

Resist & Build

Preparing the World for System Change

by Jim Tarbell

The Solidarity Economy Network was ready for this historic moment for change. Before the pandemic, they planned to gather a dozen or more key national groups working on system change at the Highlander Center in Tennessee on March 19-22 for a Summit on Resist and Build. Then the pandemic intervened and they moved to Zoom.

Their goal is to “build a collaborative process for system change.” They are a collection of groups that, along with AfD, are leading the movement for system change. They include:

- The Democracy Collaborative that facilitates the Next Systems Project;
- The New Economy Coalition that gathers a vast swath of systemic change groups to their Common Bound Conferences;
- Cooperation Jackson, which is developing a cooperative solidarity economy in Jackson, Mississippi, facilitating black lives taking charge of their future;
- Business Alliance of Local Living Economies, now known as Common Futures, that has been in the vanguard of the localization movement;
- Transition USA that has been helping communities transition off fossil fuels, living in balance with resource limits, and building equity for all.

Almost all of these groups educate and train people to build a new economy and future. As coalitions or networks, they have a broad reach to implement system change, which concentrates on expanding and supporting solidarity economies.

They use their monthly Zoom gatherings to construct a movement that resists the depravities of the current systems and creates new systems to replace the old, ensuring a vibrant and fair future



graphic: 350 South Florida

for people and the planet.

They have four specific objectives in coming together. They want to:

- Strengthen and build relationships among national groups working on system change;
- Sharpen their analysis of post-capitalism vs. reform capitalism system change;
- Articulate a collective position on resisting the maladies of the current system of monopoly capitalism; and
- Build alternatives for a vibrant future.

Their discussions range from the importance of building new systems driven by love and compassion, to an awareness that conservative forces are aiming to rewrite the US Constitution to take us back to the eighteenth century. The growing urgency of the moment, and their joint desire to help the world move into a sustainable, equitable future, makes their efforts vitally important.

One of their first efforts examined how our present economic/political/medical systems' response to the pandemic differs from how a social-democratic economy or a social solidarity economy would have operated during the pandemic.

The chart below is an abridged version of their conclusions. The differences are so dramatic that they clearly illustrate the need for everyone to become involved in system change.

One of their first undertakings was to examine how our present economic/political system's response to the pandemic differs from how a social-democratic economy and a social solidarity economy would have operated during the pandemic.

Three Different Systemic Responses to the Coronavirus Pandemic

Our Present Money-Fueled Democracy

- No prior planning for Covid 19 due to disregard by the White House.
- Insufficient, under-funded testing due to self-serving, administration.
- No guaranteed health care.
- Poor and marginalized people suffering the most.
- Frontline workers endangered for cost cutting reasons.
- Procurement of essential supplies turned into an E-bay bidding war between states and local entities.
- World travelling business people spread Covid as part of the global supply chain.

Social Democracy

- Guided planning based on human needs.
- Private production and profit motive make meeting needs impossible.
- Healthcare access would be shared and universal.
- Poor and marginalized people are protected by social safety net.
- Better funded, public hospitals would protect frontline workers.
- Government compels private industries to produce for PPE and ventilators.
- National supply chains spread disease nationally.

Solidarity Economy

- Efficient, collaborative regional and local planning.
- Solidarity for the common good ramps up testing in light of emergency.
- Community driven healthcare provides medical services to everyone.
- Worker-led health care concentrates on the most vulnerable and marginalized.
- Frontline workers would control their own job safety.
- Peer to peer collaboration provides needed supplies.
- Local supply chains would slow spread of the virus.