



Cooperation Works!

THE COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

A Look at Key Movements in Co-op History

through the lens of

What Motivates People to Organize Cooperatives?

Preparing for our training discussion on April 16, 2018

List compiled by Margaret M. Bau, Cooperative Development Specialist, USDA Rural Development

Background

Throughout history thousands of people have organized co-ops across the US and across the world. Why? What worked and what hasn't worked? What can we learn from their stories?

As co-op developers it is helpful to have a historical grounding in cooperative movements and milestones. Co-op history is rich. But where to start? Let's look at key cooperative advances from the perspective of what motivates people to come together to organize cooperatives. A look at motivations may help inform the work we undertake in our communities.

To make the most of our time together, training participants will be assigned to explore one historical movement. As time allows, feel free to research a little or a lot about your assigned historical topic. The goal isn't to become an expert, but to help start the conversation. A motivating factor is attached to each of these historical movements (though there could be multiple rationales). Motivations are an interesting lens to view history. As you explore your assigned co-op movement, prepare to share your reflections on two questions:

1. What are your thoughts about this co-op movement? *(For example: What was the context? Who was involved? What lessons can be applied to today?)*
2. Can you think of any historical or contemporary examples of other co-ops that have organized for similar motivations? *(For example: Is this motivation relevant to your work? Who faces similar situations?)*

Suggested Resources

Rochdale Pioneers – motivated by market failure and power imbalances

The Story of the Rochdale Pioneers (5 minute video from the Rochdale Museum in England)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNVzOsZt6ew>

The Rochdale Pioneers – official movie trailer (2:15 minute video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP5LhbMGQw8>

Good interactive website by the museum

<http://www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop/about-us/about-the-pioneers/>

<http://www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Our-Story.pdf>

African Americans Co-ops – motivated by perseverance in hostile conditions

Interview with Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard (written and 15 minute video). Jessica wrote the groundbreaking book on the hidden history of co-op organizing among African-Americans.

<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/22986-solidarity-economics-a-forgotten-practice-of-the-black-radical-tradition-an-interview-with-author-jessica-gordon-nembhard>

Links between the Civil Rights movement and co-op organizing

<http://www.grocer.coop/articles/co-op-changed-south>

<http://www.colorlines.com/articles/how-co-ops-helped-produce-foot-soldiers-civil-rights>

<https://diversity.wisc.edu/a-taste-of-freedom-uw-professor-unearths-a-missing-chapter-in-the-history-of-civil-rights/>

Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice

2014 book by Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard. Link to skim chapters:

https://books.google.com/books/about/Collective_Courage.html?id=hDGnAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false

[se](https://books.google.com/books/about/Collective_Courage.html?id=hDGnAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Desjardin Credit Unions – motivated by equity and social justice

A very well done website. Be sure to explore the virtual tour.

<https://www.desjardins.com/ca/about-us/desjardins/who-we-are/our-history-museum/>

Timeline of credit unions coming to the US

<https://www.descofcu.org/s01p010.php>

<https://www.ncua.gov/About/Pages/history.aspx>

Rural Electric Cooperatives – motivated by practicality

The Electric Cooperative Story (3:30 minute video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tenKnlx4ouY>

Map showing growth of electric co-ops over time

<http://www.electric.coop/our-organization/history/>

Electric Cooperative Purpose (3:30 minute video, lots of historical footage)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m362h5ERNK0>

Bob Marshall Comes Home – vintage promotional video from the 1940s (21 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SC-ckRJncrl>

Mondragon worker co-ops – motivated by a “middle way” between capitalism and socialism

Overview of what are the Mondragon worker cooperatives in northern Spain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZoI0C1mPek> (3 minute video)

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/04/30/the-case-of-mondragon/> (short article)

<http://www.mondragon-corporation.com/eng/about-us/> (15 minute video)