

UyenThi:

Hello. Welcome to the Solidarity Is This podcast. This is UyenThi Tran Myhre at the Building Movement Project. We are thrilled to be featuring a special episode today highlighting the first conversation in our State of Solidarity series. This series hosted by Solidarity Is at BMP includes three virtual gatherings that explore the evolving praxis, demands and trajectories of solidarity within social justice movements. You can register for the series on our website at solidarityis.org.

This first session focuses on how we build and strengthen solidarity in an era of silos. And in this episode, you'll hear the conversation lightly edited from earlier this spring. Here is my colleague and our State of Solidarity moderator, Adaku Utah kicking it off.

Adaku:

We are Solidarity Is, which is a program of the Building Movement Project and we work together to transform isolation, domination and extraction into more interdependent solidarity and liberation across movement landscapes. And we do this through offering practical tools and resources, uplifting transformative narratives, and also facilitating movement exchanges just like this one, so that we have a collective capacity to build our shared strategy analysis and praxis around solidarity inside of our movement landscapes.

This series is one of many interventions and offers that we're hoping to make to movement and have been making some movement for quite some time where we get to honor the many different manifestations of how solidarity is embodied in our movement work, and also wrestle with some of the challenges that we're up against and create a space where we can also share strategies and tools with each other that we hope can fortify the work that we're doing together.

This space is an extension of our own commitment to rekindling the necessary relationships that we need right now to build power. And we're doing this because we recognize that we are in a political landscape that is filled with so much chaos, crisis and contradiction. Right now, as we're gathering together, so many of our communities are facing intense and chronic crises from climate destruction to increased concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, to genocides that are happening in places like Palestine and Sudan, and the devaluation and criminalization of our bodies and also care that's extended to our bodies. And all of this is also moving alongside the mass amounts of isolation that many of our communities are facing right now, mass amounts of depression and many folks feeling like they're not connected to their sense of meaning and purpose and role in this time.

And as there's all this crisis happening, there's also a lot of resistance and reclamation. So I want to give honor and reverence and celebrate the mass mobilizations and organizing that's happening to end genocide in Palestine and Sudan, the ways that reproductive justice organizers are coming together to fight and protect our bodily autonomy and all of the different ways that we are investing in communities and divesting from the state. And it's an election year. Many of us in this room are thinking really strategically about how do we engage and how might we build trustworthy and durable power in these times?

So much crises happening right now and we know that there's not one intervention that's going to transform them. In fact, we need multiple interventions and we really believe that solidarity has a lot to offer around how we respond in this time. And we know that for a lot of us, we've been paying attention to the ways that solidarity has either been used as a very clear set of strategies, and in other places, being used as buzzwords that don't have little substance in our communities.

In our work, we're not interested in the kind of solidarity that manifests as performative gestures or symbolic acts that lack substance or long-term impacts, or the kind of solidarity that perpetuates neglect

and isolation. We're not interested in that. We're also not interested in solidarity that co-ops our work or erodes trust amongst us. We are deeply invested in cultivating transformative solidarity inside of our communities and in our movement work.

So I want to go ahead and bring up one of my colleagues and comrades in this work, Deepa Iyer, to share more about when we say transformative solidarity, what do we mean by this? Thank you so much, Deepa.

Deepa:

Thank you, Adaku, for bringing everyone together. Hello and welcome to this conversation. I think it'll be so revelatory and powerful. So I wanted to just start by saying that here at Solidarity Is and the Building Movement Project, we are big on frameworks to anchor and guide our movement work. So wanted to offer a little bit of grounding around transformative solidarity. We've been shaping this over the past six years and it's very iterative and emergent. So solidarity, we often say is a verb and a practice. It's an action that we take as individuals and organizations over and over again to raise awareness, to advance the goals of a broader cause or campaign or movement. And we hear often from the organizations that we work with that there are both incentives and challenges when it comes to solidarity practice. So on this slide, you can see some of those incentives where solidarity has been used to catalyze power-sharing among groups, strengthen movements for equity and liberation.

On the next slide, we see some more examples of solidarity being used as a practice and a strategy to support cross-community alliances or to disrupt us-versus-them narratives and wedges that occur. On the next slide, we wanted to share a little bit around the practices. We've identified six practices that often show up in solidarity practice across generations and time and movements. And many of these are actually present right now in the growing campus anti-war movement, liberatory zones that are burgeoning. So for example, centering the process of being led by the demands of those directly affected is reflected in the ways in which students are focusing on ceasefire and divestment asks that come from Palestinian activists and people. Two other practices are connections and commonalities, which remind us that while it's vital to find the links between our communities and issues, that we must not flatten our unique experiences.

On the next slide, three more that I'll quickly go over. Co-liberation is the way that we understand that freedom and equality can't be reserved just for some. We must strive for it for all of us and being a co-conspirator is embodied in the understanding that often we have to take risks to lift up a cause and be in collaboration. We see that with students risking arrest, suspensions and more.

And finally, building capacity is a lifelong practice that requires us to think about accountability, to think about discernment, and to build up the muscle for conflict and continuity in our movement spaces. I know that all of our speakers will touch upon many of these practices when they respond to the questions that Adaku will give them.

Adaku:

Thank you so much, Deepa. Really appreciate you offering that framework, and also want to honor the multiple frameworks of solidarity that are in this space. Solidarity did not begin with any of us. It's not going to end with any of us. We all come from roots and legacies that have been doing solidarity for quite some time and we want to take a moment to honor some of the lineages that have been formed our own work around solidarity. So I want to give reverence and honor, a shout-out to organizations, collectives like the Free African Society that started in 1787 to challenge capitalism, to abolitionists that are creating safety and confronting colonialism in Hawaii, to the [inaudible 00:08:47] people who have

been reclaiming indigenous land, and disability justice organizers who have been supporting us in confronting and challenging the foundational myth of ableism and supporting how we center our bodies as they are.

So feel free to drop in your own roots, some of the roots that have informed how you understand and practice solidarity in this time. And we're going to actually move with this first reflection, this first question around roots with our panel, and if we stop sharing the slides now and bring up our incredible panel. Yes, so, so good to be with you all and learn alongside you, Darakshan, there goes Darakshan, there goes Xochitl, there goes Woods. Hey, Yvonne. Hey, Rachel. Welcome you all, and thank you for all of your incredible work moving our convenings towards more solidarity.

So rather than reading your incredible bios, and if folks are interested, we have their bios in their Padlet, we're going to actually have them introduce themselves via their roots. What are the roots that have informed your work around solidarity and your practice around solidarity? And we're going to start in alphabetical order by first name. So Darakshan, we'll kick it off to you, then Rachel, then Woods, and then Xochitl, and then Yvonne.

Darakshan:

Thank you so much, BNP, as always, for your incredible organizing. [foreign language 00:10:30], folks. My name is Darakshan. I am the founding Executive Director of Muslims for Just Futures. I think in the name right there is talking about our roots. First and foremost, for me, a lot of my work and my organizing and solidarity practices come from specifically my ancestors, my great-grandparents, who were part of the anticolonial struggles in South Asia to get rid of the British colonial rule. And also were part of the broader Muslim liberation movements that were really weaving in Islamic liberation theology into social justice work.

So ever since a little child, they really shaped a lot of my work. And I think that phrase of freedom is a constant struggle, is something that I saw each one of their generations embody of solidarity is not just against state violence, but it's also around the ways in which patriarchy and gender-based violence all operate. And so those are my roots.

Adaku:

Thank you, Darakshan. Give thanks. Rachel, let's go to you.

Rachael:

[foreign language 00:11:28]. Hi, everyone. I'm Rachel Lorenzo. I am the founder and Executive Director of Indigenous Women Raising. The roots that have informed my current work and practice of solidarity informs how I answer this question and also the work that we do as a Pueblo and Apache queer parent, and growing up specifically with traditional Pueblo values around love and respect and obedience that we recognize our connection to the entire globe. And when we pray, we pray for the whole world and conflicts that are happening, and then we pray for our region, then our communities, our families, and then ourselves. And understanding our relatives and our community have such a long intertwined history. So naturally, our futures will also be intertwined. And so that is really how we try to view our practice of solidarity with other groups across the country is knowing that we're all related somehow.

Adaku:

Thank you so much, Rachel. Kicking it over to you, Woods, what are your roots?

Woods:

Hi, everyone. My name is Woods Ervin. I use her/she pronouns, and I'm with Critical Resistance. I'm on Huichin Ohlone Land in Oakland, California. So Critical Resistance was birthed out of organizers from multiple movements coming together for our founding conference and organization. There were folks who were from the Radical Prisoners Movement, the women of color, feminisms movements, student and civil rights movements and anti-colonial and third world liberation struggles. And as they forged our politic around the prison industrial complex and abolition, they realized the organization needed to be multi, multi, multi, multiracial, multi-geographic, multi-generational given who is impacted by prisons and courts and policing. Because prisons policing and courts weave their way into different parts of society, schools, hospitals, our communities, et cetera, we at Critical Resistance have to work with different sectors in order to actually effectively pull off our campaigns and projects that uproot those parts of the prison industrial complex. So we actually have to practice solidarity and actually to do our politic, right?

We use a framework, the Dismantle Change bill that requires that we work with organizations that are advocacy based to dismantle parts of the prison industrial complex organizations that are made up of directly impacted formations for the work of changing conditions and shifting power and the work to support building alternatives or just the safety and wellbeing of community members. And so some of those things are what inform my solidarity roots at CR.

Adaku:

Beautiful. Thank you, Woods. Xochitl, come on in.

Xochitl:

Hi, everyone. [foreign language 00:14:40]. It's so nice to be here and I love listening to people's roots. I'm Xochitl, and I am calling in today from Appalachia call of Florida, Gulf Coast, where I currently am an oyster farmer and local food organizer. And when I heard this question, I saw this question, what it made me think of is how I was politicized in the 90s around communities and family members of folks who'd been in the power movements. And I learned at the feet and at the knees of elders who had been active in the 60s and the 70s, and who could talk about the Black Panther Party's connection with the Red Guard, with the Young Lords, with the Chicano Moratorium Movement, with the American Indian Movement, and how folks had distinct platforms, perhaps different issues that they were centering but worked together, had shared newspapers, shared food programs.

And that was for me, the first real education that I had in solidarity in action and coming together across communities to build a very different world. So I draw from them all the time. I've gone many places and learned from people since then, but that is definitely one of my core roots of solidarity.

Adaku:

Thank you so much, Xochitl. And Yvonne, we're going to round out this question with you. What are your roots?

Yvonne:

I'm so grateful to be on this panel with such incredible folks. So my name is Yvonne, my pronouns are she/her. I'm based in Tongva Land or Los Angeles, California. I'm originally from New York City and I'm a co-founder of Solidarity Research Center. So solidarity is very important to us. We started about a decade ago as the research arm of the [inaudible 00:16:34] labor union, the Industrial Workers of The

World, to whom, which solidarity and being so-called one big union is very important in order to change our world. So I think for me, the roots are thinking about being in solidarity as one mass movement, but also considering racial capitalism and imperialism and thinking about how it's also an anti-imperialist struggle as well.

And I love, Xochitl, that you brought up our elders from the new left and the third world movement. Those are definitely inspirations for me when I think about Huey P. Newton and the idea of inter-communalism and bonding together, various liberated zones together. And also the example of Fred Hampton and the Rainbow Coalition in Chicago. And so we practice solidarity research, which we see as a form of doing research that is embedded in social movements and that blurs the distinction between researcher and what's being researched.

Adaku:

Thank you, Yvonne. And thank you all of you for illuminating and offering gratitude and reverence to the roots where you come from that really informs how we're in relationship with each other and build power in these times. Yes, we come from multiple lineages around solidarity and we know that given white supremacist culture, in particular, white nationalist culture that is often trying to punish and separate us from each other, there are silos that form in our communities and also in our movements that are working really hard to make sure that we don't build the power that we need right now to win and cultivate communities that can thrive on our own terms.

And so I want to invite Rachel first to talk about the very real reality of silos. And I'm curious, from where you sit, from where you do your work, what are some silos that you are experiencing that are impacting how you're able to build solidarity in these times? And also specifically, how do you know when silos are emerging? What are some of the signs, what are some of the patterns that show up, that reveal that a silo is either widening or about to emerge? And as you see those silos, what are some of the ways that your organization is choosing to respond?

Rachael:

For us at Indigenous Women Rising, we are in this very unique position where we are radical, ACAB, do our best to learn about abolition, and at the same time, respecting tribal sovereignty. And a lot of our tribal leaders are not there yet, I have hope for them, and how their priorities might be different as our leaders. And so trying to find that balance between what we feel is really urgent and giving folks time to understand what the issue is because when it comes to something like reproductive health injustice, indigenous people are largely left out and we don't have as much of a conversation or we're not as active in the discussions that are happening. And so that's part of what Indigenous Women Rising does is letting folks who are not indigenous know, here are the specific barriers we have that are not necessarily about race, but native people are a political group.

And as much as I think, "Abolish the United States," at the same time, we have to also respect that tribal sovereignty because without them, we don't have the kind of political power that we need to secure basic necessities like running water and education and housing and infrastructure. And there's still much to be desired with that kind of paternalistic relationship. And so I just give that kind of context to show that our organizing looks very different and it can feel pretty lonely many times because other parts of our movement towards liberation don't always take into account tribal sovereignty. And I can see why tribes or our leadership might not want to be part of building power. We're just in a really unique position and I can feel silos happening when we're not given enough time to talk about our issues, whether with our own community members.

And so that's when we have to reevaluate the language that we're using. Are we on the same page? Are we meeting our own people where they are? And ultimately, we want to be with our own relatives. And so we would choose that over more political relationships because at the end of the day, we support each other. We are the ones who are going to liberate each other, not necessarily political systems that honestly don't really profit from us thriving. And so trying to figure out how to say that to our own communities and build power together is so necessary to the work that we do specifically.

And when we're talking about silos, I think it's very different. Silos are very different from niche work that's happening, that silos can feel very negative and isolating, versus more interdependent with other movements. And so I think another way we can see where silos are starting to happen are when we can't see where our liberation is tied together, where our destinies and our futures are tied together. If we lose sight of that, then we need to reevaluate what our relationship is. Otherwise, we have our own part in creating those silos.

Adaku:

Thank you, Rachel, for illuminating those patterns that could create silos, informing or widening silos that might already exist. As someone who's been an organizer for two decades, we pay attention to the patterns so that we make sure that the patterns don't take root and impact our communities in ways that are more harmful.

As Rachel beautifully mentioned, and I want to bring you in, Woods, bring your wisdom in here. Part of the design of racialized capitalism and white nationalism is to create opportunities to divest from each other, to create more divisions, to dissipate us so that we're not able to cultivate our ability to govern and build our own collective power. And one example that I'm seeing of this is the growing professionalization and militarization of the police over the last century where tactics the US is honing in Asia and places like the Middle East and places like Africa and testing on occupied folks in those lands, and then bringing those tactics as a way to suppress and shut down our people and move us away from each other. And you've been an abolitionist for many, many years and seeing these patterns.

And so in the midst of these divisions and these divides that can be either internally created within our movements or externally created from these systemic forces of oppression, I'm curious, a successful example where you have bridged a divide and what are some lessons that you learned? What are some strategies that you had to weave together in order to make that division or that bridge amongst that division more possible?

Woods:

Okay. So at CR, we always conduct our work, our campaigns and our projects in coalition with other organizations. So never by ourselves, given what I was saying earlier about how in order to make them the most effective, we'd need other groups of people who are being impacted in other ways by policing in order to come together and to take those programs and tools down. So I'm going to talk a little bit about our campaign, the Stop Urban Shield campaign.

So this was a campaign that CR helped lead from 2015 to 2018. Urban Shield was a militarized SWAT, international war games and training that took place annually in the Bay Area over the weekend of September 11th. The targets that were part of the war games were always coded as Muslim, Arab, gang members or anarchists/activists. And it was actually billed as an emergency preparedness training, and also took all of the county's emergency preparedness training funds. So an initial group was pulled together by a national org, the War Resisters League, to protest the war games annually. But a core

group of organizations determined that we need to work on a local campaign year round in order to actually end Urban Shield. And those organizations came together built on past relationships.

So as we moved from the national to the local, we designed a clearly articulated shared goal to end Urban Shield. And then we also just made sure we had clear points of unity for the campaign so that everyone in the coalition had an agreed point of entry and departure for our campaign work. And then we created other necessary needs for coalition clear decision-making and organizing along three work groups that drive campaign strategy for legislative media outreach. And then we had a larger coalition meeting.

One issue we came up is we had a rep for one of the organizations that joined that went rogue and was doing outreach at a slant, not communicating intent, not really following our shared work plan. And this was a majority white based organization. We ended up needing to do a few interventions because it turned out that this rep was struggling to be accountable more broadly to directly impact the communities. So we did collective regrounding in points of unity, one-on-ones. We ended up setting up a steering committee that would be responsible for anchoring the strategy for the campaign and it was made up of organizations like AROC, Critical Resistance, BLM, orgs that were led by directly impacted people. We ultimately ended up having to request a new rep for the coalition, but the organization itself grew in alignment with us because we were able to communicate the political accountability mechanisms we put in place, and CR is still in strong relationship with them.

Another issue that came up because Urban Shield was billed as an emergency preparedness training, emergency medical personnel who would otherwise be getting emergency preparedness training via other departments were being taught emergency response via war games and SWAT training. So part of the expertise we needed was to have health workers who could disrupt the logic that emergencies require more policing. So we launched this work called the Oakland Power Projects, where we developed workshops along with health workers on how to address low level worker health concerns and community. The workshops were rooted in abolitionist principles, so health workers got to learn more about abolition and be in political relationship with community.

That led us to being able to calling them as a key part of disrupting the Urban Shield narrative. And we also fought for more of the county funding to be rerouted towards public health. So we ultimately won the campaign in 2018 and learned that strong campaign and coalition organizing to transform conditions helps win campaigns, and also brings everyone involved in closer alignment with the politic because you then actually take part in shifting power collectively

Adaku:

Potent, Woods. Thank you. Those are really, really clear examples of how to bring community together, how to be clear around points of entry, how we're building political education, how we are building accountability and decision-making and clear interventions that pulled different movements together to work collaboratively and it's not easy to do. So thank you for that, two clear examples.

Darakshan, I want to ask you the same question. We've had Building Movement project have had the distinct honor of getting to work with Muslims for Just Futures over the last couple of months, co-creating rapid response spaces with the BAMEMSA community, specifically around Palestinian solidarity. It's actually a report the details that work, including lessons learned around solidarity and some of the needs that organizations are asking for right now around movement infrastructure. And shout-out to your leadership, also shout-out to Deepa Iyer's leadership in co-creating and leading that space. It's been a joy to witness.

And you have a national organization that does solidarity work nationally, but also hella local in Chicago, Chi-Town. And would love for you to share an example of a successful bridging of divides because it definitely shows up in so many different ways across the national realm and the local realm?

Darakshan:

Yeah, wow. I feel like we could have so much conversation just on all of those pieces. Definitely shout-out to Deepa and BMP. Definitely encourage you all to read the 100-day report. It's literally years and years of our experience, plus the work we did with numerous black, Arab or some South Asian, Middle Eastern organizations for the last few months in terms of the needs that are emerging in this moment, but also really grounded in decades and decades of frankly, an ecosystem that has been starved by the broader infrastructure.

I think prior to answering your question, Adaku, I think one, it's I want to talk a little bit about the frame of MJF on power. So when we think about power, we really think about power with. So everywhere in our organization, we look at things as collectively. So it's whether we're building power collectively by investing in the leadership of our organizers and community, it's a collective process. With organizations, there's also a way we move power by building networks and solidarity and working across movements because at the end of the day, the infrastructures we're up against rely upon each other. You could not have this current moment around anti-Palestine racism, Zionism, if you did not have white Christian nationalism and white supremacy. You couldn't have 20 years of the war on terror that has harmed our communities, Muslim communities, if this country was not built foundationally on settler colonial violence and anti-black racism.

So understanding that these systems are built upon each other, then one way to intervene is for us to build solidarity across our communities when the state has made an intentional effort to divide and break our solidarities, and even enlist our communities against one another. So even just yesterday when I was at the Chicago encampment that is happening, the liberation zones or so forth, it was black and brown cops that were there that were policing black and brown youth, were literally calling for an end to genocide. I've seen this over and over again when we do direct actions, the cops that are in front of us are often black and brown. They're like us, but we know they work within a white supremacist system.

So in order to counter that, solidarity building is incredibly important. And so that's where power with is built with other organizations and other communities and we know that the winds in the victory has to be a cascading effect. The whole point of getting into campaigns, and I'll talk about the Chicago campaign for a minute, is so that we build our power up to be able to fight another fight and bring more people in. If we win a campaign but we lose our people, we're not building long-term power. If we're not stronger to win more organizations and newer people enlisted, then guess what? We're not building long-term power.

And I think in the work we did in the Chicago CeaseFire, one, that ceasefire wind would not have happened if it was not 15 years of Chicago Teachers Union organizing happening. We had a Mayor in place who was the breaking tie of that ceasefire because of all this organizing that had happened even before MJF had even entered the stage. Right? But then when we did build, we were building with youth organizers and I think some lessons that I learned was first of all, have a clear goal and an aim and think about making a big tent. I think the way we went about the ceasefire thing, we were like, "We're calling for a ceasefire. That's our demand. We're opening up to many people who want to join and want to bring their perspective." Some always brought a faith-based perspective, others brought a youth perspective. Some groups like the centers were like, "This is a divestment reinvestment piece because at

the end of this, Chicago is wasting billions of dollars into this policing infrastructure that also gets used on black bodies right here on the south side of Chicago, and communities actually need something else."

So everybody had their lane. They made their own connections to why this was a fight that mattered to everybody. And what I loved about it is there was multiple scales of experience. We had youth who literally just started organizing. They took over the high schools. They organized 20 high schools and went to City Council and literally disrupted shit, and that moved so many people. But then we had OG organizers who had been around for 40, 50 years with Carp, who has been doing police accountability work for such a long time.

So I also think multi-generational coalitions that allow for our elders who've been around to share their wisdom and lessons, but also room for our younger folks who want to do more agitation, more direct action, and honoring the multiplicity of those particular strategies. And it's the coalescing of those strategies together that then produces the win called CeaseFire, but we didn't stop there, right? Now we got all of these encampments happening all over Chicago. People are still throwing down. Right? So I think to me, it's all about making a clear goal, making a space for multiple people to come in, but remembering that our end goal is not even that win in that campaign. It's to make sure that we're building a bigger intent so that we keep on fighting and we keep on showing up.

Adaku:

Come on now. That's right. Building a bigger we that is intergenerational, that is clear on strategy and tactics, that is not leaving folks behind. Thank you so much, Darakshan, for that powerful, powerful work that you're doing locally in Chi-Town, and also nationally. And Xochitl, I want to bring you in. I have long admired your work over the years. So much of the work that you've been doing, it's connected to actually a lot of what Darakshan has been saying around shifting carceral and capitalistic paradigms that exist in our communities, and also within ourselves. And not only are you shifting that. Your work is also building alternative economies and ecosystems that are more delicious and dependable, I'm going to pull that line from your website because I love it so much, and work that ultimately centers our collective power.

So I'd love for you to talk about this work is hard, it's complicated, it has a lot of contradiction. What are some of the ways that you are resourcing yourself and your communities in this time, especially as we're moving from silos to more solidarity? What are some practices that you're centering inside of your work that keep people connected?

Xochitl:

Thank you. I love this. I love this conversation and all these examples that are being given and I'm going to try to tie pieces together and actually answer the question. But I was going to start with recently, I read a definition of solidarity that for me was really resonant with how I've approached it over the years. And it comes from the Minnowzine, but it said, "Solidarity, that deep, disciplined action oriented expression of love for others." That really resonated with me about what we are talking about and about how, as was just said, the reason we even are talking about solidarity and the need for it is because racial capitalism, the forces of colonialism and imperialism have divided us and have in fact pitted us against one another in many ways. And I use the us', different communities, different locations, different sub-communities.

And so this idea of us with this idea that our liberation is bound up with one another is one of the most fundamental ideas of what it is to be in right relationship, in right relationship with other humans and right relationship with this earth. That is the basis of our coming together. And when I see solidarity at

its finest, that is really what we see, is that there's this overarching understanding that our liberation is bound up with one another, that we are inextricably connected. I think Rachel said our destinies and our futures, but that in specific moments, there may be communities that are more targeted, issues that are more at play. We're seeing that right now, where they must be flanked by others of us who conceptually understand that genocide and settler colonialism on other land is our fight as well. However, in this moment, some communities may not have as much at stake, and those are the moments of great solidarity. Those are the moments where solidarity, I think as we're talking about, when I think about disciplined action oriented expressions of love, that is one that's called for.

And when I read this question, I really took it to ask how do we resource ourselves, stay nourished so that I can or that we can show up disciplined and loving and be able to take action? And something else Rachel said really resonated about how sometimes our organizations or our leadership has certain kind of political analysis and access to those networks and communities and our larger communities may not have had that and may be still living in that space of scarcity and of needing to be... Our issues need to be understood and heard and it feeling like a difficult thing to reach out and express love and solidarity with what seemed like other folks. And to me, what that boils down to is how important it is for us to root in our communities, as was also said earlier, because if I am going to engage in an action-oriented expression of love for others, I have to have a reservoir of love.

And this has taken me a long time to figure out, but that reservoir of love has to be cultivated because we live in a world that is trying to destroy that all the time. And that love has to be self-love, and I mean both as individual, but I also mean as a collective, right? Our communities. And that is what so many of the practices that we have that look really different in our different communities of cultivating self-love and self-appreciation and how we develop that reservoir so that we have some.

And I think another piece of that is this recognition of how we stay in connection with one another outside of just the moment of fight or struggle, but how we build community and relationships so that are right related. For me, what Adaku referred to is I'm talking about how we stay deliciously connected these days, how we can use food and our food pathways which are integrally connected to our ancestors and where we come from and yet we bring it to each other. And you know how we all throw down when we get into space and there's food and it's like we can learn from each other.

We have so much overlapping similarities of ingredients and these ways of our connecting which can both happen in these moments of big action and of big fight and of literal linking arms against armed forces that are coming for us or coming for some of us, that we need to cultivate the love for ourselves and our communities, and then bring that in a community building and a community deepening way with others so that we can know each other and we can understand our destinies and our futures in a very visceral way.

Adaku:

Speaking of visceral, I am curious for all of you all that are in this space, what's your reservoir looking like right now? Whether it's around love, whether it's around capacity, whether it's around connection. And wherever your reservoir is, how does it make solidarity more or less possible inside of our communities? Thank you so much for that question or just illuminating that, Xochitl. I'm feeling that right in my heart to be with that. Thank you.

Yvonne, Solidarity Research Center. You all have been studying this for quite some time, but not just studying it. Also like us, facilitating movement exchanges across so many different movements, to talk about how we build solidarity economy, not just using data science, but also story-based strategy and research that hopefully invites people. Actually no, it does invite people to take action. So as someone who does research, looking at this moment, and also looking ahead, what are some trends, some

opportunities that could either challenge or enhance our ability to be in solidarity with each other across different movements?

Yvonne:

I have to say right now, I'm really concerned about what's going to happen, as many of us, in November. I think that there's going to be a huge threat for all of us. Really, ultimately it's all of us. And it's not just here in the United States, it's globally. We are seeing the rise of fascism. We are seeing what is sort of a repeat of the 20th century happen again in the 21st, and I think there will be more efforts to divide us. There will be more efforts to pit the white working class against black people, or Palestinians against Jewish people. But I think what we need to do is to be in solidarity, to stay in solidarity, to recognize that we, generally the 99% of the people that are often excluded from material and wealth and social capital and power in this society, that we actually have more in common and together, we can actually fight and defeat those who do have the power and who do monopolize the resources.

And I think that it's not to say that we don't have differences. I think we should acknowledge what our differences are, but then also move forward on what we share in terms of our similar interests. So I mentioned before that we are very inspired by the Third World left and about two years ago, we engaged on a movement building project around municipalism. So we were inspired by experiments in Barcelona, in Rosario, Argentina, in the Zapatistas, to seize local control. So we have two projects, the Municipalism Learning Series, which is broadly a political education series to expose radical municipalism to audiences in North America, and then to deepen practice. And then also, our experiment on the ground in Los Angeles, which is Los Angeles For All. And we've been facilitating a People's Movement Assembly here and it is really hard work. It's really hard work to bring people together.

I feel like it's a microcosm of solidarity and practice, to bring people across our 500-square-mile city, ridiculous city, together across various silos, across variants, political tendencies, different communities, different racial identities, to see that we actually have something in common and we are not being represented in the powers that be. And so our project is very much inspired by the idea of municipalism, of liberating zones, of what Huey P. Newton called inter-communalism. We are seizing control of our local places, but we are not stopping there. Just like the Panthers offered to send people to Vietnam to fight the war against imperialism, we need to build connections, and that's already happening. That's what you're seeing on the campuses right now globally. We're seeing that we're all interconnected and that ultimately, we need to join together.

So at the local level, can we resist? So can we fight the powers that be and resist racial capitalism and its incursions on our being? And then can we build alternatives in self-governance and solidarity economy, or what is also known as dual power? And how do we shift finally, from the alternative so that that eclipses what we're resisting and that becomes the dominant structure? So yes, it's a lot of work. It's one thing to talk about it as an idea conceptually on a panel. It's a whole other thing to host a gathering of people and schlep stuff across the city.

I feel like this is where the hope is. Building big tents, yes, but also tense that acknowledge where our differences lie and seeing where we have enough commonalities that we can move forward and staying strong because it's not going to be pretty, I think, in the coming years. I just learned about this Project 2025 the other day. Okay, folks know about this. I'm behind. There's going to be stuff happening. And honestly, the left has been divided for too long and we splinter along various interests. This is the time for us to be together.

Adaku:

This is the time. This is the time on the clock of the world as Grace Lee Boggs, Detroit organizer, elder, ancestor, keeps reminding us of. Thank you so much, Yvonne, for both holding the concern and also the possibility. And thank you for those spaces. Those are hard spaces to pull together and we need them right now.

So we want to round out with one more question, which is just a call to action, one call to action that each of you have for our folks that are with us. What is something you want to invite folks to do? Something that's practical and radically doable that helps us move closer, helps us build solidarity in this time, especially in the midst of so many silos and fractures that are happening right now. And we'll have about two minutes per person. We'll kick off again starting with alphabetical order, first name. And Darakshan, what's your call to action?

Darakshan:

Wow. There's so many calls to action. I feel like that's what I've been doing for the past few months is literally, every single day there's a new call to action. So one, I definitely want to invite you all to continue follow Building Movement Project because I think there are a repository of many movement spaces, different events trying to bring us together. Even the fact I've been fangirling many of your organizations, but this is the first time I'm actually seeing you all. So I think even just that convening is really powerful. Follow Muslims for Just Futures. We just have so much work happening as of right now, not just at the national scale but also at the local level from Chicago to the DMV as well.

One particular invitation I want to make to you all is that literally tomorrow, we will be releasing our community-led movement strategy around what we want the White House to do around countering Islamophobia. And it's now been endorsed by 95 organizations across movements. This is something we're very much concerned about because it is essentially what we are worried about would be the government co-opting the work to fight Islamophobia, to further more criminalization, more entrenchment of the many things, the infrastructures we've been fighting. We did go ahead and submit it to the government already, the strategy, but we are inviting other movement partners to come and endorse it so we can keep people informed about what the processes and what it's going to be developing on this piece so we can get alignment within our movement partners around pushing back when we put that call out.

It's parallel to the ways in which unfortunately the White House antisemitism strategy and the ways in which we're seeing antisemitism resolutions and bills being introduced that are really a cover to repress a lot of the movement work that is happening. But that would be my one very clear invitation to the movement groups on this call. We really want to show a bigger tent of movement groups endorsing our version, really from community output... Input, apologies about that, to be able to say that we don't want a White House strategy that's going to be harming our community. So I'll put that in here in the chat. But yeah, those are my calls to action.

Adaku:

Yes. Thank you, Darakshan. How about you, Rachel?

Rachael:

I love this question so much. My biggest thing is start small if you really want to be part of this. There's a place for literally everybody, I think operating from an abundance mindset rather than scarcity, "What org do I join?" I love sewing. And so a local shop here in Albuquerque is a local hub for people who love to sew. They're like, "How can we learn more about indigenous issues?" And it was like, okay, you love

sewing, you have a quilting group. What have indigenous people contributed to the world of quilting? The history of quilting is so sacred and it's so intertwined with other communities. Learn about that. Start with what you know and what you're really passionate about and go from there, and what have these different groups contributed to that thing that you're so interested in?

And if you feel so inclined, follow us on socials because that's free. Send us an email on our website, donate if you're able to. But I think the biggest thing is, for us anyway, is just letting people know, indigenous people did not die out. We still exist. And it's a practice to include what you really love, what you really care about, and what different groups have contributed to that movement. So you can see your place in that movement with that community, and that's how we build interdependence.

Adaku:

Thank you, Rachel. Woods?

Woods:

Okay. Yeah, there's a lot in terms of call to actions. I would say broadly, I would say support abolitionist campaigning in any way you can. Whether or not folks articulate it as explicitly abolitionists or not, but I think in particular, there's this proliferation of cop cities across the country that's starting. And if there is something local to you, then please, either support with time or resources or reposting, uplifting those fights. I really think that that's tied to some of the broader concerns about the entrenchment of fascism because as we're seeing right now, how the capitalist class is able to hold their line is by deploying the police against us. Right?

And I would say bring in communities that are directly targeted, particularly in prison and formerly imprisoned communities, but also folks who are targeted by the rights agenda. And that's birthing people, immigrants, trans people, black people, communities involved in anti-colonial struggles.

And I would say lastly, I'm really glad that folks talked about strategy. We need strategy, that big strategy. We need bold strategy, grounded actual strategy for liberation. I think that that can help us break out of some of the ways in which we can get stuck with how big our task is and how many things we're needing to hold. And so it helps us struggle together in generative and protective ways that also allow us to move generative in a way that's like a generator towards our vision.

Adaku:

Thank you, Woods. Xochitl?

Xochitl:

I think I'll throw two different directions around the call to action, but as people said, there's been so much incredible organizing over these months, but right now, the students on these campuses who are really facing incredible repression and who are showing such incredible solidarity and unity. I'm not representing any organization, but I want to just make a call to people to... I hear sometimes people with their critiques or their like, "Maybe they should be doing it this way or that way."

And just to say, one of the things of solidarity is to let that go of what you think should be done and just get in behind the folks who are putting their bodies on the line. And so a real call to support, and I know folks who are alum and connected to these different universities who forget to use their own role and their own leverage. Call, call the president. There's lots to be done, I think in this precise moment, this week to support these students. Because Woods brought it up, I would also agree just coming out of Atlanta for many years, stop cop city and defend the Weelaunee Forest, just to follow that work and see

if you're at all in Atlanta or have a way to load in on that. It is work that absolutely continues to need the human power and capacity to build power.

And then the last thing is just along that thing around this idea of how we cultivate our own reservoir of love. And one of the ways that I have found more recently is actually practicing solidarity with the earth herself, which is an action that both gets you into practice but also is so incredibly nourishing and doesn't have some of the complications of when we practice solidarity with other humans because humans are complicated. But if you can get out there and weed around a plant, if you can get out there and be in solidarity with a tree or a river, if you can immerse yourself in some water and ask the water and the body of water what that body could use from you or what you might have to offer. Sometimes it helps us put ourselves in perspective and right size us when we do that. And so I invite everybody to take action in that way also.

Adaku:

Thank you, Xochitl. Yvonne?

Yvonne:

I love the idea of the reservoir of love. That's really beautiful. I do feel, as this genocide has been happening since October 7th, that I'm seeing in my community that people are also just getting tired. They're burning out. There's always new folks entering in the movement, which is so exciting. But also, there's a lot of folks that are just exhausted at this point. So I would say the call to action, take care of yourself at a very core level. Take care of yourself. Recognize that there are seasons to this movement. We are in a whirlwind right now. There are also seasons to your leadership and to individual agency. This is a slog. It's absolutely not a sprint, and we need people to be around for the long haul.

I would also say take care of each other. So in our movement spaces, see who is providing care work and support the people that are doing that labor by offering childcare at meetings or providing food for people or spotlighting the people that are able to provide food for each other. That's something that we try to do at every single People's Movement Assembly is to make sure that there's food, and if needed, that there's also childcare. And then take care of the world, be gentle, pay attention and stay alert and get ready to jump in during moments of the whirlwind and keep it going when there's moments of rest as well.

Adaku:

Thank you all so, so much. Thank you, Darakshan. Thank you, Xochitl. Thank you, Woods. Thank you, Yvonne. Thank you, Rachel. I hope you all feel nourished by this conversation. And also inside, within, you have more questions, maybe you have affirmations of the work that you're currently doing, and maybe you are feeling drawn to building up your own capacity to build solidarity in these times.

And speaking of collective wisdom, I just want to offer back what you all said around what makes solidarity possible, more understanding of each other, sharing in joy and play, learning from those who came before and creating collective safety and care, Building Movement infrastructure that is durable across generations. Fictive kinship? Yes, you all. Recognizing the dignity of our own selves without flattening the dignity of our peoples. Creating opportunities for re-engagement when some of our people leave movement so that they can find a way to come back. Building connection and compassion. Embracing a love ethic. What's your reservoir looking like, you all? Seeing the ways that we are linked and connected without flattening who we are and what we're up to. Dreaming new futures together. Being open with humility, noticing our assumptions and how they don't or do get us free. And asking our

elders, asking our young people what they know about how to be free and build solidarity in these times. And have clear strategies and question if those strategies work or if they need a change.

From Building Movement Projects, the clear call to action that we have is to be in collective practice together. So one of our goals, one of our roles here inside of movement is to be builders, weavers and storytellers. So getting to uplift narratives and getting to move alongside movement leaders like the ones that you all have heard today in cultivating spaces like this where we get to share and learn together, and also build strategy together. So an hour and a half is not enough time to get into some deep practice, but it is enough time to get into some juicy conversation that hopefully is planting some seeds within you and around you.

So this is our first State of Solidarity. There's going to be another one in September around how we counter attacks against each other. And then in November, how do we build solidarity beyond the elections? And for folks who are looking for a much more in-depth space where we have more time together, we have a rapid response ecosystem lab. We know a lot of folks are doing a lot of rapid response right now. Often those moments can be either moments of pivotal opportunity and connection, but also moments that could separate us and impact our infrastructure. So this is a space to really learn how might we build rapid response infrastructure that's also building and connected to the long-term work that we're trying to do in our organizations and in our movements.

And then for folks who doing solidarity work, talking about it might be newer for you, my newer beginner organizers, we have a space for you that is a six-week space where you can come together and learn about those fundamental transformative solidarity principles that we talked about and how you might integrate it inside of the work you're doing right now.

And we're so lucky that in addition to all of this, this is not the only practice space. All of our incredible co-conspirators and panelists also have incredible spaces that they are holding, and we want to invite you to get connected as you are able and have capacity and have reservoir. So everybody, do not believe the lie of racialized capitalism that you are alone. You are connected to a lineage of peoples, you are connected to land, you are connected to folks who are willing to show up in the face of despair, which I know can be so real right now. Look at us, right here, right now, committed to our present and our futures. And there are ways for you to plug in the role and in the way that is meant for you with the reservoir that you have. Thank you again, Xochitl, for giving us that frame. And we will see you all, whether in the virtual space or out in the streets. And again, thank you for your presence. We get us free. Bye, you all.

UyenThi:

Thanks for tuning in to the special episode of the Solidarity Is This podcast, featuring the conversation from our first State of Solidarity. Visit our website at solidarityis.org to find related resources from this episode and register for the September and November 2024 State of Solidarity sessions. And for emerging activists and organizers, make sure you check out our Solidarity Is Cohort, a six-week training program on transformative solidarity principles and practices. Learn more at solidarityis.org and apply by July 19th for our fall 2024 cohort. As always, take care of yourselves and your communities. We'll see you next time on Solidarity Is This.