up the collaborative. Such as maternity care, maternity leave for ourselves.

Ebony: Yes, I was just about to ask you, what are some of the things that people have used the care fund for?

Erin: Yes, so we were able to fund maternity leave for two members. We also helped a member who was experiencing a little bit of housing insecurity, we were able to help them with their rent for a month. So it kind of serves as like an FMLA, but extended just to cover whatever gaps may arise, you know, that one of the members may need.

Ebony: Thank you so much for sharing that and Georie, I also want to learn about Symbolised and the work that y'all are doing, what sparked its creation.

Georie: Symbolised was created out of a need of working in a lot of different parts of the food industry. I worked in kitchens for a very long time, majority of my life I spent working in kitchens, and I had gone through this long story of ancestrally being around food in our community, in very different iterations. Whether it was through my grandparents or working at this nonprofit in our community that did a lot of feeding and things of that nature and eventually going into culinary school. Out of culinary school, I got into farming. When you're in culinary school and you're in the food industry, you actually don't learn a lot about the agriculture space and vice versa. Like many agrarians don't know about what actually happens in the food industry on that side as well. Initially it started out with me just wanting to help these two components work together. I just started seeing the economic failures amongst Black people who are farmers and Black people who work in the food industry, and all different varying levels. I was trying to figure out what was causing this disparity in some of these spaces that I was working in.

So part of me also at one point in time, during this journey, got really interested around the time actually of Trayvon Martin's murder. It kind of put me back into the space of

like, you're just thinking about the industry, but what about your community and the food disparity those communities are shaping. During that time, a community engagement mentor of mine was working on a project around history and once I started looking at the food industry from a historical place, I started seeing why the food system works the way it does and why these disparities are like this. It's a system rooted in enslavement, it still has a lot of tendencies surrounding that type of oppression. One thing I used to tell people, you can't go in a bank and yell at a teller, well at least you shouldn't, but people feel like they can go to a restaurant and yell at a waitress. Why do we think that? Why is that ingrained in our system that this is the place where I can express this type of anger? Where did that come from? Who were the people originally doing the job?

Anyway, once I started looking at the history, and the systemic parts of it that were creating this disparity, I really wanted to address the economic implications surrounding it. I really wanted to take a deep dive and look into - what is it that our economic system does that causes these Black, Brown, and Indigenous folks to struggle so much trying to maintain businesses that are around trying to feed people specifically. Whether it is an open air market, or so on and so forth.

So, that is what that encouraged me to do and then we started looking at alternative models, there's a lot of information out there around cooperatives. One thing that I would say is that what we have found is that worker-owned cooperatives, cooperatives that center the laborers, are the most equitable, and it's going to get you close to something sustainable that's further from exploitation. That's what we do, we focus on the people who are doing the work, the farmers, the growers, and then we build that way.

Ebony: I love how both of your work, Erin and Georie, that they're both connected to taking care of the people that are at the foundation of our well being. People that are growing our food, the ones that are helping to birth our babies and care for them after, the ones that usually don't receive the utmost care in our system. They're actually usually at the bottom of the "class." But I think through the models that you all have of empowering them through these models of care and cooperation are so essential to them realizing their power and having autonomy in these systems that otherwise aren't rooted in care. I know that you all applied for the Black Solidarity Economy Fund, and then you ended up working within the committee. So I'm curious what your role is at the fund.

Erin: Yes, so I'm a pretty new member to BSEF and the NEC (New Economy Coalition). We just applied last summer or last year, and were kind of pulled in, in the summer, during their retreat. We oriented to what BSEF has going on and since then, from

attending the meetings and things, I found out about the grantmaking group that is a part of BSEF. I was really eager to learn about that side, because within the MHEC (Maternal Health Equity Collaborative), and at Black Mamas ATX, I serve as a grant manager. So it was really nice to be on the other side of that and see what that process was like, and I really appreciate BSEF's initiative for wanting to invest in the Black community. I feel like that was something that really aligned with me as a grant writer. So yeah, the roles I play are really a member and then continuing to be part of the grant making team.

Georie: As someone who has received this grant in the past, I wanted to be a part of providing that opportunity and giving back in that way. Really learning about how do we collectively think about solidarity economy amongst Black people? I think that was a big part of the grant. For me, that was kind of something that I really wanted to think through and learn from some of the other people who have been around the space longer than I have.

It was a space to have discussion about things like, people who are practicing solidarity economy are not necessarily articulating it that way, might not necessarily know it's called solidarity economy or think about it that way. To have that discussion in real time with other Black people and talk about how do we recognize the genius that's being practiced that's not necessarily falling into these categories and labels that have been placed on them, and make sure that we give credit when credit is due.

If we see something that somebody wasn't really practicing solidarity economy, how can we pull them in, and show them what it might really be about too. It don't gotta be like, nah, you ain't doing that right. You ain't gotta sun nobody but you can really just be like, hey, this is what it's meant and this is what it looked like in history when Black people are practicing this way.

Ebony: Yeah, there's such a spectrum to the way that people are practicing the solidarity economy. I think that no one is doing it 100%, especially because we still live within capitalism and so we're trying to create these other systems within those confines.

I wanted to piggyback on what you were saying about Black people not necessarily using the solidarity economy as a way of describing their work, but that they're doing it inherently. Perhaps that's also why some of the spaces do not necessarily have a lot of Black people in them, a lot of the solidarity economy spaces, because they are not connecting to that language, or the culture in the space isn't welcoming.

So I think that it's so important that y'all are intentionally creating this network, and that the network is being expanded by former grantees. I think it's really necessary for grants to be informed by the people that are receiving them.

Connecting back to the inherentness of Black people practicing the Solidarity Economy, I always say that the Solidarity Economy is ancestral, it's not new. So I'm curious how some of this inherent wisdom of solidarity informs your collective model and practices.

Erin: Yes, so at the MHEC, a lot of us are in tune with honoring that ancestral wisdom. I think our group was an example of people who didn't necessarily refer to ourselves as the solidarity economy at first, but were doing it anyway, because of that. Because of our desire to kind of reflect back what we knew had been passed down culturally, ways of caring for each other, supporting each other.

I just pulled up our community pillars, which are birth worker sustainability, power building and organizing, holistic care, and thriving communities. So we collectively decided on this, capitalism is very individualistic, where I would say the solidarity economy is not. Even having that practice of shared power and decision making and how we're going to govern ourselves and coming up with these pillars was an example of that. Then the pillars themselves, prioritizing our own wellness and wellbeing. Like, nowhere in here is it like get all of the money and do all the things. It's just how can we make sure that by taking care of each other and ourselves, that we're able to continue taking care of our community?

Georie: That's fire. Yeah, so for us, a unique component to our work is food. A good portion of our work is looking at how our system was colonized and what does a decolonial system look like? We have a particular way that we go about engaging in it. We always start with popular education when we go into a community, so even a community of growers, most people don't think about growers as a community, but they are, I would suggest to anybody that wants to start a farm, that you do not farm by yourself or in isolation.

So anyway, when we go into that space decolonially, we're looking at what's the historical background of this community? Like, who are these African people here and what's the majority of these people in this community? So through public education and research, we just share with the community, here are the people you come from. The majority of this community is made up of these folks from this part of Africa. In this part of Africa, this is the economic structure that they had pre-colonially and this is how this worked in agriculture for them. It kind of just takes you out of this capitalist structure, even though you still got to pay bills, you still got to do that, but you are thinking about

yourself ancestrally, you're thinking about yourself pre-colonially, you think about yourself outside of that space. How can we incorporate some of those things in the way that we go about structuring the co-op as we want it to be in the future?

Ebony: Yeah, that reminds me of George Washington Carver and how he would travel to different farming communities to educate the farmers and give out these bulletins of ways that they can grow regeneratively and also culturally appropriate crops. So yeah, I think meeting people where they're at is so important and grounding them in the education and wisdom of our ancestors, that we were farming a certain way. Now they have people from the USDA come in and teach people how to grow. It's like, we don't need to learn from these extension officers how to grow food, we can be doing that ourselves with the knowledge we always have had.

Erin, I think that that's also so important for us to have a say in the principles and values that we're rooted in, and that are motivating us to do the work that we're doing. To have that as something we can always come back to and reference and remind ourselves of why we are moving towards the vision that we are.

I would love for you to share, a story or practice, you already shared some practices, so maybe a story that has embodied the solidarity economy within your group.

Erin: Yes, so what's coming to mind first right now, one of our collective programs among the five organizations in the MHEC is a child care program. Which I'm going to just take a second to humble brag on us because we are providing free childcare in a place where childcare is over \$1,000 a month, to specifically Black women who are pregnant or postpartum. I don't know if y'all know but because of COVID, there were a lot of restrictions on who could be in the birthing space but Austin is a transplant city, a lot of people there are away from home, away from their support system.

As a result if they already have other kids, they may not necessarily have had anyone to watch them while they were giving birth, CPS was being called on people. So we started this program to combat that and also to offer respite and care for moms postpartum. Even if this is your first child, everybody needs a break every now and then to be able to attend to themselves and their business. We also offer it for appointment based care. If you need to go to the doctor or you need to take your new baby to the doctor, or if you need a therapy appointment, or if your doula needs to come see you because you just had a baby. Our childcare program is there to meet all those needs.

So a story of how, because that's a practice, but a story of how this is solidarity economy was the formation of this program. We had a community development day, we brought in all the MHEC members who are working at each of these organizations, we brought in doulas and birth workers and moms. All these people came into a room and sat down and like all day, we just

thought it out, we dreamed it up. We imagined it together, collectively. Now it has grown and iterated and become this beautiful thing that's functioning so well at this point.

Georie: I have a partner in Eastern North Carolina, when we were addressing food insecurity in another city in North Carolina, we had to build a food system that was primarily Black and Indigenous. He is a brother, an elder, a mentor, in some ways. Logistics is an issue in food, we often don't think about it. In some ways, it was highlighted during the pandemic, even though the pandemic isn't over.

The brother taught me this thing called 'down the river approach' that comes from the Indigenous community he comes from, he's Black and Tuscarora. He was saying, you don't gotta go everywhere to get the food. You just need one person that's headed this direction to drop it off with this person headed this direction, then drop it off to this person headed in this direction and eventually, all of it would get to where we needed it. It was an Indigenous form of logistics that was able to help us feed our people in urban centers, even though this food was coming from rural spaces all throughout North Carolina.

Erin: That's awesome. I just had to jump in and say that, that was so cool.

Ebony: That is really cool. That's like a solidarity assembly line for food. I love that y'all are offering free childcare that's so important and that y'all had this community dreaming process made up of people that you're actually trying to serve. So that's really beautiful. I want to bring us back to BSEF, to the fund, and for you to share a little bit more about the regranting process and how you all manage that collectively.

Erin: Yes, so one thing that stood out to me about the collective nature of this grant making process, which again, is my very first experience with grant making, and also BSEF is my introduction to the solidarity economy as referred to in that way. Something we did before we even started looking necessarily at all the applications was deciding on the base amount. We came up with about, like, five prioritization areas. Okay, you fit the base model, and you are doing this and you're doing this other thing, we can give you some more.

Georie: I do want to say, because I didn't shout out this farmer and I don't want to be talking about people's ingenuity without you know giving credit, it was a farmer from Eastern North Carolina Farmer Collaborative and I want to shout them out before moving on to the next thing.

I think what Erin said is true, just being clear on there is a priority. I want us to do a better job of somehow communicating out to the world all the different wide spectrum of ways that people, Black and Indigenous people are practicing solidarity economy amongst themselves. All these different things, I wouldn't think of logistics as a part of it, but it is, there ain't no economy without it right? There ain't no economy without mothers, there ain't no economy without mothers. We just don't think about all these components.

I think that was really key too in those prioritizations that Erin is talking about. These people, in some ways with these identities, who are like triple, quadruple marginalized in certain areas practicing these different forms of economy, when they're so heavily pressured by society, to not even be a part of it but also be exploited by it. It's really keen to make sure that we're focusing on them, as we think about how we distribute that fund.

Ebony: How did that feel, to have that agency and to be on the side of being a grantee to then being a part of the grant choosing process?

Erin: For me it was something I wanted to take really seriously, you know, having had the experience of applying and trying to meet a need, with a request. It felt really, it was bittersweet honestly, because it was so awesome to be able to make as many grants as we did, to be able to put funds in the hands of people. Especially like one of the prioritization areas were groups with low overall organizational budgets. So this may have been like their first grant they may have ever received or among the first, they're still in initial stages trying to get off the ground. So being able to be like, yes we see you, we see what you're doing, we value that, here's some help with that, was awesome. But saying no was so hard, because it's just, we can't give to everybody. I think if we had unlimited money, we would but when we did have to come to those tough calls, that was tough.

Georie: In some ways, I felt a little bit of impostor syndrome because I felt like I wasn't supposed to be in that position. I'm going to get a little controversial here, but sometimes in nonprofit spaces, communities on the ground, people on the ground doing the work are often not the ones who get to make those types of decisions. Imposter syndrome has a particular way of hitting you, where you're like, am I responding to this power I've been given and maybe I shouldn't be making these decisions. It's got this really interesting way of making you second guess yourself, even when a decision has to be made and when you are like no. If you shouldn't have been here people wouldn't have invited you, so yeah, I definitely felt that. There were people in the space who had way more experience that were there and were the voice of reason in some ways, and we could ask questions. It was those tensions.

Ebony: Yes, I've definitely also felt the imposter syndrome and it's like a strange feeling to have that power. I would go through conversations in my head of like, well, if it's not me, then maybe it would be put in the hands of someone that doesn't care as much and so that brought me ease to having that power. It's such a tension for me that we have to choose yeses and noes to things that are like, essential for our well being a lot of the times, it just creates this sense of scarcity, that there aren't enough resources to go around. So to then, like, possibly be the person that's affirming that for somebody else is not a good feeling.

How has plugging into this network empowered your solidarity economy organizing?

Erin: Well, what comes to mind for me when you say that was meeting everybody who's part of BSEF that came to Oakland last year for our conference. Just seeing like Georie has already mentioned today, how many different areas and sectors we're all in and still doing solidarity

economy work. We have Black people doing solidarity economy work in the maternal health space, in the food space, in the energy space, in the environment space, in education, meeting basic needs, and housing. Like, we really got it all y'all, we really got it all.

Knowing that there's this big network of people, especially when there was an all grantee and perspective grantee call in the Fall last year, and just seeing that again. If we ever want to just link up and go on and just take over and just you know do our thing, I think we have all the people power to do so. It makes me reflect on the people power that we're leaning into when in the MHEC space. It puts me in the mind of a retreat we're planning right now and a twice a year event that we hold for the community, which is a free baby shower. We lean on people, we're using their garages and everything, we're accepting donations from people who have babies or just want to contribute by buying the things. We all meet up twice a year, and really push it in the community because people need help but all these people may have your need right around the corner.

Georie: BSEF has a retreat that the grantees and folks are invited to which we want to get more. There's one coming up soon, that we're currently planning that I'm kind of a little involved with because it's going to be not too far from where I'm at. I'm kind of excited about that so I can get to show people my spot.

I think just wanting more spaces where you can gather collectivity and in some ways it leaves a yearning for this space in this time, because it's really important right now and it's gonna be really, really important next year for us to be together and be sharing with each other, strategies and concepts, like how can we be self determined. It's going to be really, really important for us to be able to do this for ourselves, like Erin's talked about, I think that that's a possibility and there's hope in that.

Ebony: 100%, we already have a holistic network to meet all of our needs and we really just need to link up and talk, and like you said, strategize. I'm wondering, what are some of the barriers to us weaving this network?

Erin: We are practicing the solidarity economy while living in a capitalist state and so our time is commodified, just by the nature of where we live. Like Georie was saying, you still got to pay bills, there's still things that you might have to do just to get through until we get to that place where we're thriving without it being such a burden to get there. So I feel like being able to all have the same time and space to have that link up, to come together, to meet and gather, and strategize, and do the work of pushing it forward.

First off, capitalism draining the mess out of us, everybody is tired and especially if you're trying to do something alternative to the system, even just being part of the system is tiring. If you are doing that, because you got to pay bills, but you are also trying to be alternative at the same time, that's a lot of energy. Then still love on your family and drink water and touch grass, and you know all the other things you just need to do to be. That's kind of a barrier.

Ebony: Yeah, that deeply resonated with me, it's definitely a privilege to have time to dream and strategize. I'm curious, also, to hear from both of you, what is the future you envision for having a robust solidarity economy for Black people?

Georie: You trying to get me in trouble, you trying to get me in trouble. I really want us to be decolonized. I want our communities, our children, and our families and when I say that, I mean as gender expansive as possible, I want all of us to be decolonized. To understand the things that were handed to us or given to us, or the conditions we were put into, do not have to be the conditions in which we live out on a day to day basis.

How we see each other, how we care for each other, how we love each other, really be reflected in something that's not rooted in our oppression. That goes down to the foundation, whether it's food, or whether it is how we even classify what family is, how we classify what human is, all of those things, how we include ourselves in what is Black, like even the understanding of the diaspora. So, yeah, I really want to see us decolonized and that's the safest answer I can give you without getting in trouble.

Erin: Piggybacking off of that, picturing that as you were describing, us decolonized Georie, I'm seeing like, Black people feeling free enough to be and do. I just feel like I know so many people that have so many skills and talents and that's not even what they do for a living or they just throw down in the kitchen because this is what they do and that's what makes them happy.

To your point of the food industry, that is supporting people's livelihood, being alive, we all need to be able to eat, or like mothering and loving on people seems to come so naturally to the doulas I work with. It's great that they found that work, but to be able to support them in a way where they can do that for the community and for themselves, there's no hint of anyone feeling overburdened or overworked or like I have to keep going just because money is attached to this, you know. So people being able to do their thing that they love doing that they're passionate about, that comes naturally to them or whatever, that benefits all of us, without it, feeling in any way exploitative or taking from the joy of actually carrying it out. I feel like there are enough people doing enough things for us to eventually get there.

Ebony: Yes, I wanted to reiterate what you said Georie about the conditions we currently have is not what we have to live on a day to day basis, times will change. We need to dream it up and practice it. Yeah, like you said, Erin, like no more doing shit just because we feel like we have to in order to survive, I really, really hope that in our lifetime, we do not have to do that anymore.

I also want you all to share some practical ways that we can nurture this vision that you all are describing.

Erin: What comes to mind for me is sharing and resting. I think these are things you don't have to have an organization to do, it can be in your everyday life. Even thinking of that 'down river principle' that Georie was talking about, it makes me think of my grandma. That's kind of what she would do. She's living in Arkansas, and has friends who grow stuff or in her

network of friends, she just delivers food to people just because she knows all of them and she's going to see them anyway so might as well. Or I'm going to take these clothes from this friend to this friend so her grandkids can have something to wear, just whatever. I think we all do that, probably to some extent without thinking about it but having some intentionality behind it, all of us collectively.

Just just look around, you probably were going to get rid of some stuff anyways, or you got too much of something or you might have a need over here that again, somebody down the street might be able to fill. Also rest, like, it's not going to be sustainable, it's not going to be genuine, it's not going to be any of those things if we're tired, and we're doing it from a place of begrudgement, feeling like we have to or just at our wits end and doing it, take time to rest. We're talking about Tricia Hersey and rest is resistance right now and it's very anti-capitalist to believe that you're not a machine, you're a human and rest is an inherent right. It's something that you need to be able to thrive so being able to do that so you feel the energy and the love and the power to be able to do all that sharing, I think is really important.

Georie: I think for me, one of the most, it's so many different components of it for me. Knowing where I come from, asking the question and sometimes there's different reasons why we might not necessarily be tied to our ancestry genealogically or genetically, but when we talk about communities, we're not talking about your DNA, because a lot of your culture is given to you by people who spend a lot of time with. So just knowing you, your community, the history of that space, who those people are, and where they came from, I think that's a practice that really, really, put me on this journey.

Also another one is just trying to rebuild my relationship with the world around me, with nature. I think one of the most devastating things that colonization ever did to African people was to create a separation between them and Mother Earth. We are stewards, we are lovers of Mother Earth and there's so many different Indigenous names for her in West Africa that we have lost and in almost all of them she's the primary focus of our moral and ethical lens. So that's pretty much the thing that I would say.

Ebony: Yes, to all of that. I think that our severed connection to the Earth is what a lot of destruction stems from, and also this idea that there's scarcity, because in nature, it is very abundant. Yeah, we need to go back to the practices of just resting in nature and we are owed time back so we definitely shouldn't feel guilty about our rest and rejuvenation. So thank you all so much, for sharing your wisdom and for the amazing and necessary work that you're doing.

[Music - Solidarity Economy (Riddim) by MADlines]

Ebony: 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.

