

Nurturing Family Leadership: Community-Centered Equity Practices
Webinar: Cooperative Economies for Collective Leadership:
New Paradigms for Funding Community-Determined Efforts to Advance Child
Wellbeing and Equity
Thursday, April 22, 2021 | 1-2pm EDT

About the Webinar

Cooperatives have long served an important model for building community wellbeing, guided by values of democratic decision making, shared power and ownership, and equitable distribution of health, economic, and social benefits. Learn from leading experts and practitioners in the field who will provide an overview of the principles and structure of cooperative economies and models, including barriers and challenges, as well as benefits and opportunities of implementing this model to advance community wellbeing.

Panelist Biographies

Nia Evans

Executive Director, Boston Ujima Project

Nia's educational background is in the areas of labor relations, education leadership, and policy. Her advocacy includes a focus on eliminating barriers between analysts and people with lived experiences as well as increasing acknowledgement of the value of diverse types of expertise in policy. She is a co-creator, along with artist Tomashi Jackson, of Frames Debate Project, a multimedia policy debate project that explores the intersection between drug policy, mental health services and incarceration in the state of Massachusetts.



James Vamboi

Chief of Staff, Community & Culture, Boston Ujima Project

James is a social worker, visual artist and fundraising strategist originally from Philadelphia. He moved to Boston to serve on the City Year Boston 2012-2013 corps and never left. James is a Jamaica Plain resident that cares deeply about people and the planet and is inspired by the work of the Justice Funders, Bayard Rustin and his Sierra Leonean aunties who taught him all about love.

**Marcos Beleche**

Board of Directors of the Dorchester Food Coop

Marcos is Executive Director of the Four Corners Main Street Program in the Dorchester, Massachusetts, where he leads an economic development and placemaking agenda grounded in equity and inclusion, to support small businesses owned by immigrants and people of color. Raised in a farmworker family, his community organizing began early on with farm- and cannery- worker struggles in California. Marcos has worked in the community development field at the national and local levels for nearly 30 years. His past work includes coordinating a national technical assistance program for Latino community development corporations (CDCs) while with the National Council of La Raza in Washington DC.

He was also the lead trainer for the Community Leadership and Organizing Center (CLOC) at the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership. Racial Equity, Environmental Justice, Food Security, Youth, and Leadership Development are priorities he holds dearly.

Marcos is an avid gardener who values its restorative power as an opportunity to also embrace and validate his cultural food traditions. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Dorchester Food Coop, and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and is a member of the Boston Food Access Council Steering Committee.



Jessica Gordon-Nembhard

Professor of Community Justice and Social Economic Development, in the Department of Africana Studies, John Jay College, City University of NY

Author of *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* and 2016 inductee into the U.S. Cooperative Hall of Fame, Jessica Gordon-Nembhard, Ph.D., is Professor of Community Justice and Social Economic Development, in the Department of Africana Studies, John Jay College, City University of NY. Dr. Gordon-Nembhard is a political economist specializing in cooperative economics, community economic development and community-based asset building, solidarity economics, Black Political Economy, and community-based approaches to justice. She is a member of the Council of Cooperative Economists of NCBA/CLUSA; the International Co-operative Alliance Committee on Co-operative Research; a Faculty Fellow and Mentor with the Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing at Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations; and an affiliate scholar with the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives (University of Saskatchewan, Canada). Gordon-Nembhard is also a past board member of the Association of Cooperative Educators; and a member and past president of the National Economic Association. She is the proud mother of Stephen and Susan, and the grandmother of Stephen, Hugo, Ismaél and Gisèle Nembhard.

**Ronda Alexander (Moderator)**

Director of Operations, Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center

Ronda Alexander is a native Detroiter dedicated to working with communities to reach their desired goals by aligning and leveraging their resources. Ronda joins us from the United Way for Southeastern Michigan where she served as the Director of Corporate and Community Alignment on the organization's College and Career Pathways team. In her role at United Way Ronda worked to help external corporate partners find meaningful ways to engage with both students and educators; as well as worked across teams within the organization to align and leverage resources.

Prior to joining United Way Ronda worked on the premier education initiative of Ford Motor Company Fund – Ford Next



Generation (Ford NGL) for nine years. While at Ford Fund Ronda served a variety of roles including Professional Development/Technical Assistance Specialist and Program Manager for STEM initiatives. In all of her roles with Ford Fund Ronda worked with and supported multiple communities across the country as they worked to transform their communities through education.