



Library podcast

The Detroit Rebellion and Global Resistance Movements

[00:00:05] Welcome to The Seattle Public Library's podcasts of author readings and library events. Library podcasts are brought to you by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation. To learn more about our programs and podcasts, visit our web site at www.spl.org. To learn how you can help the library foundation support The Seattle Public Library go to foundation.spl.org

[00:00:36] Good evening. How are you doing.

[00:00:42] Awesome. So I'm going to do a poem for ya. That's all right. If it's not your welcome to. Plug your ears. My name is Kayo Nikita Oliver. And. I was asked to do a specific poem for you before I do it I just want to give you a little bit of background of where it. Burst. Out of. And especially as we think about a city like Detroit and we think about places like standing rock. And the Navajo Nation Reservation where water is

[00:01:23] Hard to find it's there it's polluted and just remembering that water is not just a human right. But when we think about what many would show any means which is. I would say one was time many would Tony. We really have to think about how water moves. It's not just that it is life for us but water moves in a very particular way. And when I was at Standing Rock and when I reflect upon time that I myself spent in Detroit because that's where my family always had. Our family reunions. Just thinking about Flint Michigan. Standing Rock the Navajo Nation places like Detroit Indianapolis Chicago where I grew up where you look at the car industry you look at water as a human right you look at housing in Seattle and we wonder why our nation is at the point that it's at now it's because we're thirsty.

[00:02:21] And when you're thirsty you when your body is thirsty you will react react in particular ways. You'll do what you have to to get that water. You'll do what you have to to live. And so I wrote this piece. After standing rock. And wrote it. As I thought about all the many movements that were watching erupt across the country and have been watching for a long time and what it really means for you and I to move like water and for you and I to choose to be justice especially in places

[00:02:55] Where justice seems like it's it's dry I hate having things on a stand.

[00:03:04] I grew up in the black church so this might take like 20 minutes.

[00:03:10] Y'all ready.

[00:03:19] Let's go down to the river to pray. Steady about those good old days and to show when

[00:03:30] The golden crown. Good Lord. Show me though.

[00:03:38] Oh family. Let's go down. Let's go down. Don't you want to go down. Oh family. Let's go

[00:03:54] Down to the river to pray.

[00:03:59] I can hear my auntie singing in the back of the chapel my Bible leans down to me and says Baby I understand that justice is like water. It starts as rain in the clouds and makes its way down the mountainside into the valley below that it settles in the place where it is most needed. Understand. Baby you must be like water. You must be like just this. See how this water moves water will not be obstructed it will move around over or through a thing if it has to you just this must move around over or through a thing if you have to we get to the water and Baba says to me understand baby that justice is just us being just us that without us there is no justice that without us there is no resistance that without us this system persists in its defiance. Dividing us further from the divinity that is our unity with Mother Earth dividing us further pollute of anything that is our unity with each other dividing us further from the deep entity that is our unity our love she reminds me that in this place that only casual everything around me. That's when all we see is property suddenly we're seeing and properly as the man is steadily blocking my attempts to break free.

[00:05:13] There can be no free trade agreements with black bodies are sold as stocks and bonds of Joe sell sell out as politicians are building their wealth and these black and brown bodies markedly market it targeted murdered extra judiciously with impunity not just locally but globally by the same hands who stole us from our homeland to work these lands the same hands or feet as back to these lands the same hands it'll try to sell us back our homelands over processed and overpriced so we become underfed but your uh. Guess what. I come from a resilient people are still living people. I still hear people we are still here. People in the land of the brave the home of the slaves shit i keep getting that wrong. The land of the Braves and somewhere around us I feel like someone is missing the natives is anyone looking for them as the rivers run red round us with blood. Is anyone looking for them. We don't ask so they never have to tell the truth. You don't think it has something to do with these politics. Politics. Blood sucking politicians were the only thing rather than their failings other blood stained hands. Look at them elbow deep in the cookie jar.

[00:06:26] Well we just call it capitalism. Who pays the total for this feudalism or the 10 percent prosper. The rest of us rest at the bottom in chains and body bags and be buried much more than six feet deep under more fair trade agreements where the only thing barely traded is our rage against this machine a machine that would have you believe you will never have enough. You will never be enough but Yossi enough is enough is enough is enough is enough when we say it's enough say it's enough it's enough there's always been enough when we were willing to share it my barber leans down to me once again by the river in the valley where the water pulls in the place where it's most needed tells me to look at my own reflection reminds me that justice is what love

looks like in public reminds me that if you cannot love yourself you cannot be justice you must first learn to love yourself before justice is just as being just as she reminds me I must learn to love myself like water that it must move o round over or through I think if it has to my love cannot be obstructed.

[00:07:38] That's the only way that justice is just as being just us she reminds me that when I find myself lost when I cannot figure out where the love has gone she sings Let's go down to the river to play sturdy about those good old days and to show where the golden crown.

[00:08:08] Good. Show me the way.

[00:08:12] Oh family. Let's go down.

[00:08:17] Let's go down. Don't you want to go down. Oh family.

[00:08:24] Let's go down to the river to pray.

[00:08:31] Just this is just a speed. Just us. Thank you.

[00:08:37] Yo. Thank you very much Nikita for sharing that very powerful

[00:08:56] And beautiful art.

[00:08:58] Well welcome everybody. Hello my name is Chelsea. I'm with the borrower services department here at the Central Library. Thank you for your attention. It's now my pleasure to introduce Davida Ingram. She is our public engagement programs manager here at the Central Library DaVita

[00:09:22] How's everybody doing tonight. Hayes. I have some official news for you which is that we are going to end our program at 9:00 p.m. but in between we get to have a great conversation. And. I'm a little bit teary right now because I was thinking about having the kids speak before we have a conversation about the 50 year rebellion. And one thing you may not know is that Nikita. We're welcoming Nikita back to public life. She was running for mayor and she's also an artist and she happened to meet her campaign manager doing a program here at the library. So when she asked we did a plaza program with a deejay and art making and it was very fun and when she asked hey could I do a poke do a poem before you start the program I was thinking about Scott saying he wanted to have spoken word and it seemed like an opportunity that I couldn't turn down. But I also was thinking that this is a place where we get to meet one another and we get to think about community and what we can do together and it's really not about our political affiliation but it's about us making a wonderful city. So with that in mind I'd like you to just take a moment to speak to your neighbor

[00:10:40] And chat about some of the things that might be on your mind in terms of social issues and then when you have that minute to check in with your neighbor we'll come back and we'll introduce

our speakers because I'm very excited to tell you more about them. But take a moment to talk to your neighbor about what's on your mind about the social issues that are affecting this country. Just a minute

[00:11:06] Now I know very well that we have more than a minute's worth of stuff to talk about what's been going on in our country.

[00:11:12] But tonight's program the 50 year rebellion how the U.S. political crisis began in Detroit is part of a series that we have been doing all year round. That's looking at the changing political climate of our country and at the end of our conversation tonight with our scholars Scott Kidder Sue gay and Michael hearts. We're going to have a Q and A. But in order for our Q and A to be equitable and inclusive we have to warm it up a little bit. And I'd love for you if you happen to have gotten the index card and a golf pencil to spend some time thinking about the questions you will ask because we'll be limited in time. So with that in mind. We're thrilled to have Seattle's local scholar and activist Scott Kidder S.J. here with our special guests author and scholar Michael Hart. Tonight's conversation is one that we've been planning for a bit but the context is 50 years ago urban rebellions erupted in Detroit and cities across America. As social movements advanced all over the world. With political debate centred on many of the same unresolved issues race war policing and civil rights

[00:12:22] Resistance has emerged as the key word for today's generation of activists tonight. Scott Kidder Seagate author the 50 year rebellion and Michael Hart author of assembly will analyze the structural crisis provoked by the 1960s rebellions and draw lessons from the past half century of social justice movement building. Scott is a professor of American and ethnic studies at the University of Washington Bothell and previously professor at the University of Michigan. He is the author. Co-author editor of four books the shifting grounds of race black and Japanese Americans in the making of multi-ethnic Los Angeles the next American Revolution. Sustainable activism for the 21st century with Grace Lee Boggs exiled from Motown a history of Japanese Americans in Detroit. And the 50 year rebellion which will be on sale and you can get a signed copy tonight thanks to Elliott Bay. Scott is also a board member of the James and grossly Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership in Detroit and a love that I love any crowd this participatory and has been involved with a range of community organizations since the 1960s. Hold your applause because I'm going to introduce Michael Howard and then we'll give them a really warm round of applause Michael Hart teaches in the literature program at Duke University. He is co-author with Antonio Negri of the Empire trilogy empire multitude and Commonwealth as well as declaration and assembly. The trilogy in particular its first volume Empire Empire has been hailed as the Communist Manifesto of the 21st century.

[00:14:11] I think these two might have an interesting conversation for us. Do you mind if we can bring our speakers up and keep in mind we'll have a Q and A at the end.

[00:14:19] So please welcome Michael and Scott.

[00:14:27] Thank you. Thank you so much for coming out tonight. I know there's a lot going on in the world. So it's really humbling that you're all here. I really want to thank DeVita Ingram for that

generous introduction and for all her work not just on this program but for so many amazing programs that make this library and make this city a much better place. Thank you so much for your work. And thank you to everyone at the library that makes that makes events like this possible. Thank you to Elliott Bay and thank you to Nikita Oliver for that amazing opening. I had this event that really was a bucket list event where my previous book with Gracie Boggs came out. It was in. It was in New York and Grace was a really close friend of Ruby D. So Ruby D did a poem to open my last book launch and I think in many ways Nikita is carrying on that spirit of artists like Ruby D who have been so active in the public arena. She's helped us to see that the movement is bigger than all of us but that we can all become bigger by participating in that movement. So thank you Nikita Oliver as I want to thank Michael Hart for really helping me think through this book and continuing conversation that's been going on over a number of years now.

[00:16:01] I would be remiss if I didn't start by recognizing people that died and were injured in Charlottesville but really everyone that struggled against the fascists the Nazis the white supremacists and struggling for democracy and human rights and human dignity in this country which shouldn't have to be a struggle for basic human dignity.

[00:16:25] But it still is and I want to see that activism is part of a long tradition of struggle.

[00:16:32] And I want to put that into the context of debated talked about the unresolved contradictions of 1968. I think we're still living in a historical moment frame by 1967 sadly as Michael said we're still living in a moment framed by the unresolved contradictions of 1867 but we're going to focus more today on on the past 50 years. And I want to just give two examples. I'm sure you've all heard them by now trumps both sides comment in many ways is shaped by. The response to the 60s by the idea that. The push for racial equality and the establishment of civil rights means a loss of freedom for others in this country. This is really the product of 50 years of racial resentment and and politicians consciously inflaming that racial resentment. I read a poll today that said 68 percent of Trump supporters believe quote There is a lot of discrimination against whites and that is really the central problem for many of them and why he could say there is sort of legitimate concerns being raised by both sides and we need to say fine people on both sides. And I think the second point is his focus this equivocation defaulted to this focus on restoring law and order which was again the predominant right wing response to the rebellions of the 60s the rebellions in the in the cities but also really the revolt against the imperialist wars in Vietnam and other places around the world that this shock to the system required a call for law and order.

[00:18:15] This is what Nixon ran on when he was elected in 68 and this was part of a real shift a paradigm shift from a focus in this country on a war on poverty to a focus on a war on crime and what we have now this mass incarceration crisis. So this is really again a product of 50 years of a politics of fear and resentment in response to the crisis brought about by the rebellions of the 1960s the focus on law and order in the 60s was revolved around you know the FBI is Cohen tell program coordinating assassination of not just Black Panther Party members but other activists trying to. Convince Martin Luther King that he should commit suicide and give up leadership and infiltrating or at least spying on just about every social movement in this country in the 60s. Today we see. Attacks

on democracy we see authoritarianism we see voter suppression. And again this is part of this pattern of a 50 year response. So we live in very dangerous times. And I want to quote my mentor Detroit's philosopher activist Gracie Boggs from a address she made after her 19th birthday. She said quote with growing unemployment the crisis in the Mideast and the decline in this country's global dominance we have come to the end of the American dream.

[00:19:43] The situation reminds me of the 1930s when good German so-called good Germans demoralized by their defeat in World War 1. Unemployment and inflation followed Hitler into the Holocaust. These days in our country she continued a growing number of white people feel that as they are becoming the minority and the black man has been elected president the country is no longer theirs. They are becoming increasingly desperate and dangerous and to quote now It sounds like the pitch perfect response to Trump's campaign in 2016. But actually she was responding to events that happened in Detroit and Michigan in 2013 when the governor Rick Snyder stripped Detroit's elected government of its authority and named an emergency manager to take order autocratic control over the entire city. The key elements of it later Mark Trump's election facilitated the state takeover and bankruptcy of Detroit. Authoritarian rule by the superwealthy a so-called white lash against black political power. Voter disenfranchisement the gutting of worker's rights and the pillaging of public goods and institutions and the architects of this heavy handed maneuver have subsequently put forward Detroit's corporate makeover as president for financially distressed governments and public entities across the globe. So the sad reality is that the hazards millions of Americans fear may happen in 2017 most likely have already struck Detroit Detroit used to be the wealthiest in America.

[00:21:11] But. By many assessments it now has an official 40 percent poverty rate. A poverty rate that is triple the national average during the 1950s Detroit population peaked near two million. By 2015 it was estimated to be down to six hundred seventy seven thousand. And Detroit became a national symbol of extreme persistent racial segregation and inequality. So these to me are not symptoms of one city. You know that that's exceptionally bad. These are symptoms of a structural crisis that is systemic and national in scope. And to borrow from critical race there is Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres. We need to see Detroit as America's canary in the coal mine to use their term too often has been cast off as a space of exception its problems and so insurmountable that the nation refused to deal with them. However when you're on Tara's call on us to recognize how embattled communities of color quote signal problems with the way we have structured power and privilege and provide the early warning signs of poison in the social atmosphere so we'll get more into this. But I just want to lay out what are the things we can learn from from from Detroit. One is that Detroit help us to see the distinction between calling an event a riot versus a rebellion right. So for those who saw it as a riot. It was it was a description of conditions that needed a restoration of law and order and we've already seen where that's gone.

[00:22:40] But violence was not new in Detroit or in America. It was embedded within a white supremacist social order. Detroit itself one time had over 20000 Klan members right. People aren't aware if this is the 1920s when patterns of racial segregation and inequality are really being established in the industrial city. Detroit had a race riot in 1943 and race riot then meant white mobs and police assaulting African-Americans and this persistent pattern of job discrimination inequality

within the schools when the housing was many was enforced by unequal policing and of frequent outbursts of police brutality. So that is why so many in Detroit gravitated towards seeing the uprising as a rebellion rather than a riot. The violence was always an already inherent within the White Supremacy order. But what we want to get more in today is what grossly Boggs and there's talked about the need to move from rebellion as a stage in rejecting a system and an inequality towards social transformation and revolution. Seeing revolution not as one event that will simply change everything overnight but seeing it as a protracted struggle that particularly has to arise from the grass roots. So I'm going to stop there and save some of these specific discussions for a conversation that we'll have over the next 45 minutes or so.

[00:24:08] So what's gotten I have planned is that we'd each talk for five to seven minutes I think right at the beginning and then and then we have three different points that we're going to talk back and forth about before I think the ideas more or less to open it up between 8:00 and 8:15 to have plenty of time for a discussion to see you know where we're where we're going with that.

[00:24:29] I wanted to emphasize and really take off from where one of the points that Scott left off with and that's the way I would put it is to say that protest is not enough. I mean clearly today protest is necessary not only in the U.S. it's sometimes easy to lose track of the fact that it's the rise of right wing movements and governments isn't strictly a U.S. problem but in some ways common with a variety of countries around the globe including the Philippines Turkey Russia Poland movements in Western Europe too. So when keeping that in mind I would say it's absolutely necessary to protest. It's absolutely necessary to. Protest in the streets at police killings at the courthouses when the when the police are not convicted at the construction of tar sands pipelines at the construction and functioning of oil refineries at the airports.

[00:25:44] Responding to Muslim bans in all kinds of ways.

[00:25:51] And of course against fascist racist demonstrations like in Charlottesville. In fact you could conduct construct your list with innumerable other necessary today points of protests. Yeah I guess so. So the first first point of this I suppose is the protest is necessary. I mean I also the events of Charlottesville force us to add also that a kind of defensive action is also necessary today. Unfortunately a kind of protecting people against fascist violence especially when police are unable or unwilling to do so. When I think about other countries that I've been involved with with similar kinds of things in recent years there's been a similar kind of need to protests protect migrants. I'm thinking now of Germany Sweden Italy countries that I know relatively well protecting migrants against fascist attacks like so there's a kind of defensive action an antifascist defensive actually anti-racist defensive action that has to happen. But all that said it seems to me that it's important always to keep in mind that protest isn't enough when we only think about protest and only about these kind of defensive actions. It seems like we couldn't be stumbling from one disaster to the next. In fact since the election in November and especially since the inauguration in January it can seem people are are tied to their Twitter feeds or tied to the news cycle so much that there's this kind of incessant reacting and so that that that reacting and the defensive mechanisms can can be all engrossing instead. And this is something the sort already said so I'm really just amplifying or repeating one point he made instead.

In addition to protest in addition to the defense. What's necessary is the construction of real social alternatives. And that's what I think we really have to focus on. I'm sure that later I have some examples and Scott has some too about what's going on today where people are constructing real alternatives and not just being not only being caught up in the kind of response and and protests.

[00:28:13] But let me let me just add here before we get to that later wanted to add in some ways try to link this to this story. Scott was telling about Detroit a general our theoretical hypothesis I hope you can be indulgent of me that's the way I think.

[00:28:33] So here's the hypothesis and then I think I'll be able to make it articulate it enough. The hypothesis is that resistance is prior to power. What I mean by this is we normally think of it in the opposite way we normally think is that part power acts they innovate new ways to oppress people etc. what resistance does is it responds to it like that power comes first and resistance comes second. What I propose or this seems to be a useful hypothesis is to think about it the opposite way that resistance is what comes first in power comes second. So let me just start with the story that Scott tells about Detroit in the book in particular I've read the book by the way I highly recommend it.

[00:29:22] This story he tells in the book is about these 50 years in Detroit and how it's really a right wing and capitalist response to rebellion that's driven those 50 years like that really 67 comes first and then fiscal crisis white flight to the suburbs of financial control the city is all in some ways a response to that and that seems as though that's maybe one way of thinking about it.

[00:29:52] But when we think about the rebellion it's important not only to think about July 1967 fighting the police the burning and looting but rather to think about the history of Detroit in the decades around that and the kinds of resistance that was really not so much resisting power but creating alternatives already. It's really that I would say that the power in Detroit was responding to. So for me important examples of this come from the auto industry and maybe thinking Detroit in those years it's impossible to separate the history of the city from the history of the auto industry. I'm thinking in particular of of of two specific organizations the WHO which organizations which Scott does talked about of course and explained in the book the Dodge revolutionary union movement at the Dodge plant the Dodge auto manufacturing plant and related to it the League of revolutionary black workers what both of these organizations what I think was distinctive about them is that

[00:31:10] They were of course opposing the company you know they were workers who were struggling against dodge or against the auto manufacturers really against capital as a whole but they were also struggling against the United Auto Workers and in specific the White centralized leadership of the UAW. So with the with the with these organizations were constructing at the time was a more democratic and specifically a more autonomous organization like more autonomous not only from capital or from the from the plant but also from the union and specifically from the White controlled union and they were also involved not only in the plant like not only the organizations of workers in the factory but also the organization of the community outside of the plant. Ultimately I think what these groups were aimed at and what they were constructing was an alternative mode of life and specifically with these organizations a black autonomous mode of life in Detroit.

[00:32:19] So it seems to me want to come back to my apotheosis then that resistance is prior to power that the development of the power structure in Detroit was responding not only are really not even so much to the conflict with police in the streets you know if you think about 1967 as that kind of as the burning and looting but rather to the kinds of resistance that was really constructing an alternative mode of life like that's what seems to me interesting and what the what the league and the Dodge revolutionary movement union movement was doing so that's so that my hypothesis then that resistance is prior to power. It's not just that it comes first. It's really that that is the moment of innovation that power is not able to construct what is really these movements of resistance or struggle for liberation. Like that's where the real moment of innovation is. And that's what it means to say that resistance is prior to power that that's the moment of innovation and power just just reacts to it and tries to contain it steps back from it.

[00:33:33] So OK so what does this do for us. Like what would this hypothesis or this perspective. Yeah. So looking at the history of of the Detroit rebellion that way also now trying to read movements in the present that way what does it do for us. One is to recognize that maybe this is the most simple one or maybe two simple even to say is that we're not just victims like it's not just that power acts and we are. We are victims of it but rather that and or that we're just defending or that we're just reactive in all those ways but rather that social struggles for liberation are powerful authors of social innovation themselves. That's what I mean by this perspective of resistance as prior to power. And it forces us to look beyond the protest to the instances of social innovation. OK.

[00:34:28] So if that's that's I'm really going to stop with this first part there but I hope that you could see how it relates to my opening claim that we have to hear again. I think I'm saying something that all of you it seems to me no news for anyone.

[00:34:42] You know that protest is not enough that in addition to protests we need also and maybe more importantly to construct real lasting alternatives that this notion of resistance being prior to power is a way of seeing that or way of highlighting that that is not just a matter of resisting of reacting of defending ourselves against oppression but also and moreover about treating the struggles as the moment of innovation that can create read social trends.

[00:35:12] And that's what we need to focus on today it seems.

[00:35:15] Okay. Pass to the next part Thanks. So this back and forth part we decided we wanted to start by looking at the significance of 1967 right. So say a couple of things about that and that relate not just to Detroit but really to Seattle and really everywhere in the U.S. The one obvious point is that. The contradictions of 1967 not been resolved they still have white supremacists we still have a system of institutional racism and white supremacy beyond people out there carrying torches. We still have severe economic inequality people were protesting wars in the 1960s. We're still quagmires in at least two wars and possibly you know worried about a nuclear war. At this moment and undoubtedly it was police brutality that touched off the rebellion in Detroit and in Newark and other places in the 60s. Most of the people that died in Detroit were killed by the police. Right. So we can look at it as an

uprising but really it was also a police riot. This new movie Detroit which some people like and others don't like it all does get at a very important incident that happened where it was basically the police in the middle of the Detroit rebellion assaulting torturing and really massacring innocent African-American civilians and two white women in a motel. So that's an important thing to point out is in some ways that hasn't changed Seattle. We're still dealing with police killings and trying to get them under control. I think the other side of that though is that 1967 even though some of these forms of oppression still exist really is a turning point in history because as Michael was saying so much of the politics of the last 50 years has been a reaction to the shock to the system that the rebellions of the 60s represented the rebellions in terms of the street uprisings. But also again the political revolt against the existing order and against a system that

[00:37:34] That preached equality but was really very slowly and gradually moving in that direction. And in many ways was starting to stall. And so you know what you see in Detroit was Black Political Empowerment to the point where you had 40 years of African-American mayors right.

[00:38:02] And the response to that was white more white flight more shifting of resources and jobs and funding to the suburbs.

[00:38:15] And you had this new base this new base of white voters moving from the Democratic to the Republican Party the so-called Reagan Democrats.

[00:38:25] And now some of them you know supported Trump.

[00:38:30] So it was a turning point in terms of this right wing kind of revolution but it was also a turning point in terms of oppressed people's communities of color.

[00:38:40] And other formerly marginalized and silenced voices saying that you know we are going to put our issues at the center of the national stage right. And in many ways that is what is the source of polarization in this country. Day it be you know easy to say why can't we all just get along. Well the point is the reason we don't get along. It's because we haven't resolved these figures. That again grew out of the rebellions of the 1960s. So Michael so just two ideas about this historical part

[00:39:17] To go with this know they both do in some ways have to do with the Kathryn Bigelow film to which I imagine some of you have seen and most of you haven't seen a kid. You don't have to have seen it and maybe you don't have to see it I have relatively low expectations of what Hollywood would do with such an event. So I wasn't disappointed by it but I wanted to I thought two criticisms of it might help you know just as framing devices and one one about police brutality and the other about spontaneity the police brutality point maybe is a simple one and it's partly about reading the events.

[00:39:55] The it seems to me that while one must focus on police brutality and on and on police killings as we often do still and of course as a representation of Detroit also does it can be misleading because that focus on police brutality or even the concept itself presents it as an exception. I think that that in fact so that it seems as if you know this is the kind of impression one could get from from a

film such as that. But also I think a recounting of many of the of the events of the last of the last decade it can seem as if therefore if we only had a police force that did not include those few racists everything would be better if it seems like the exception.

[00:40:48] That's what I think the concept of police brutality too often does.

[00:40:52] And instead one has to recognize not the exception but the normal daily vicious life of relationships to the police to the courts to the prison system like the one has to focus on the norm not on the exception. That's where the only the only difficulty I'm having then are the only criticism I am I'm using here of this notion of police brutality is that it focuses on the exception whereas I think the real problem is the norm. What really is happening every day that that's the problem rather than the exception.

[00:41:30] The second maybe I could put this again as it seemed convenient to put as a criticism of the film too is about this appearance of spontaneity like that it appears and it could easily appear that the that the rebellion was a spontaneous response to the police killings the police arrests first said at an unauthorized bar you know liquor sales and then the police violence.

[00:42:08] I think they're I guess my motto was this would be Don't trust anyone who calls a movement or revolt spontaneous. I think that it only looks spontaneous from those who are ignorant of the causes.

[00:42:24] So I mean the classic example is this and I think you can probably think of many other classic examples. A class example comes to mind for me is 1960 in Greensboro for young black men sit at a white lunch counter and refused to leave. So journalists and many sympathetic preservers described it as a spontaneous protests and from the outside it certainly appeared to come from nowhere.

[00:42:53] But then of course if you know what was going on behind those four four young men the organization for years and church groups in student groups the local chapters of the NFL ACP there had been for years before that sit ins elsewhere in the southeast in the U.S. so that it only appeared spontaneous if you didn't see all of this. I think spontaneity just is that is the appearance from from the outside whereas from the inside one can recognize the long construction that goes into this.

[00:43:33] I mean one could name a number of other numerous other events have another one that I've been interested in the 2011 riots in London after the Mark Duggan killing I mean the two.

[00:43:44] I guess this is what I think that's got the importance as got attaches to the distinction between a riot and rebellion whereas in or riot could appear spontaneous whereas a rebellion has behind it a history of organized ice struggles least that's where the way I'm interpreting it. So

[00:44:08] The spontaneity it seems to me I can the same way that I think police brutality reduces the normal and structural functioning especially racist functioning of the police the courts and the prison system.

[00:44:24] Spontaneity is also a way of discrediting discrediting the revolt and focusing on it merely as a reaction and not as a constitution of alternatives. So I want to take off from your point about the repression and the police brutality not being an exception but really being the norm not that they have to do it just like the Klan that's Jimmy Boggs he's just the Klan would you know lynch people

[00:44:54] Not continuously but they would do it enough to where the rest of the time that that threat and that fear would be imposed upon the black community under Jim Crow and I get I guess I get that that's what you're saying about you know the police state violence right that it happens as a way to enforce order right. And it seems to me that one of the things that comes out of the remains of the 60s is the shift towards authoritarianism mass incarceration as a way to restore order. But it's interesting to me that you know obviously liberals and Trump supporters don't agree on almost anything right now but there is among some liberals this kind of common sentiment to try to go back to a golden age of American politics of American liberalism when you had the New Deal and you had a. Social safety net. And again that's not all. But it is certainly something you see it in the writings of someone like Paul Krugman. And obviously when Trump supporter is saying Make America Great Again you know they are talking about a return to a sense of prosperity and peace and they are covering over. All the male privilege the white privilege is a hetero normative cis gender privilege that was inherent in that right which is but in some ways so are the liberals thinking that we just come back to an era of new deal liberalism.

[00:46:17] I mean in fact the point of the 60s rebellions was New Deal liberalism was not serving everybody equally in fact Ira Katz Nelson just read an. Editorial The New York Times based on his book *When Affirmative Action Was White*. So many of these 20th century programs of the New Deal and of liberalism and coming out of the Democrats disproportionately uplifted whites and the middle class rather than imprints people of color particularly African-Americans and women. And I think that's one thing that why the 60s is is a point of no is a point of no return because you really have to be innocent naive to think that you know there was some happy medium at that moment. And so that's where I see the polarization happening where you have this shift towards authoritarianism and right wing authoritarian in terms of state violence but also this shift towards you know gutting unions and pensions and benefits and and using globalization and outsourcing as weapons against its workers that devastates Detroit even while other cities like. Seattle may benefit from the new global economy. And yet even when cities are more wealthy you have some of the same problems in Detroit you have. Hundred forty nine

[00:47:33] Because people's property values are are devastated by predatory lending and Wall Street shenanigans and other things. But in Seattle because property prices skyrocketed you also see people losing their homes and communities under attack in Detroit

[00:47:49] The public school system has basically been eviscerated heavily by the funding and involvement of Betsy De Vos attempting to replicate these types of privatization policies for the whole country.

[00:48:09] And and yet in Seattle you don't get that same level of white flight from the public school system but because of that you have much more race and class inequality within the the Seattle School District. So you know again I guess the point I'm getting at is the polarization happens really everywhere even though it looks like it's more extreme in a place like Detroit. But it's getting at your point that the system itself. Right. There's no such thing as a normal system. In fact what we call the exceptions are really defining the new dynamics of this system. So I guess that yeah I guess that brings us more to the present. So I want to give some of some of what's happened in Detroit

[00:48:53] And I think again it's important to point out that Detroit was really at the center of the fight for workers rights labor unions and civil rights in this country right. Detroit was even called a model city for social progress prior to 1967.

[00:49:14] And what we've seen is it's really not an accident that Detroit has been targeted for this right wing authoritarian autocratic takeover by a so-called emergency manager in the name of restoring you know fiscal health.

[00:49:28] But really what it is it's not just a rearrangement of fiscal policies it's a rearrangement of social policies on a mass scale. And so you see pensions and benefits cuts for workers and retirees you see massive privatization of city departments sell off of public assets. There's even this plan. That these Libertarians have to buy up Belle Isle which is like Detroit's Central Park but it's an island they actually want to turn it into a private city state for millionaires. This is an actual proposal and it's not just fringe people it's like you know the former head of the Chamber of Commerce and the treasurer of the Republican Party people like that in terms of focusing on gentrification and making the city more business friendly. You have massive subsidies for billionaire developers like Mike village who the late Mike village but his family owns the Detroit Red Wings. They got a two hundred fifty two hundred eighty five million dollars subsidy for a hockey arena while the city was in bankruptcy. Meanwhile 250 million plus dollars that was supposed to go from the federal bailout to help homeowners facing foreclosure

[00:50:39] Or you know they're having trouble with their mortgage payments was diverted instead by the emergency manager and the governor to demolitions.

[00:50:48] Right.

[00:50:49] And if people didn't leave because their house was demolished the city started shutting off water to over 80000 people in the midst of this bankruptcy. And so it is basically. And while they were over in your period closing roughly 200 public schools and maybe the only good thing about the water shutoffs is that at least people having their water shut off weren't getting poisoned by drinking water.

[00:51:20] As the people in Flint a hundred thousand people in Flint were when the emergency manager took over their city.

[00:51:26] So again these are horror stories but they are also an attempt to just sort of take away the flaw that once existed right to take away not just the safety net but a basic sense of livability for people. So that again a city could exist no longer on the basis of civil rights and union rights but be based on this model where the billionaire developers rule over everything they have their private security you know defining what life is like and people who can't afford to live there are simply you know seeing their homes demolished their schools closed and their neighborhoods basically stripped of services so that's to me what's really dangerous about this moment. Michael I'm going to bring you back because. The other point I think we want to make and I definitely want to make is that all these negative things that are happening and again you see what's happening in politics at the national level these horror stories are a sign of a system that is producing tremendous amounts of oppression and inequality. But but a sign of the system that's also in crisis right. And I think that's really important to recognize today that this system is in crisis because of the demands that movements have put on it and the challenges and the shock to the system that came not just from again from the urban uprisings in places like Detroit but from the 50 years of activism and organizing that the movements have done to create a to create an alternative.

[00:53:14] I wanted to in many ways Scott has just been emphasizing and I and I think this is also a central thread in the book is a kind of continuity between 90 the last 50 years between 1967 and today.

[00:53:29] I wanted to bring up one one aspect with regard to the present it seems to me different and provides and presents us with a new challenge and this is by the so-called leaderless nature of horizontal movements from the recent years and maybe even the recent recent decades leaderless horizontal movements that that of course are not only typical now social movements of the U.S. but but a variety of other places across the globe which seems to me a different difference from 50 years ago. In fact many of the. Social movements let's say at least since 2011. But if we want to put it that way many of the criticism of them Black Lives Matter included. They've been criticized for their failure to model themselves on the leadership structures of the previous generation had.

[00:54:34] I mean this is a I mean Black Lives Matters many things. And so it's hard to speak about in general but often there is a criticism that it that it does not conform to let's put it that way.

[00:54:50] The leadership structures and the charismatic leaders themselves of 50 years ago I think it's true that in this is one way in which there's a kind of continuity among black lives matter. Occupy also stretching back to the globalization protest movements of you know starting in 1999 say that in them there are no charismatic leaders there no leadership councils.

[00:55:24] They're relatively anonymous facilitators I would say who often choreograph struggles rather than leaders in the previous sets. So and in them I think completely rightly in my view it's driven

been driven in that direction in over the last 50 years through a critique of the anti-democratic nature of traditional leadership structures.

[00:55:54] In fact what what is what is one of the many interesting things about black lives matter Newt the various black lives matter movements is the overlap between the rejection of traditional leadership structures with the rejection of gender and sexuality hierarchies that the two in many ways function together. So. On the one hand I would say that social movements in recent decades have been right to refuse the traditional forms of leadership in the name of democracy and equality.

[00:56:29] But on the other hand we do need lasting forms of organization that are capable of bringing about real transformation. Too often it seems to me as if these were our only choices that either we could choose beautiful democratic movements but which were however ineffective and ephemeral like short lasting or our only other choice our traditional centralised leadership structures the organizations of which we didn't like.

[00:57:06] But we had to in some way under know hold our nose and withstand them in order to be effective I think that that's it's not true that those are only choices. But it's a conundrum. This is I partly wonder bring it up in case some of you were interested in discussing it. It seems to me a organizational question that's of great importance today. I have my own ideas about let's say addressing this conundrum like what are our choices.

[00:57:35] If not only horizontal short lasting and effective movements or traditional vertical leadership structures that are undemocratic and I think actually not effective either but that's another matter. So but I thought instead of giving you my own ideas about I just give two examples. It could at least be evocative.

[00:58:00] The first is the way that the movement for Black Lives combines horizontal organization with a platform of policy demands and in some ways ensures the lasting and I hope one hopes effective nature of it with Democratic organizing like that this might be or one might argue on the basis of the attempt.

[00:58:23] You know that that kind of experiment of some of the platform of the Movement for Black Lives of going beyond what I was presenting as a kind of conundrum of the Either Or another example which which might be less present for many of you are electoral parties outside of the U.S. the one that comes to mind most for me is Podemos in Spain. Electoral parties that are attempting to both draw on and foster democratic social movements.

[00:59:01] In other words electoral party I mean someone might some might argue I'm not sure if I would argue this myself but some might argue that the Bernie Sanders campaign was was or elements of the Sanders campaign was trying to do this too. I guess all I'm interested in now is just posing as a principle that one might think of a an electoral party that could both draw on the energies of social movements but also maybe more importantly Foster and give place to the increase of social movements that that might be another way of understanding how to get get by there.

[00:59:35] So I guess what I'm I both want to present this is an important challenge for movements today that's different.

[00:59:45] I would say that 50 years ago and also maybe just as a baseline for starting discussion to say that the refusal of traditional leadership structure doesn't mean being ineffective in short lasting but rather forces us to recognize as a challenge. Models of organization that are able to enact lasting transformations and continuous ones that don't fall back into the older leadership structures that seem to me undemocratic and and unequal.

[01:00:19] Something that I want to take off from that we know now without a doubt that elections matter do make a difference.

[01:00:30] And yet we also learned I think many of us you know of from having Obama in office for eight years that elections don't solve every problem in the world. In and of themselves or by themselves either. Right. So elections can be very extremely important especially right now. As a defense right that's a defensive

[01:00:55] Act against.

[01:00:57] Again the types of atrocities we're now seeing committed and that are will continue to be committed for years and years and years with all that's being done you know to stop to prevent us from taking more effective action against climate change and things that will have long lasting effects. So I think this is where these new movements are so important because yes some people would say well why don't you have that one leader that charismatic leader or why don't you run someone for office. You know that can make a difference. But the fact that as we know that that having someone in office will only be effective if there is grassroots movement to make that person accountable. And in fact in fact oftentimes we've seen it in many cases putting someone putting a new face in power either doesn't change anything or in some ways corrupts that person who ends up betraying the movement that they came out of. Right. And and that's what I think is so important about these new movements even if they haven't taken power so far in the traditional way they are they're organizing and transforming relationships and consciousness and activity at the grass roots in ways that are absolutely essential if you want long term structural transformative change. And that's why I want to just end this part of our conversation by coming back to Detroit because again it would be very difficult to find a place where people have been faced with you know higher levels of unemployment where again their right to vote has even been basically neutered by these new emergency measures laws. And even though the emergency manager himself has left he by law put in place structures and policies and priorities that the city now has to basically uphold for the next 13 years minimum before they can be free of this state oversight that they've been put under.

[01:02:52] So. You know you would think and that in that context people could feel demoralized and defeated and some people do some people have simply moved away. I want to give a shout out to the Detroiters that. Are here today I know there are at least two or three of them. That are here. So

you know you can take people out and try but you can never take take Detroit out of them. But the point I want to make is that because people have been deprived of those types of representative democracy and because people have been deprived economically of those types of jobs that you know like the 15 dollar and hour jobs that people have demanded from corporations here in Seattle because they've lost so much because they can't rely on wealth you know being created by skyrocketing property values that they've had to develop innovative resilient ways to survive they've had to put much more focus on taking care of each other at the neighborhood level they've had to put much more focus on strengthening and rebuilding relations between children and parents and grandchildren. They've had to deal with the prison crises the mass incarceration crisis on major scale. They've come up with ways to grow their own food not just to feed themselves but to deal with the blight caused by vacant lots and abandonment. They have come up with ways to promote restorative justice and conflict resolution that does not require police intervention or incarceration.

[01:04:39] They have been focused on building economic cooperatives that are prioritizing human needs rather than profit. Right.

[01:04:50] So there's actually in this void of jobs and in traditional jobs and investment and politics there's been this challenge and this opportunity or people to create a much more visionary alternative. Right. And it's and it's ultimately for it to transform all of society right. It does need to affect the policies of people in government.

[01:05:17] And and the primary engines of our economy. But that will happen in my assessment by people replicating the models that

[01:05:32] Are happening on a small scale in Detroit with Freedom Schools. Again with economic co-ops with urban farms will happen by people replicating those rather than somehow those magically being voted into office. You know and imposed from above. And I think again that's the moment we're in. Obviously we wouldn't want to choose to be in a moment where someone this reprehensible wouldn't be in the White House. But because you know people who believe in democracy and human rights and social justice are not in power. We have this challenge and this opportunity to strengthen our relationships and and enhance our visions at a grassroots level.

[01:06:17] So I mean this is a really seems to me really interesting and maybe I guess inspiring aspect of of of of Scott's perspective on this and also the book which is that you know Detroit is not just the site of an incredible oppression and a kind of experimentation of new forms of of ways to screw people over.

[01:06:39] I mean with with the city the whole list that's got put up there. It's also today the site of really an extraordinary laboratory for alternative futures like that that's what seems so inspiring about Detroit is not only that people have survived this incredible 50 year onslaught it's rather that they have created experiments of a different different future and that's what I mean.

[01:07:06] That's what seems to be one thing once you get out of this 50 years. It's not just recognizing that we're suffering under the same yoke that's been that's been developed all that time but also that that they're the kind of construction of construction of real alternatives and sort of as I said at the beginning I think it's much more interest.

[01:07:28] It's much more it's much easier. Yeah it's much easier to recognize protest and resistance than it is to recognize people experimenting with alternatives.

[01:07:39] And so that's what I just wanted to add one thing to this with a couple other examples and there are Detroit examples of this I'm sure to an optic is something like that a concept for helping recognize this experiments you know contemporary what seemed to me today important experiments with alternative futures for me and it it goes under the concept of the common like what I mean by this the common is something a way of sharing social wealth as opposed to private property or even public property if by public property you think of as the state controlling it. The common instead is something that we share and that we manage democratically. That sounds I mean I think there are two things First of all it can sound very abstract to you and B it could sound utopian you know like the struggle against private property. That sounds both antiquated and and impossible.

[01:08:33] Let me just give you two examples that I read under this under this lens. Let's say of the common which maybe in these examples it seems obvious to me the first is about standing rock and struggles against the Dakota Access Pipeline. So I mean there are a. Number of super important things about Standing Rock. I mean the. Extraordinary gathering of North American tribes. The initiative taken by Native Americans in an environmental struggle. In some ways it environmentalists following the lead of of Native American groups.

[01:09:13] But what if the assertion of the common in the struggle that I wanted just to highlight here like because the Standing Rock was really not about property and about ownership or there's one argument you could make which would put it about land ownership you know which could go back to treaty to say that this is our property. That's the tribe's property therefore you can't construct a pipeline because it's our property and we should control it. But instead I think that's not the argument. I think that's that property argument is really replaced by an argument about the common. Because the argument about the earth in standing rock is about constructing a different relationship with the earth. It's not about a relationship of ownership but one about share about sharing about care and about collective democratic management of our relationships to the earth so that I think what the the protests against the pipeline think about the water protectors or a number of other figures having having to do with standing rock that the that the struggle is really not just one against the extractive oil industries but also about and maybe even more importantly about constructing a different relationship with social wealth with with the with the earth and with water which is not one of property was one of the common I think that maybe that I feel like that's maybe an obvious example. The second one I wanted to point to is about an initiative

[01:10:56] That called the black land and liberation initiative which it's anchored by the blackout collective in Oakland and others. I learned about it in the lead up to Juneteenth about taking back the

land and I had I listen to that and maybe many of you listen to to these regular web webinars that movement for Black Lives runs. And so this too seems to me an argument for the common this this black land and labor no sorry black land and liberation initiative Labor would be fine too.

[01:11:32] So here here's their argument where they say what they're what they're opposing is the current extractive economy. This is from from their statement the mission statement.

[01:11:44] The current extractive economy which depends on the violent enclosure of land culture power wealth and spirit. So what. I think that one gets from this really. They say why do I say it's a notion of the common. It's about opposing the enclosure of land as private property about the enclosure of also immaterial social relations or for other forms of social wealth as property or put it this way. I think that they they're posing a fundamentally different notion of reparations. Like you could understand reparations. And this seems perfectly right and I interested. And I'd be perfectly in support of it in terms of theft like if he turned think of reparations in terms of theft. It's about the right rightful owner and restoring something to the rightful owner like that's not a bad concept. But it's all within a property rubric. It seems to me within the rubric of the common one can't even think theft the rent and the reparations that. The the black landed liberation initiative poses is not in terms really about theft and the restoring of property it's rather about restoring a relationship of the common that is one in which we all have access to and democratic decision making over the land and other forms of social wealth.

[01:13:18] It seems to me a fundamentally different notion of of of of of reparations one that in some ways it seems to me more radical that goes outside of the relationship of property saying not just don't just give me back what you stole from me but rather that we needed a fundamentally different relationship to the land and other forms of social wealth in which we don't own it but we share it and have. Mechanisms of democratic decision making around it. Okay I hope that these they can at least make sense to you as you know Scott and I were both saying in the beginning that it's not just a matter of protest and resistance but also constructing real social alternatives an idea that there are some ways in which even coordinated with each other social movements today are proposing real and radical social alternatives that could lead to a different to form a liberation and a different future.

[01:14:20] Yeah. And so you know to try to summarize the conversation I think we're saying that resistance is essential that when people reject an unjust system they are making a positive statement right. That it's important again to struggle over that because whether it's through voting or whether it's through media debates when the right wing tries to frame it simply as a crisis of law and order. That's when you get the authoritarian response authoritarianism and the types of of you know even far right movements that we're now seeing threatening us. But it really comes down to not just those defensive struggles against the right but but fostering a creative alternative to to that unjust order.

[01:15:08] And the last thing I just want to add and open it up on this comment is the people that have been most essential to creating generating and both but also being imaginative in terms of being creative have been people who have been most excluded and most oppressed by the existing hierarchical structures. Right.

[01:15:28] So when you look at these movements rising day it's particularly because of women of color queer trans disabled working class folks women of color and gender non normative gender nonconforming persons that are really at the forefront of what's making these movements so much more innovative and creative. And so we want to I guess invite comments disagreements questions and and see what

[01:15:57] You have to contribute and just a reminder to please keep your comments brief.

[01:16:04] We'd love to get as many voices as we can. And not everybody is an external processor. So we said that we would leave a little bit of time for people to write comments out so if you're more of a writer go for it. But I also think that it's nice when people kick off conversations so if you have a question that's been burning in your seat go for it.

[01:16:23] And also thank you to Mike and to Scott for such a great conversation yeah I was interested. You're talking about social movements and you mentioned

[01:16:36] On the left it's kind of been herky jerky very good at the legal short term playing a short game over and over. And I was wondering if you in your research did you look at the other side of the coin. In the sense that look at where we are today with Trump. He's dismantling government. He's putting big business in charge and you look at that look at those bullet points. Right on down the line. All of this stuff. You can trace it back trace it back trace it back not to 1967. It's textbook 1960 John Birch Society. They are doing that agenda now. They never went away. If that was Robert Welch and the Koch brothers dad. And they just kept grinding away within the Republican Party all this time. Is nightmarish as this is. They're better at social movement than we are. You know. And ironically the Birchers back then tried to put Barry Goldwater in the White House and everybody flipped out because he was gonna get his hands on the bomb.

[01:17:40] Look who's got the bomb now. And I mean. I think what you're talking about I really get it but I think in a way when you look at the other side of the coin go back a few more years

[01:17:51] Starting with the Birchers. They have been working all this time social movement. And this is their agenda. They're getting it now. And they will get it done a few years ago.

[01:18:04] Let's take some more questions and Comet e me too Petra Hopi I know you Ethiopian matchmaker. First off I would like to thank our native people whose land we're standing on and it's because of their mass murder genocide and ongoing enslavement that we're able to see here today.

[01:18:24] So it's a two part question. You highlighted how this nation has been first off. Continues to be impacted by ongoing 500 years of ongoing genocide cultural genocide and colonization built upon white supremacy established room by colonized settlers. So I'm curious oftentimes when there's these conversations there comes the complex

[01:18:59] Concept of an ally specifically there's like a social dissonance moment for people like Khan settlers who privileged white privileged and white people facing white fragility or white savior effect but then they kind of want to be allies. What type of steps or like best practices or like what can they do so that they can begin to one heal from their own white privilege white guilt or nice settler guilt and white fragility and then the second part is once that's established we can take no of the ongoing historical and intergenerational trauma that has been inflicted by ongoing conversation. So we talk about the seventh generation prophecy prop our Lakota brothers and sisters on healing seven generations and then it begins seven more generations to begin the healing holistically to begin decarbonising as our whole individual society environment and future generations.

[01:20:20] So how do you foresee that people as one as a nation and communities and the earth can begin the healing or reconciliation if you can never really heal.

[01:20:38] Thank you. Whether we take more question let's do at least three. Yeah.

[01:20:46] I haven't read the book. I should I want to pick it up before I go. After doing all this study and living there for a long time and this 50 years of experiment happened what is your verdict in foreseeing the future of Detroit.

[01:21:05] The future of Detroit what do you want. What's your sense well just start there.

[01:21:11] I mean again the point I am trying to make is that I think what's happened Detroit it's been really critical to U.S. history right. And I think the future of this country is in many ways tied to what's happening today not just metaphorically because Detroit is you know setting the example a negative example is as you pointed out that that has now become central to the national agenda.

[01:21:34] Again education is this morning's I mean the charter school industry in Michigan is now a billion dollar interest in 80 percent of the charter schools in Michigan are for profits. I mean they exist basically to make money off of this students not even so they're not even like building cars like GM where they would try to you know use exploit labor so that they could make profits now they just see the students themselves as the source of money to pocket for the for profit charter schools. So you know there's a negative model but again there's a positive model. And I think to try to address your question I. Obviously I'm critical of white privilege and racial inequality. It's very hard to convince people under this current system which is set up to promote polarization and hierarchy and equality for people to somehow you know change their position within this current system because it's really set up to pit people against each other. Right. So I think our only hope and this is why again why though nobody wished for the type of devastation that happened to Detroit why people like Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs saw it as a real challenge and opportunity is because when the system fails on that level for so many people we have to come together in new ways. And when we do that. There's no guarantee. But but the opportunity is to create a whole new set of values and principles rooted in rooted in respect for indigenous peoples rooted in respect for all oppressed peoples rooted in

[01:23:06] Respect for the land rooted in respect for future generations.

[01:23:09] So I mean that that is the real real challenge right. You're going to have a real hard time in a city like Seattle where there's so much wealth. I mean the two most richest men in the world now live in the city. It's very hard to convince people to give up that system that's creating so much wealth because so many people are fighting to get access to that wealth. And people have a right. I mean obviously if you work for people making billions you have a right to do your fair share. But but what's happened in Detroit again the collapse of this system has really challenged people to think up those types of alternate and again it's mostly coming as I said from those who've been most excluded. And I totally agree it has everything to learn from indigenous peoples whether we're talking about standing rock or Palestine or Puerto Rico or anywhere in the world yeah.

[01:24:01] I definitely would you want to just start with that and then I can come to the first one which which was I think you're absolutely right to point out the difficulties of the concept of ally but I think we also have to recognize that necessity of always thinking in coalition terms and recognizing that we have to. And I would say not only within the U.S. but also outside of it because the problems that we're facing. I mean I just mentioned this is the beginning but it would probably be a different evening's discussion. The problems that we're facing in the U.S. today aren't that different from things that are happening in a variety of countries around the world. And we're only stronger the more we recognize it seems to me those connections like even either having explicit relationships but even just learning from learning from each other. It could be I mean movements learning from each other. In addition to individuals. So anyway I mean I know that you're not when you're posing the difficulties of white privilege and in the problematical nature of allies you're not saying that we shouldn't.

[01:25:14] I just want to say that we have to approach that always recognizing that the kinds of coalitions connections are are completely necessary. Maybe that's that's what I would go with you know with the first one I wouldn't say you were saying that the right is better at social movements in the left. I wouldn't go that far. I think that actually right wing social movements in the U.S. maybe ever everywhere are reactionary in the sense that they really reflect back elements distorted elements that the left wing movements have done previously. Like I was saying you know sometimes it's just in terms of repertoire of struggles. But you know I was thinking about how this was the early 1980s what was called Operation Rescue Work where anti-abortion movement took up the notion of a sit in and so that they would blockade around it so they would just take the tactics from the left and kind of redeploy them on the right. I think that that's similar. There are many ways in which there's that kind of redeployment of the lefts but that maybe that's not the important thing.

[01:26:25] I mean the important thing that you're definitely bringing up is it's gotten I touched about this at the beginning and end and Charlottesville and a number of other things.

[01:26:34] Even the last weeks and months make this perfectly clear. I mean part of the agenda has to be opposing and finding ways of contesting and even protecting against the violent and and horrifying nature of right wing movements in the US today. I mean that has to unfortunately. I mean I think that's one of the least interesting. I think you know I get interested in certain intellectual things I

find fighting fascists. One of the least interesting conceptual things but it's necessary. Unfortunately that's what we're stuck with. And so we have to figure ways ways to do that. And that's part of what the importance I think of what you were saying about the the power. Of of these right wing movements is is that it poses a constraint on us.

[01:27:28] You know that we have to find ways of opposing the.

[01:27:32] I was curious about something that was mentioned awhile back in this conversation about how we're kind of responding to. Oh sorry. Oh there you go. It's hard it is about power. Something about power. Kind of responding to revolution. And I think that I guess my question is if you look back if you if you read about older movements you know I think about like in the Black Panther movement or Ella Baker had we're doing a lot of things around creating new structures you know and creating co-ops and I get the feeling now that there's been kind of a shift in what's deemed possible. You know that we don't that I don't hear a lot of people talking about that kind of thing at least you don't see it. Or maybe I don't see it you know maybe I'm just not there. But do you. And I guess my quote my specific question is do you think that one of the responses explicitly the power has is to shift what we view as possible into very you know kind of the historical record of what's been tried and where we've been. So I'm curious if you have

[01:28:48] Advice about what we can learn here in Seattle from Detroit about the problems that we're facing so as you mentioned there are some really important differences and that we have a ton of wealth here. But it feels like we're facing this crisis in terms of the inequity of that wealth and that a lot of ordinary people can't afford to live here anymore. Rise in homelessness and inequity in the school systems. And I'm wondering if you see parallels and things that. That people should have done sooner in Detroit or what like what. Anything that comes from this study that we could learn to make Seattle a better place now.

[01:29:29] So I'll try to combine these two. So a friend named Bill Ayres wrote a book called demand the impossible palling around with Bill last time he was in Seattle. And I think that's you know something that Detroit

[01:29:47] Looking at what people doing in churches expands the realm of of what's possible right. So again I have friends who have started anywhere from one acre to nine 10 acre urban farm so they're not just community gardens which have some wonderful community gardens in Seattle and other big cities. But Detroit because of. Because basically capitalists and developers abandoned and white people also middle class white feel abandoned so much land. You have the ability to do these farms on a much bigger scale and it expands the bounds of what's possible. So of course it would seem ludicrous to go into downtown Seattle and demand nine acres of land for a non-commercial community or community owned you know predominantly African-American run urban farm that's rooted in you know radical principles of of movement activists.

[01:30:37] But if you can see a precedent in Detroit then you can see you know at least the seeds of a possibly. Again it's not going to happen overnight but it expands the brown of what we're fighting for.

So instead of just fighting for the people who are rich and powerful to give us a little bit more than what they gave us yesterday that we are seeing that we have a long term strategy and we have to recognize yes it's going to require a lot of organizing a lot of coalition building a lot of strategic thinking and creativity and struggle. And you know on the other hand there are resources in the city. You know we don't have to deal with you know the type of of deprivation and lack of just basic basic needs that so many thousands of people face in a city like Detroit or in other parts of the world that have been so devastated you know bye bye.

[01:31:30] Toxic racism. And by you know the lack of any type of meaningful labor laws or minimum wage I mean we don't have. What we have examples of that but we don't have it on the same scale. So I think we just have to find you know what is that balance between where we are positioned and what we what we can do with the current resources that we have and what we need to do beyond our current capacity would have a dual two to two ideas really about.

[01:32:01] By your point which was you know that when one thinks back historically to the Black Panther Party and the breakfast programs of the free clinics it doesn't seem like the similar things are happening today of the construction of a social alternative.

[01:32:13] I think on the one hand such things are often invisible and so partly what it is is to try to see what people are doing.

[01:32:22] Like it takes a greater effort. I often have people say to me like oh it's so depressing today because no one's doing anything and well I think he's just not looking hard enough like that. I don't mean you I mean me. Everybody's hard to it's hard to say the first thing is about like seeing what people already doing. And that's where I thought Scott's examples from Detroit are really important but also thinking about it elsewhere was happening here in Seattle what's happening elsewhere.

[01:32:49] The second I hope this isn't a conflicting idea which is that I'm convinced today is the moment for people to think big like it's not a moment where we should just say look we need to make incremental gains.

[01:33:03] The right wing is so strong we're under this horrible government etc. We need to just defend our gains or I think instead. On the contrary today is that is the time when we have to really think and we can really think about a radically different world that we want. So that I think that it's it's maybe. I mean I feel that we are called to that today to think of a radically different world in radically different possibilities. I think it's open for that today. So on the one hand I think there are already things happening. But on the other hand I would say so much more is possible and necessary then. And that's where I think.

[01:33:51] I mean we could come here and after the weekend it's hard not to feel like well is so folks like the country is so fucked like how can how did it come to this. I think at the same time we have to recognize that the extraordinary the moment of extraordinary possibilities that we're facing or even

responsibility that we're facing of of this possibility of creating something different. So anyway I would put those two together and it seems like the appropriate way to end. Does that seem OK with you.

[01:34:23] Yeah thanks everyone for coming.

[01:34:32] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.