



NFG's 40 YEARS STRONG NATIONAL CONVENING SERIES

What's Land Got to Do with It? The Role Land Plays in our Social Movements: Past, Present, and Future

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>> **COURTNEY BANAYAD:** Welcome, everyone to NFG's next session in our 40 Years Strong virtual convening series. This is our "What's Land Got to Do with It" session. We have Zoom captioning today that you can turn on in your toolbar. Please feel free to turn your camera on if you would like for us to see your faces and you can also rename yourself by adding your pronouns and your organization.

And now I'm going to pass it off to our board member, Mark.

>> **MARK PALEY:** Hello. I'm the director of administration and finance at the Hyams Foundation in Boston. I'm also honored to be a board member of NFG. It's my honor to welcome you to this event, "What's Land Got to Do with It? The Role Land Plays in our Social Movements: Past, Present, and Future." This event is one of a series of the 40 Years Strong convening.

After graduating college, I wanted more practical training in another culture in the United States. A professor said I should do an internship in Beaufort, South Carolina. I quickly learned that land and the sea islands off South Carolina and Georgia are an important part of the Gullah culture. And it was handed down from family members through the generations. And land was taken from family called heir's property.

Not having transferred land through legal or white supremacy ways, made the Gullah family vulnerable to have their land taken away. Developers could force a sale then they could develop islands like Hilton Head. My mentor, who was raised on Hilton Head before the bridge had the freedom to explore land where he knew and was known by many family and friends who looked out for one another. One of my first experiences was when he showed me his family's cemetery. He had to request permission to be let into the gated community and we drove to a small plotted grave, marked by gravestones surrounded by the luxury vacation homes.

My work there led me to appreciate the Gullah community and their devotion to family and culture, and to learn that they were under attack from developers who had vacation destinations for people who had no idea or respect for families who lived there before.

Shortly we're going to hear from leaders who worked to build infrastructure to fight for climate justice, sovereignty, and land justice. I want to introduce you to NFG staff member Nile Malloy.

>> **NILE MALLOY:** Hello, everyone. My name is Nile Malloy and I'm the director of the Democratizing Development Program. It's a place together to bring space and place funders for support. We try to create a space where folk can thrive together in solidarity for the work and solutions happening on the ground. I'm personally excited about today's conversations on the intersection of land, food, housing, power, and ownership, and how land is linked to our liberation and freedom from the shackles of an exploitive and capitalistic economy.

So, I'm going to actually want to just say that I just really have a deep appreciation for the leadership on this call and really looking forward to a profound conversation. And we just hope that whatever our funders are hearing in the discussion, you want to continue to be a part of the work of NFG. So, I'm going to pass it onto Alison and Kellie.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** Hi, everyone. My name is Kellie Terry and I'm a Senior Program Officer in the Sustainable Environments team. And it was my great honor and pleasure to join you and be in community with you all today. I want to really thank NFG for including this conversation in its 40th anniversary national convening. Given the moment that we're facing, I couldn't think of anything better we could be doing with our time, our power, and our privilege as philanthropy right now.

It's my esteemed pleasure to introduce our panelist who is are going to review our agenda and give a little bit more context about the moment that we're in right now and all that we're sitting with. So, we will be joined today by Dara Cooper, of the national Black food and justice alliance. Dawn Phillips, the executive director of Right

To The City Alliance. And we're so saddened that Rowen White from the Native American Food sovereignty Alliance. She is unfortunately dealing with a COVID-19 crisis in her community, which we understand is so relevant to what we're all facing right now in this moment. We will be leaning on Dara and Dawn to bring her voice into this session as we understand there is no conversation about land if we're not centering the experience and the expertise of the Indigenous community. So, that is our goal today.

So, if we could have the agenda slide up now just briefly, if that is the next slide. There we go. Wonderful. So, just to walk us through a little bit today. We are going to have a presentation and conversation from each of our panelists. And it is going to be interactive. So, there are going to be questions between panelists. There are going to be questions from the panelist and the audience and the audience back. Then we're going to do a dance break, have some time for Q&A and then we're going to have a closing.

We really look forward to the next 90 minutes with each other. I'm just going to take a little bit of time to run through what I see is the moment that we're in right now. And before I do that, I just want to encourage folks to turn your cameras on. We won't bite, we promise. And we'd love to bring your physical faces into this community that we're building together today. And we appreciate that.

So, it is fitting to say that our world is on fire. The need to continue to bring the experiences of voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color, our BIPOC communities, most directly impacted by the dual impacts of COVID-19 and systemic racism to the center of our work remains paramount. In September and October, the nightmarish events of 2020 continue to unfold, now even into November, and escalating. We witnessed the devastation of a miscarriage of justice in the Breonna Taylor case and another innocent Black man, Jonathan Prince killed at the hands of police. Hurricanes barrel down on the South. COVID-19 across the nation. The death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a rushed Supreme Court nomination process, an increase in white supremacy. All of this while millions of people are left without support from the federal government as Congress fails to pass another much-needed relief package.

We still can't breathe. We are still angry. We are still reeling. We are all still grieving. We acknowledge this pain so that we can move beyond it without disregarding it. And so with that acknowledgment and being in community with you all, it is my honor and pleasure to pass this onto my colleague and partner in crime in the best sense of the word, Alison. Thank you.

>> **ALISON CORWIN:** Good trouble. Thanks, Kellie! Hey, y'all. It's so nice to see your beautiful faces and hopefully hear your voices at some point. I'm Kellie's teammate, for those of you who don't know. She/her. Currently in Brooklyn. I'm also honored to

be on the NFG board. I love NFG.

Kellie and I and our partners have been dreaming about this conversation for a super long time, so, I woke up feeling really excited that the day was finally here. Really, thanks for grounding us in that Kellie. I think, you know, part of what we want to put forward is to create a space for this conversation today because we feel like the least we can do is try our best to match the resiliency and the determinedness and unwillingness like our partners like Dara and Dawn who are here today. We wanted to create this space to match that energy and do our work with love and joy and reflect what it is that you're going to bestow upon us today and be in dialogue with one another.

Before we jump into the juice of the conversation, we actually want to know who else is in the room. We're going to do a quick poll just to know who all is with us. So, if we could bring up that first poll question. We'll give y'all just a minute or so to respond.

So, this is who are we. Are you an organizer? Are you a funder? Are you coming from the public sector? The private sector? Or other. None of those things is you. You can put whatever describes you best and how you're coming into this space in the chat box. And maybe someone on the poll folks behind the scenes. We're close to looking like we have some good numbers to share.

Multiple identities. Consulting practice. Bringing it all in. Love it. Funder organizer. Yes. Let's see who we have in the room. Overwhelmingly, no surprise, three quarters of us are funders. We have 10% organizers. No one from the house today from public or private sector. That's interesting. 15% other. Love that. Keep chiming in on the chat box. Let us know who else is in the space. Just good to know. For those who, you know, who are joining us but not speaking, use our voice in other ways. So, now we know who is in the room. Thanks for participating.

I think we also, so, Kellie and I have another invitation to kick us off because, you know, I think as Kellie and I have made our way into philanthropy, one thing we've definitely learned is it's a white dominant culture that is stripped of a lot of fun, to say the least, personality, culture, joy. We are trying to figure out way to do that.

But we have an invitation for everybody, just to show up as our full selves, we believe is an anti-racist practice. Not doing it is reinforcing a white dominant culture. As best you can, I know there is so much going on. Kellie, the grounding you gave was beautiful. For however best you can, be present, bring yourself into this space. We invite you to bring your whole self. It's cool to be yourself in this space. We don't need to be professional, whatever that means. We don't need to be our best funder self. Just bring your whole self. Take off your job title. We're inviting you to take off your position. And we're inviting you to try on your full humanity, your history, your instincts, as we move through this conversation about land.

And so to get into that space and kind of try that on, if you have a pen and paper close by, or if you prefer to type out a note, this is just for yourself as we go through this conversation, we want you to take a few moments to meditate and think for yourself about what land means to you. So, what does land mean to you? What's your relationship to land? And let's just take 30 seconds of silence just to write that down for ourselves or hold that thought and keep it close by. All right, y'all. Continue to meditate and muse on that I think as we move forward.

But I'm going to kick it back to Kellie, because Kellie has some more to share.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** Thanks, Alison. So, if we could advance the next slide. That should be a really nice, cool picture. (Chuckling) You know, Alison and I, you know, just to carry on the thread of just wanting everyone to bring your full selves to this space really believe in the power of story and also because our frontline leaders also tell us that this is how we bring our full selves into the work that we do.

And we're sharing this because we think so many of us, so many funders are working to shift the way philanthropy works, and that's why you're here, and how we hold relationships with frontlines, grassroots readers, and how we understand our role in the movement and our work. As Alison said, we wanted to provide an opportunity to connect the often bifurcated and separated conversation about the critical and central role of land. And how land is relevant to all we do within movements and across movements.

So, what I wanted to do is to one, also just talk about the picture that will you're seeing right here. So, this picture was taken at the New Community's 50th Anniversary Celebration in Azora, in Albany, Georgia. It was in October 2019, pre-COVID, who knew there was a world. And why this is critical because we want to one, acknowledge that in addition to all the work that you're bringing to this, that we stand on the shoulders of a long and rich land justice movement.

In the center, you have Mrs. Sherrod, which is her and her husband, Dr. Sherrod have connected the dots between the Civil Rights Movement and the Land Justice Movement and the important role of ownership and community control over land by founding the first land trust in this nation. And it is important that we remember this legacy and its connection to social justice movements because often in our work these things are separated. We wanted to provide an opportunity to show you how, for us, this was a manifestation of many years of work behind the scenes of philanthropy to create a strategy that was reflective of the frontline movement.

Alison is going to talk a little bit more about what the theory of change is. And to navigate the internal mechanisms of philanthropy to lead us here, which is under this beautiful tent we had not only the National Black Food and Justice Community with

Dara and Miss Savvy Horn here, but we had Right To The City here in this beautiful tent and community. This inspired us to create this session and share a little bit about our journey. With that, I want to pass it onto Alison.

>> **ALISON CORWIN:** That was a hot day in October in Albany, Georgia. But it was amazing and it feels so long ago, but it was literally just a year ago. So, yeah, thanks for that Kellie. I think we wanted to ground it in story and kind of hanging out under that tent all together kind of reminded Kellie and I that we knew in our role that our job as funders is not to set strategy, but is to actually build deep relationship and trust with our movement leaders and our frontline grassroots organizers and leaders, and listen to what they are telling us. That led Kellie and I to be with the leaders in that tent. Kellie and I have been rocking together for a little over five years and you know different parts of the journey. We've sweat, we've cried, we've laughed, we've done writing. But in all of it, we were traveling, we were listening to folks, we were in churches, we were literally under tents, we were in fields, all over the place, literally just trying to understand what our role in helping to organization within philanthropy and mobilize the resources.

We're going to hear the visions from Dawn and Dara and bring Rowen's voice into this space. We understand our role was to listen and understand and honor that wisdom and knowledge and go back home to our institutional home and figure out what we could do internally to best reflect what you've been teaching us. I'll read out what became the theory of change. The reason why we're sharing this is because we really recognize that a lot of y'all have been doing this work and we are grateful because we have learned from you, we have organized with you, we continue to strategize and think and do all the things. And we also know there are some folks who are navigating. You may be a funder back home at your institution and you see a different path, you see a different way you want to organize things, but it's been difficult or hard. And we just want to say there's lots of us. And where there is no way you find a way.

We're sharing this because Kellie and I are two of many of you who have been trying to shift what we see as a very white-dominant philanthropic culture, to something that is really rooted in anti-racist practices that are legitimately in real relationship with our partners. That's how we wanted to share our story and how we came to understand that land is central to all of our work, in case that is inspiring to you, y'all want to reach out to us, we want to continue to work together.

So, that all said, where we landed was that we understood that our theory of change, first of all, had to center racial justice first and foremost. We understood that our role was to try to support the increase of voice and power of frontline communities to create more equitable, environmental outcomes. We sit on an environmental team that works across racial lines that benefit and uplift all. We can put this in the chat,

too, because it's a lot to digest.

But we understood that the outcomes that we were trying to seek were the outcomes of the frontline leadership, which were to expand the environmental and climate leaders of color, particularly our Black leadership, and increase community control over decision-making processes, which is why we understood land to be so central to this conversation. Who gets to decide, who gets to benefit, and what is happening on that land. How do we shift from something that is both extractive, both to the land and the people, to something that is generative and determined by the people who live, work, and play on that land.

We often go about this using to use a philanthropic word, interventions, which are about building accountability, alternatives, and democracy. We understood we needed to get out of our silos because it's bifurcated. We know that philanthropy loves to isolate us. We are stronger together, and when we have these integrated communities. That's how we came up with land use through community power, which Kellie manages, and the climate and environmental justice work they get to manage. Together, we have two sides of the coin and we get to come together and have conversations like this.

I think Kellie, I think I want to throw it back to you unless maybe I should ask that final poll question just before we sort of, can we bring up the other poll question. This is so we also know who is in the room and where are we in our understanding and learning. We're curious how familiar land justice work is to you. Is it super familiar, you know a lot about it? Do you know some but you're still learning, or is this like a totally brand new area of learning for you? We'll give you just a moment to fill that out.

Okay. Can we go ahead and close the poll and share the results. All right, y'all, overwhelming we know something, but we got more to learn. That's good news because we're about to learn a whole bunch and be in dialogue, but it's great to know that we have a mix of folks in the room.

I think as I hand it back over to Kellie to kick off our conversation with our esteemed, brilliant leaders, I think Kellie and I just want to message that we want to not get distracted by the noise. There's a lot of noise right now. And I think our partners like Dawn and Dara have asked us to work through it. So, we are here to work through it. And we understand that if we are attuned to and listening to the frontline and grassroots leadership and to the right folks and get to amplify the right experiences, that can carry us through the difficult times. We hope today is a moment to listen, reflect, learn, and carry us through those difficult times, where philanthropy sometimes maybe makes us feel confused at best about what we ought to be doing. So, hopefully there is some clarity today. And thanks, y'all.

Kellie, I'm kicking it back to you.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** Yes. And without further ado, let's get started. Next, we're going to have a deeper dive. We're going to hear from both Dara and Dawn. Dara is going to also bring Rowen's voice into this space for us. And then we're going to have some time for the panelists to ask each other questions and then dive into some Q&A. So, we don't want to eat into anymore time. Dara, we're so excited to have you with us. Thank you so much.

>> **DARA COOPER:** Thank you. What an incredible honor to be here with you all. What a brilliant co-panelist and coconspirators, and really just excited to be in conversation with you. Mark, your comments were just really moving for me, because that's actually how, or you lifted up a location that is so critical to this conversation. And also the birthplace of the National Black Food and Justice Alliance. I'll talk about that in a little bit, but I just thought that was just so spot on and just really grateful for that.

But, you know, before I get into the work, I was really inspired by the bringing of our whole selves into this. So, you all should know my name is Dara Cooper. I'm the daughter of good troublemakers, very proud of that. My mother is doing incredible community land and community safety work in Jackson, Mississippi with the People's Advocacy Group. And then I come from another troublemaker who is an organizer and who also comes from land in Tennessee.

And so you all should know that the work that I do I'm sure many of us leaders we can say this, it's deeply personal. My ancestral family on both my maternal and paternal sides were violently removed from our ancestral land. And that's how we ended up in the Midwest. But I came to learn this after years of working, you know, in the food justice movement. And I started wondering what's my own land story. And then learning academically, learning about what happened, you know, in academic ways. But then it was just a deeper level learning about it personally. Right? And to understand history from a personal context.

And so that brings me to a mandate that drives my work and many of us in the movement. And I don't know if folks have heard of Mary Hooks, from SONG, Southerners on New Ground. But she gave a mandate to the work that came to her. The mandate, she says, for Black people particularly in this time is to avenge the suffering of our ancestors to earn the respect of future generations, and to be willing to be transformed in service of the work. Right? So, I wanted to share that because that grounds kind of how I approach this work and how many of us are thinking about it. But we're really thinking about, you know, generations ahead and how we can be transformed in the service of this work. And also honoring our ancestors, as well.

So, the National Black Food and Justice Alliance was founded, as I mentioned, actually at Penn Center, which is, you know, in the Geechee area, that Mark mentioned earlier. We were founded in 2015, because again I mentioned I'm a troublemaker. And I've been doing food justice work all around this country and I knew, and I would go to conferences and would only see experts who were white. And I was like I know my people are out there. I know we are doing this work. We, after having been involved in the BUGS conference, Black Farmers for Urban Gardens. We knew there has to be some strategic alignment of the incredible work being done by Black people all over this country to come together and create a mandate and a mission. We were founded.

And our goal, our mission, and I think we're really living into it is to develop Black leadership to support Black communities, organize for self-determination, and build institutions that work towards Black food sovereignty and land and liberation justice. Our work is in two particular main areas that all serve the goal of ultimately getting us towards liberation. That's what our work is rooted in.

So, one part of it is what we call food sovereignty. And I have a definition I can share with you all later. It's beyond access. We don't want access to. We want to control the means of. And we want to control the means of a system where we're actually able to build the system that we know our communities deserve. A system that's rooted in dignity and care for Black communities. And so many of our groups are, we're about 40 members now. And growing. And so all over the country. So, these are Black farmers, land stewards, organizers, doing incredible work.

So, in the food sovereignty space, we are working on what's called self-determining food economies, where we're working on supply chain infrastructure and also co-op development. We have about 30 different partners all over the country doing food co-ops, which is really incredible work. I'm not going to spend too much time there, but I wanted you to know it's happening. What I'll spend the rest of my time talking about is land, for this panel. Before I get into what our work is, what I want to talk about is how we think about land and why it's important. Just in case I need to compel some of you folks here on the call to join me in why we understand this is one of the most urgent places of focus we need to be paying attention to.

So, land is intimately tied to our right to space and existence. The right to be whole, nourished, and healed. The right to determine the destinies of our communities. We're seeing the displacement of Black people all over the country and all over the world. We've seen the destruction of our farming communities by 95%.

This wasn't by accident. We have to understand the intentionality and the designs by how our communities have been dispossessed and violently removed. We have to understand that as we work on the remedies to design a better future forward. We can't pretend like none of these things were intentional.

For my climate family in the audience, for folks to really understand that land contributes to at least one quarter of global greenhouse emissions, right? We know that the industrial agricultural system is one of the greatest and largest contributors to fossil fuel contribution.

For folks who want to know why land is important, there cannot be any solution around climate and environmental justice if we don't consider land use and a regenerative approach back to the land. That is our focus area. Not only is our system, you know, deeply, our food system particularly is deeply unfair, it's racist, it's sexist. I can totally give you all kinds of some explanations why. But trust me for now because I'm short on time. But it's also toxic and contributing to the decimation of our planet.

But we know better. Our movement is about to be free and self-determining, to be fighting for land, to be decommodified and taken off the market. It's important to get back to all of our Indigenous legacies of land-based knowledge, understanding that land is a relative and a source of healing and resistance.

So, we have a member of a farm in upstate New York that talks about in 2006 when they started their work, their topsoil was just a few inches deep with hard clay underneath and severely eroded. Since then, their soils have tripled in depth. They've seen pollinators coming back, biodiversity to the land. I'm lifting that up as a small example, but tremendous. If we get back to a regenerative relationship to land, what does that mean with the healing that needs to happen A, with the soils, but also with our communities.

Land, including also the bodies of water that are also colonized, but land is some of the first sights of the most heinous violence that continues to be perpetuated against the earth, but also against us. It's also one of, if not the most important sites of our liberation. And so land for us, again, it's a means to understand how to truly be free.

And so through our work, which I'm about to talk about in two seconds, we have been working on practicing governance with each other, upholding Black feminists, anti-capitalist, and abolitionist principles, in ensuring all of our folks, including queer, trans, disabled, formerly incarcerated, all of our folks have the means to be nourished, full, whole, and in all of our dignity.

The last part here is Black land in power, thank you Shelly, we are working in the spirit of the legacy of the new communities that Kellie lifted up. Thank you. And Alison. It's the first legal formation. And thank you Mark for lifting up the fact that there are other formations of land-based work that we are drawing on.

And so the Black Land in Power Coalition, which is sponsored by the National Black Food and Justice Alliance, it's a network. Shout out to Nature's Garden of Victory and

Peace in Alabama. We are building a network of land stewards and community land trusts and farms working towards ultimately land reform strategies. Through a three-prong strategy.

One is building a strong network of Black led community land trusts and sustainable land stewards. The second is to fund which supports our ecosystem, but also expanding the ecosystem. At the height, Black land stewardship is about 5 million acres. I'm saying stewardship instead of ownership. Because we don't agree with owning and private ownership of land. Our goal is a reclamation around Black people's sustainable stewardship to the land.

And the third layer of that fund is to defend against the violence that happened before but continues to happen. It didn't stop. The third strategy of ours is most important, which is to fight. So, it's build, fund, fight. Our goal is to fight, organize, invest in leadership, towards what international communities all over the world are working towards, which is land reform.

Last couple of things. We're working on policy with the Movement for Black Lives. We're on the leadership team there. I just want to reiterate the defunding police is a viable and necessary call that we need allies to stand in solidarity with us around. So, we see our aims as divesting from the harm and investing in life and care. And so that's what this land work is about. There's a Black Farmers Justice Act coming up. I was going to tell y'all about it, but I think I'm running short on time.

And I have some thoughts around how we need to dig into abolition and thinking about all the forms of slavery that need to end in this country. Right? So, the 13th Amendment tells us that the prison industrial complex continues to perpetuate the enslavement of Black people, brown people, and Indigenous people in this country and that needs to be eradicated. But we also need to understand that abolition calls us to think about the root causes and to imagine something much more deserving for our communities. I invite us to extend that imagination to the prison industrial complex and beyond, but also extend it to the industrial agricultural complex and think about how we can continue to invest in building new systems that our communities absolutely deserve.

I'm going to pause there. I think I'm going to kick it over to Dawn and maybe say a couple of words in a second afterwards about Rowen White's work. Dawn Phillips?

>> **DAWN PHILLIPS:** Thank you so much, Dara. I always say what's better than 1D? Two. Two D's. It's a two D kind of day. So, much appreciation to all the folks who did the work of organizing the call. I want to shout out the NFG tech team who is holding us down this morning and appreciate the opportunity to have a meaningful partnership with NFG. It's a long, fruitful, and powerful one. I want to appreciate everybody who

has made that possible.

Following in Dara's footsteps, I'm just going to quickly introduce myself. I'm Dawn Phillips, and I'm the director of the Right To The City Alliance. For anybody who is hoping to hear a lot more about Right To The City this morning, I'm going to be talking a lot about our work, our framework, our vision, our values, and our strategy to some extent. And getting really deep into the nitty-gritty, like where our groups are, please feel free to let me know and I'm happy to send you that information.

But for today, I really want to talk about the idea and really kind of reinforce, I think, more than anything, so much of what Dara has already started to put out. I'm an immigrant to this country. Queer immigrant. I was born and raised in Singapore where we were a colony of the so-called British Empire for about 170 years. And before that, the Dutch. And then in some cases, where I'm from, before that the Portuguese.

So, along the lines of what Dara shared, for me, this work is rooted in a history of several hundred years of colonial oppression both in my home country and my home region as well as the context that myself and other of the Black, Indigenous and folks of color work with in this country. And I think why we are talking about land today is because our understanding is that land is fundamental for any vision, any agenda, and any reality of self-determination that is possible. Right?

So, there really is not a way to discuss the ability of a community, a people, of a nation, to be sovereign, to be able as Dara said not just to manage but to steward kind of the resources, the life-giving, life-sustaining resources without land at the center of that. The starting point is that land is central not just to survival, but to self-determination for all people especially people who are living still with that history of imperialism, of colonialism, and of genocide.

So, I wanted to just start by saying that, you know, land is a highly contested and highly valuable commodity in the capitalist system. It's not just our people who need and value land. There is a form of value that capitalism has placed in land and in housing today and what that means is that currently 60% of all the world's assets, all, in the whole world or the equivalent of \$217 trillion is located in real estate and real estate speculation. And of that \$217 trillion, 74% of that is in housing specifically. Right? And pretty much all of us on this call are aware that that is in stark contrast and contradiction to the gentrification and systemic dislocation that Dara was naming that many communities have had of the ability to safely, healthfully, and sustainably stay in place, right? In their homes, in their communities of choice, et cetera.

And we know that while we, you know, we unite with Dara, that the vision is not per se about individual homeownership. Individual homeownership is a good indication. But at the same time where we see investors like Blackstone, private capital investors

buying up over 37% of all home sales. We know that homeownership for the vast majority of communities of color is at its all-time historic low. It's never been lower in the history of this country than it is at this present moment.

Why is this the case? This is the case because of multiple decades of an aggressive policy and political framework of neoliberalism that is deep both in this country and globally, as well. And part of the reason why I wanted to name that is because this neoliberal stands inside and outside, to some extent, of who is in the White House, who is in Congress, who is in the Senate. Right? Neoliberalism is a political and ideological framework what has been actively pursued as aggressively by Democrats as by Republicans. And I'm raising this today because I think many of us are kind of celebrating, and rightly so, celebrating the defeat of Trump and preparing for an incoming Biden-Harris administration.

But the reality is we cannot forget that we are no less, we are facing no less significant of a threat of reimposition of neoliberalism in a Biden-Harris administration as we were under a Trump administration. I think there's an important re-grounding in this moment to remind ourselves that while we are seeing a change in administration, we are not likely to see a change in the fundamental political frameworks that have led our communities to be in this place that we are now in today. Right?

So, without getting all in the weeds about neoliberalism, which I think is a framework that most folks on the call are very familiar with. This agenda of privatization, of overreliance on private capital and the quote, unquote market, the kind of heavy deregulation, the reduction of the role of government in providing and meeting critical needs for communities have all led to what we know to have caused the foreclosure crisis. This moment of growing homelessness, the loss of public housing, inadequate production of truly affordable housing nationally, and the growing affordability crisis for renters, right? As well as a model of corporate development that prioritizes profit over community need.

So, even as we pivot to some extent away from the last four years, and I apologize for repeating this again, but I feel it's so critical. We have to have our eyes wide open. That the dangers remain very real, but we have to be ready to ensure that there's actually true transformation.

Renters have a very strategic role to play in this moment. This housing crisis caused by neoliberalism has also created conditions that position renters in a very strategic way. One, because renters are essentially at the center of multitudes of social movements and social struggles. Right? Because renters are single moms. Renters are overwhelmingly Black, Indigenous, folks of color. Renters are students. Renters are seniors. We understand that renters, while they share kind of a role in the economy, they also overlap and intersect with many, many other movements and many, many other struggles. We know that the number of renters are growing right

now because of the way that the housing market and the way neoliberalism has affected land organization in this country, we're seeing renters becoming the majority in more and more places, even in less urban areas.

We're seeing there are likely to be about 108, well, actually right now there are 108 million tenants living in 43 million rent at homes. And that figure is projected to grow another 50 million households over the next 20 years. So, we are talking about a lot of people. We are talking about people who are deeply invested in the system because it's clearly a system that is not working for them.

So, what is it that is at the crux of this idea of transformation? So, I'll say a couple of things. So, I think in terms of the land and housing liberation work that we are doing, very similar to what Dara put out, we believe firmly and centrally that the leading aspect of transformation has to be the ability to organize hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and ultimately millions of people, right? For us, the idea that we need and we would love to see through not just the work that we're doing as an organization, but it encapsulates the work that Dara and others are doing, because this is a mass effort by many formations, many of us together, a movement ecosystem not just organizations working together, to organize millions of people across the country.

The number we've set for ourselves is 5 million because that represents about 3% of all renters in the country. We want to as Dara said see a million of acres of land put back into community stewardship, putting the framework that Dara put up, which is not a framework of individual ownership but a framework of collective stewardship, where communities and peoples come together to decide and determine what is best not just for their community, mother earth, the environment and their own lives, but all those things together. And we're looking to redistribute hundreds of millions of dollars to support these developments and this type of community stewardship.

There isn't a way for us to reimagine the sector without reimagining the relationships between individuals, communities, peoples, and to some extent movement organizations and movement formations. We know because of this history of colonialism and of the long history where our peoples and our organizations have been systemically divided, pitted against each other, and really, you know, kind of encouraged and supported to be against each other, the idea is that we fundamentally have to change the way both we relate to each other, but how we relate to each other in this broader movement ecosystem, as well. We talk about this idea that only a housing moment that centers Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, feminism, and Black liberation can successful contend with the twin threats of both the real estate sector and neoliberalism.

So, on that note, I'm going to end. And I'm going to ask our beautiful tech crew to cue up a short video. This is a video that demonstrates the work that is being done in

Minneapolis by one of our groups there. And they are doing powerful work that is going to come across clearly. And it's very much an illustration of the ideas and the principles that I'm sharing. So, if folks could cue the video, that would be wonderful.

[VIDEO]

[Music]

- >> **ON SCREEN:** ¡VICTORY! After a two year campaign we won our buildings! The Sky Without Limits Cooperative. Inquilinxs Unidxs Por Justicia.
- >> [Spanish translation] I am extremely happy because this victory signifies a lot of effort, lots of dedication, lots of discipline from a group of people that did not know each other, that at the start we formed a group without thinking of what we could win during this undetermined period of time.
- >> Let me tell you, I feel like it's a big relief. It's been a really long battle and struggle, but we have more work to do. I'm excited to continue this journey with my neighbors that we built this family around.
- >> [Spanish translation] I firmly believe that this can transcend much more than a cooperative. This is the start to, as the name says, a sky without limits. It means a lot to us. It's like giving a beginning, a reason so that other families find out about our cooperative and, likewise, so that we can win more cooperatives and so that our sky won't have any limits.
- >> My vision is to have all the units filled with people that are line with the cooperative's values. Not people who want to be there because it's affordable housing, but people who actually want to build and grow as a family and a community. In the near future, though, like maybe five or ten years from now, I could see us having a car pooling company. I could see us having a day care center there. I could see us having classes where we teach each other English, Spanish, even the East African languages, as well, so we can all be able to connect with one another and talk with each other. That's my vision for the cooperative.
- >> [Spanish translation] This work does not end with this victory. The work starts as of now because we need to fundraise to support each other. We need a lot of help from the community and we need to unite today so that we can keep transforming.
- >> It's a way to bring the gap between the north side and the south side. Letting people know that at the end of the day we are all united. We are all going through the same things, but we're coming together.

>> [Spanish translation] This triumph is important but we can have much stronger triumphs. And so that we can be a more informed community.

>> They give us our strength, because they know what we're doing is for our kids to have a better future. Without them, I don't know if I would have been able to continue on with this.

>> [Spanish translation] This triumph is important but we can have much stronger triumphs. And so that we can be a more informed community.

>> **ON SCREEN:** Donate to support the sky without limits cooperative.
<https://bit.ly/buildthesky>. Dedicated to our friend Maria Zavala who fought hard so that our dream could come true.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** What an inspiring conversation and also just such a beautiful story of victory and triumph to end this part of our conversation with. So, I just want to just again like if we can just take a collective breath in. Collective breath out. With all of that wisdom and knowledge that both Dara and Dawn brought to us. So, thank you so much. And we're going to sort of free style this agenda just a little bit. And take a short dance break because that was so much wisdom.

And then when we return, we're going to have a great benefit of having both our panelists, Dara and Dawn, be in some conversation with each other and ask each other questions, and then we will be going into sort of a broader Q&A that Nile and Dara will help us moderate. We're going to have a three-minute dance break. It's about the time of this awesome song. Get up, move your body, and we will see you back here. Okay? After this song. Thank you so much, community, for being with us today.

[BREAK]

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** That is so beautiful. That is so awesome! Thank you for sharing that. So, we want to take a moment to bring folks back into the space.

>> **ALISON CORWIN:** Kel, I think in our free styling we're going to facilitate some combo.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** Okay. I didn't know if we were going to go to the third poll question. I hope you boogied a little bit. We're testifying today. Now it is our esteemed honor to really go into a dialogue between our panelists. Dara and Dawn and give some time

for them to be in community with each other because that is just as important and paramount as the opportunity for all of us as a sector to be in community with front-line leaders.

So, Dara, the question that you shared really for Dawn, and please correct me if I'm getting the wrong question here, but I believe that you wanted to ask Dawn about what a political north star is at this moment for us. And where are we driving, where are you all, all of us, where are we driving solidarity work towards? And what are the things that we're asking folks to hold the line on? You know, what are we compromising and what is not up for compromising? So, if that sounds right, and please if you want to amend, of course go ahead and do that. But yes, Dara and Dawn, take it away.

>> **DARA COOPER:** Yeah, I'm so excited for this. Yeah. I'm like yes. And I want to acknowledge that this question actually came out of a conversation I had with Rowen. And if I can just really appeal to really look up Rowen White. She is so brilliant and she's actually working on a body of work around land and repatriation and also the NDN Collective LANDBACK movement.

We have so much happening and I'm listening to you with these exciting goals that we share so much in common about. We're having, how many did you say? 5 million people plus. I think we can do this, Dawn, five million and beyond, you know, what are we driving towards. And I have some thoughts, too, after you share.

>> **DAWN PHILLIPS:** And Dara, I was actually going to say I kind of wanted you to tell me what you're thinking of this first. I just got done speaking. We should do it that way. You should tell me what you think and then I'll add if I have anything else. But yes, please do.

>> **DARA COOPER:** Okay. I'll oblige real quick. And then also I went and looked up a couple of words from my interview with Rowen that I thought was pretty cool, too. I actually love alliteration. I thought about this. When I think about what victory looks like for us politically. I think of recovery, reclamation, and repair. There has been deep, deep harm to our communities that continues to happen. I think about all of those things in terms of what does it mean to recover, what does it mean to reclaim what's been lost and including in our future generations.

And when I think about repair also to lift up, you know, reparations, too. There are five requirements to that. One is the cessation of that and guarantee of non-repetition. Another is restitution, compensation, satisfaction, and rehabilitation. I just wanted to offer that up as a definition. But I just think about reparations,

rematriation with the land, and with an abolitionist pathway with reclamation and rematriation. I would like us to move towards a movement internationally. I was deeply involved with the work in South Africa and Colombia.

I can talk more about that in terms of what I'm seeing, in terms of communities organizing themselves, using state resource to actually build up their own infrastructures, but I would love to see that here in terms of some serious repairing of harm and reclamation of our Indigenous practices being with the earth. How does that flow with you? What do you think?

>> **DAWN PHILLIPS:** That really deeply resonates. I think sometimes when we talk about Mother Earth, some say we are incidentally housing organizers, and we are fundamentally concerned about transformation. And I think sometimes when that term or that idea gets put out the sense is that it's primarily a vision and it's primarily an aspiration. And I think that what I agree with you is that for us today even as we are kind of like right in the midst of what is this severe crisis, we are clear that if we don't work on the historic traumas, the historic hurts, the historic divisions, the things that capitalism and colonialism have grown inside of us, not only can we not liberate the land, we can't liberate ourselves. There's a fundamental relationship. In the video, you see that.

And that's just like one microcosmic example where the video makes it appear and the story of the folks, you know, who did that organizing makes it appear as if the unity, the solidarity, and fundamentally the love was intuitive. Why? Because they were neighbors. Because they live next door to each other. Because they live in the same building, because they live on the same block. Those of us who actually organize know that that's actually not the case. If you're actually like knocking on doors, if you're actually talking to neighbors, you know, more common than not people don't speak to each other. People do not feel safe engaging each other. There is a whole history that's inside us from a political-social level to a cellular level that we have to kind of work through together and that the idea is as you were saying, Dara, of like deep, real solidarity, deep, real interdependence, this is fundamental to the organizing.

And I think this is actually where to me I feel so urgent. It's easy to some extent or easier to some extent, even though it's not, to get people behind the idea that we need to organize and grow land trusts or collective models of stewardship or cooperatives or to support organizing in some cases. But the much more challenging idea is to get our partners, and I think this is true of folks in philanthropy, to understand this thing that Dara I hear so much at the center of your work and the center of ours, too, is this idea that we have to, that it takes time, it takes intentionality, and it is strategy that is required to produce these new relationships between, within, and across peoples, communities, nations. That is the basis, right?

Of a just transition. That is the basis of the transformation from extractive to regenerative. That's is what distinguishes a false solution to a real solution or a people solution.

So, I'm really appreciating Dara today the opportunity to get so deep in this idea because I think oftentimes these conversations stay at the level of like here is the campaign, here is the project, here is the effort to decommodify or collectivize this stewardship model. How can we get folks who are on this call and so invested in the idea that this work that is harder to explain, hard to qualify, and in some cases hard to describe and then take so long, so much patience, so much love, and so much attention that that is the heart of where our attention, our resourcing, and our commitment must be if we're going to see all these other outcomes also become possible.

>> **DARA COOPER:** Absolutely. Dawn for president. What y'all say? (Chuckling).

>> **DAWN PHILLIPS:** For one, I don't know? Do we even think that's something that we need?

>> **DARA COOPER:** Well, there's that.

>> **DAWN PHILLIPS:** You know what I mean?

>> **DARA COOPER:** That's a question, for sure. Absolutely everything to what you said. And the reality is we didn't get in these conditions overnight, right? So, we are addressing generations of trauma, generations of colonialism, generations of oppression. And so absolutely what you said in terms of all the work it entails, all the love it entails, all the relationships it entails, all the systems and infrastructure it entails to hold our relationships. So, absolutely to that.

But to add onto what you said which is generations which we're dealing with. I saw a note from Faron, shout out to you, Faron, about about urban and rural. I love this conversation because that's some of what's underneath our conversation. You all do a lot of work in urban settings. We do urban and rural. Many of our members are based in rural communities. That's what's interesting about the community land trust work, too. It actually started out of rural communities. But to see it being applied in urban settings, too, right and particularly through many of your members and work, too. So, maybe if there's something that you can speak to around how you see the community land trust work. Oh, sorry. I'm stepping on Alison's toes.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** They're not toes. (Laughing)

>> **DARA COOPER:** I wanted to bring his question into the conversation. I thought it was spot on and I'm glad he named it, because this is something very specific that we're all working on, which is what are the solutions and how are we thinking about urban, peri-urban, and rural communities in all this.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** Yes. And I did not mean to interrupt that flow, Dara, because we're going to flow right into that and I just wanted to transition us now because those questions that Faron is posting and any other questions that you all may have, please place in the chat. And we're going to transition now to take this really deep dive and connection that Dawn and Dara have facilitated for us, and we're going to care ray that even deeper to bring everyone's voice into the space. We're going to facilitate questions from you all and also questions that they have for us.

>> **ALISON CORWIN:** I don't even want to take myself off mute, because I never want to speak after Dara and Dawn. I was not trying to get in there. But we're coming to a close. You know. I feel like this has been such a rich conversation, but one of the things Kellie and I, and we're ripping off of Vinnie, for anyone who saw Vinnie facilitate the Kataly Foundation call, which was amazing and gave us so much life. One thing she did is y'all come and share your knowledge and brilliance with us and then we ask you questions. But we took a page out of Vinnie's book and flip the script and have y'all ask each other questions, and we want to know what questions you have for us as a funding community and start there.

And if we have time, we only have a few moments left, I know you already started to get into Faron's amazing question. We'll see if we have time for others. But if you have questions for Dawn and Dara and others, please put them in the chat and we can follow up afterwards. But Dawn, I know you have a 17-part question as per usual for all of us. I'll try to lift up I think the highlights, but I'll need you to step up if I mess it up.

And I think Nile you're going to help by seeing who like wants to grab the mic and maybe step in. Or if you have a response, put it in the chat. Nile, anything to add there?

>> **NILE MALLOY:** No, this has been an amazing call. I want to hear what Dawn and Dara have to say. I like questions to funders. Let's build on that.

>> **ALISON CORWIN:** All right. Let's do Dawn's 17-part question justice. I love you Dawn. Dawn's question is while we recognize the importance of Trump's removal from the White House, we have our eyes wide open to the challenges of the next period, despite an incoming Biden administration, it will take significant work to ensure the next four years of federal action serves and not further harms Indigenous, Black, and other working class communities of color.

Dawn's question to us is a couple parts, but what can we, what can philanthropy do to ensure our sector is deeply aligned and coordinated with movement force to ensure that we can post the most meaningful federal interventions possible. What are we going to do to be in alignment with Dara and Dawn and other front-line communities? And then I think the other piece to hold is to ensure that our defeat of Trump does not lull us into thinking that the hardest work is behind us. What lessons can we as funders and philanthropy lift up as our years with Obama and what can we build on and do differently? Trying to bring forth and forward those lessons.

Nile, I haven't been paying attention to chat. Is anyone wanting to unmute?

>> **NILE MALLOY:** No one is ready for that. If they are, I really encourage the conversation. I do think this is a part two conversation. I think it's an ongoing conversation that folks are having. I'm open to seeing if anybody on the call or internally in your institutions are talking about this.

>> **FARON McLURKIN:** This is Faron. I'm happy to speak to that NFG's perspective. I'm the vice president of programs here at Neighborhood Funders Group. A couple of thoughts. Through the course of the election and on and the past week, we've been in conversation with funders around the country of various stripes about sort of this very question. And I just have a couple thoughts on it.

The first in the most 10,000-foot way, but also in the most deeply personal and political way, I actually want to encourage us to recognize and ask the question of or embrace the fact that we are or at least can be part of this movement, too. Folks are fighting. And when I saw the video. Thanks. One, I'm so happy to see both D's. You know, I have had a relationship with that work. And I just know it's so incredible.

And I was really struck by in the video, my favorite part or the part that kind of touched me the most was when kind of the second woman spoke. She gave this breath. This (exhales) This relief. She said something like this has been a long time coming, a long fight. Later in the video they said it's been two years. Some sense in our funding cycles we're like two years, it's not a lot. But when you're on the front lines every day, you know, putting yourself out there to make change in your

community, you know, every day against folks that have power over your life, you know, that feels like an eternity. We heard a lot about the anxiety and the stress of this election. Think how long just the last few weeks have felt for folks and now multiply that by it being in your house and it being someone who like you may live right next to and someone who can determine a lot about your family.

I think our call to action is pretty clear. It's first that we need to continue to invest in low-income communities, workers, Black Indigenous people of color, LGBTQIA gender non-conforming women, immigrants, rural communities. All of these folks have the keys to what we need in our new system. And I know there's been a big gasp of relief and no administration is going to change them. Many of these systems are entrenched.

For folks who are interested, there's a lot of information we've been compiling on calls to action with philanthropy. I can share a link with that on our website. And think about yourself and think about your role that you want to play in history in terms of this movement, how can you be part of it, and how can you use your platform, your privilege, and your power to make the world a better place. Thank you so much, y'all, for this amazing program.

>> **NILE MALLOY:** You dropped the mic on that one. It was tight and complete and been having great conversations about this. Kellie, Alison, any closing thoughts as we slow down and wrap it up?

>> **ALISON CORWIN:** I do want to say quickly as we close just if there are resources that we want to share with each other like spaces where like in the funding community NFG is a big political home and a community of practice for so many of us. And Faron and Nile, thank you for lifting that up.

If there are specifics, if there's anything else folks want to share where they're organizing and learning with other funders to respond to what it is that Dara and Dawn have put forward today, let's share that with each other. Let's keep going. Let's keep learning together and organizing together. So, then we will save this chat and we will share those resources back out with folks. So, that we know kind of what our next steps are and thank you for those calls to action. So, back to Kellie.

>> **KELLIE TERRY:** Thank you all. This gives me such fire and energy and reassurance with all that is going on that we do in fact have a beloved community because we're building it right now and their intentionality of being here and sharing this time and space with us is love in action, right? Which is really basically what justice is all about.

So, please we're going to share all the links in the chat. I know there is an event coming up on Thursday. Please register for any of the events. Also check the National Black Food and Justice website because they're holding some amazing conversations, as well. Please let's not forget to check out the links with Rowen's work. I just want to lift that up.

Whatever funder community you're a part of, we thank you for joining this and take this and share it with the world. Don't forget, you can also text Alison and I because we live for this stuff. We want to give a shout out to our director Helen Chen, because without her leadership we wouldn't be here and our teammates. Thank you, everyone. And may you have a blessed rest of your day. [Music]
