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One Member One Vote:

To Identify the Success of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund  
and the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives through Cooperative Leadership

(2020 update)

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## Introduction

In this exploratory case study (Yin, R.K., 2014), I investigate the original inspiration and motivations of two *leaders* who work with successful long-standing cooperative development projects. Carol Prejean Zippert is a founding member of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, now the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, and Tim Huet is a founding member of the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives. This exploration served to advance my scholarship and inform the development of ethical leadership strategies inside a social enterprise of my design, *Collective REMAKE: Art, Business, Education, Jobs, News, People, and Recycling for Sustainability*. Collective REMAKE supports the development of worker-owned businesses and other kinds of cooperatives with people who have been incarcerated and other individuals who are pushed to the margins of the mainstream economy due to race, sex, class, gender identity, age, or ability. In 2017, Collective REMAKE received its first grant to launch a series of Cooperative Education and Development workshops with people who have spent time in prison or jail, focusing on members of the African American community. Demonstrations of the project's success include a positive response from participants, new cooperative businesses in development, a substantial commitment from a network of cooperative partners from the community, and new funds. In 2020 Collective REMAKE received fourth-year funding, as well as new grant award, to expand cooperative education and development programming, currently, online.

My motivation goes back to my feminist awakening in the late 70s. I have a socialist feminist analysis (Davis, 1983; Evans, 1979; Firestone, 1970; Kollontai, 1976; Marx, Lenin, Engels, & Stalin, 1971; Rowbotham, 1973; Smith, et al., 2017). I view social conditions and the impacts on people with a lens that considers class, race, sex, gender identity, age or ability. My perspective is reflected in the values of the some of the contemporary literature

in leadership studies (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016; Essed, 2004, 2008 & 2013; Young, 2011). Poverty, racism, and mass incarceration are critical systems that encompass each other, and hold up the oppressive capitalist economy. For many years, I worked against the system as a grassroots activist and artist. In the 80s and 90s, I was an activist organizer and artist in the anti-apartheid movement in Minnesota. Since 2005, in Los Angeles, I have been involved in the campaign to stop prison and jail expansion in California and Los Angeles. We experienced a few victories and many disappointments over the years. In the midst of the struggle, I created a vision to build a cooperative economic enterprise with people in reentry. Today, Collective REMAKE is implementing and expanding that dream. After a decade of challenging local and statewide governmental agencies to stop prison and jail construction and redirect dollars into community services, I decided to help create part of the solution. Collective REMAKE is a product of my final capstone project in the MA in Urban Sustainability at Antioch University Los Angeles, 2016.

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. (International Co-operative Alliance, ICA, n.d.)

There is a long and textured history of cooperative development in diverse communities in different geographical locations in the United States that goes back to the 1800s (Curl, 2009; Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; Wright, 2014). We can also look to examples of economic cooperatives around the world and in diverse cultures. In an initial search, I found cooperative efforts in China (Huang, Fu, Liang, Song & Xu, 2013), Ghana (Lyon, 2006), Nicaragua (Mària & Arenas, 2009), Niger (Keeney, 1999), Russia (Gerkey, 2011), Tanzania (Ibbott, 2014) and Vietnam (Le, 2018). There are many kinds of cooperatives

supported by democratic structures: housing, finance, marketing, distribution, producer, and worker cooperatives.

Collective REMAKE will support the development of different kinds of cooperatives, but we are initially focused on creating worker cooperatives. A worker cooperative is a for-profit business that is owned and managed by the workers. There is no boss. Worker-owners have an equal investment and an equal say in a democratic decision-making process, one worker, one vote. Workers share pride, motivation, skills, vision, and commitment to a business in which they have a mutual interest. Profits, or surpluses, are distributed to the workers or invested back in the company, as decided by the worker-owners, not outside stakeholders. Collective REMAKE will offer educational programming, a supportive community space, shared business infrastructure, training, and administrative and technical support to individuals who want to design and build cooperative businesses in Los Angeles County to support their communities' future. As a democratic enterprise, Collective REMAKE will engage a broad network of social capital (Maak, 2007) to support and incubate start-up cooperatives through development hubs supported by local partners including 1) Administrative & Technical; 2) Business, Finance & Legal; 3) Cooperative Education; 4) Community Partnerships; 5) Development; 6) Health & Wellness; and 7) Marketing and Promotion. Cooperative partners include: Arroyo S.E.C.O. Network of Time Banks, the Arroyo S.E.C.O. Revolving Loan Fund, Democracy at Work Institute, Five Points Youth Foundation, LA Coop LAB, Los Angeles Union Cooperative Initiative (LUCI), and Movement Generation: Justice and Ecology Project, Oakland. The above organizations promote worker cooperative development as a strategy to move away from the extractive economy and move toward building resilient, sustainable work that will support future generations. Collective REMAKE members and cooperative partners adhere to the seven cooperative principles and values adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance in

1995 (ICA, Cooperative identity, values & principles section). The principles of sustainability (Miller & Spoolman, 2014; Sustainable Development, 2015; United Nations, n.d.) also guide our work. The universal cooperative principles, formerly known as the Rochdale Principles, have been adapted and revised multiple times since they were developed by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, weavers in Manchester, England. In the 1840s, the Rochdale Pioneers broke from the exploitive textile industry and created cooperative businesses (Holyoake, 1900). They “were socially progressive and radically ahead of their time in admitting women and all classes of society, irrespective of political persuasion or religious beliefs, as equal members of their cooperative. (ICA, 2015, p. 5)” The ICA also considered the influence of early cooperators in the Western world, including:

Charles Gide in France, Alfonse and Dorimène Desjardins in Quebec, Canada; Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen and Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch in Germany; Horace Plunket in Ireland; Frs. Jimmy Thompson and Moses Xavier [Coady] of the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia; and Father José María Arizmendiarieta in Mondragon, Spain. (ICA, 2015, p.1)

The principles are interdependent and meant to work together to guide those who want to build successful cooperatives (ICA, n.d.).

### **Seven Cooperative Principles**

1. **Voluntary and Open Membership:** Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
2. **Democratic Member Control:** Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and

making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights—one member, one vote—and co-operatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.

3. **Member Economic Participation:** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. **Autonomy and Independence:** Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5. **Education, Training and Information:** Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6. **Co-operation among Co-operatives**—Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together

through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. **Concern for Community**— Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

(ICA, n.d.)

Integrated, the cooperative principles and the principles of sustainability promote concern for community, cooperation, democracy, diversity, equity, mutual support, measurement of full impact on social, cultural and economic conditions, no harm, and improved quality of life for future generations. Through interviews with Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet, I explore their motivations, values, and strategies that hold up long-standing successful cooperative development.

### **Methodology**

“At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 2013, p. 9).” I chose to interview two cooperative leaders whose work in contemporary, long-standing cooperative development projects, in their relative communities, is of significant worth to the cooperative movement. Their energy and practice are guided by values relevant to current discussions inside leadership and social change scholarship. Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert is a founding member of the original Federation of Southern Cooperatives, now the Federation of Southern Cooperatives /Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF), which is comprised of Black-owned cooperatives, agricultural marketing cooperatives, credit unions, and financing entities across eight states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. The member cooperatives also own a Rural Training and Research Center, RTRC, in Sumter County, Alabama. Along with the Panola Land Buying Association, they owned another 1,300 acres of farm and forested land including where the RTRC is located (Wright, 2017). Tim Huet is a co-founder of the Arizmendi Association of

Cooperatives in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives is a cooperative composed of nine member businesses that are worker cooperatives: six bakeries, a landscape design-build cooperative, a general contractor, and a technical support collective. The FSC/LAF celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2017 (FSC/LAF, 2017). The Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2016 (Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives, n.d.)

I met both Carol and Tim in the last few years. In the spirit of true cooperators, and in alignment with the seventh cooperative principle, "Cooperation among Cooperatives (ICA, n.d.)," they both responded readily to my request for an interview.

### **Interviews and Research**

To understand the characteristics, motivations, values, and strategies emulated by Carol and Tim, I made the following inquiries: 1) Can you talk about your inspiration and your pathway to become a leader in the cooperative movement? 2) What is the purpose and value of cooperative businesses to the community you work in; 3) What types of cooperatives do you work with? 4) How is the democratic structure implemented inside the cooperatives you work with; 5) What is the function of education inside the cooperative and in the community; 6) How do you view your role as a leader in the cooperative movement; and 7) What do you think is the most essential cooperative principle?

To support and analyze the interviews, I found a plethora of information from their organizations' websites and links to related topics. I reviewed articles about the interviewees, their projects, associated people, and activities they referred to, as well as other topics that came up in our brief interviews. There is a short case study on the SFC/LAF and multiple articles written by Jessica Gordon-Nembhard (2004a; 2004b; 2006; 2012), author of *Collective Courage* (2014).



Not since W.E.B. Dubois's 1907 *Economic Co-operation Among Negro Americans* has there been a full-length, nationwide study of African American cooperatives. *Collective Courage* extends that story into the twenty-first century. Many of the players are well known in the history of the African American experience: Du Bois, A. Phillip Randolph and the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Jo Baker, George Schuyler and the young Negroes' Co-operative League, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panther Party. (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014, back cover)

I reviewed literature written by and about cooperative thinkers and doers from the 1930s (Coady, 1936; Connor, 1939; Lorenzo, 2000), to the 1950s (McKnight, 1994; Arizmendiarieta, J. M., Herrera, C., & Azurmendi, 2000). Their work was an inspiration behind the Southern Federation of Cooperatives in the South, and the Arizmeni Association of Cooperatives in the San Francisco Bay Area. In both cases, the initial inspiration to build cooperative businesses from the ground up, in economically compromised communities, came from an in-depth philosophical view generated from social doctrine of the Catholic Church, on different continents. There are multiple articles written by Huet (Huet, 2001, 2004 & 2013), including the *Cooperative Manifesto* (Huet, 2004), in which he enlightens the reader about his transition to focus on local economic development. Joe Marraffino provides a detailed description and graphic illustration of the structure and growth plan for the Arizmeni Association of Cooperatives (Marraffino, 2009).

### **Interviewee Bios**

Both Zippert and Huet have impressive biographies that demonstrate a strong allegiance to a cooperative philosophy. One would be hard-pressed to garner this background info from either individual directly, as they are both focused on their mission and process rather than elevating themselves as leaders. It is a natural tendency embedded within the

cooperative principles philosophies to not emphasize the role of a single leader and focus on developing leadership capacity amongst members and working together for the good of the whole.

**Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert** is a lifetime member and leader in the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, FSC/LAF. Carol and her husband, John Zippert, have been with the Federation since the beginning—1967. They were the first interracial couple married in Louisiana, also 1967, after the Supreme Court ruled, in the *Loving vs. Virginia* case, that the ban on interracial marriage was illegal, “They sued the State of Louisiana to remove its miscegenation statute to allow them to get a marriage license (Blackwell, 2018).” John Zippert is the Director of Program Operations at FSC/LAF’s Rural Training and Research Center in Eps, Alabama. In step with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the FSC/LAF, and their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, the couple was inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame in May 2017 (Tbuen, 2016; FSC/LAF, 2017). “Induction into the Cooperative Hall of Fame is the highest honor that the U.S. co-op community bestows on those whose contributions to the promotion and development of the cooperative form of business have been genuinely heroic (FSC/LAF).” Over the last fifty years, Carol has led the Federation of Greene County Employees, FOGCE, Federal Credit Union. “Under her stewardship, the assets of the credit union grew from \$25,000 in 1975 to \$1.4 in 2017” (Tbuen, 2016). Stewardship is an excellent descriptor for Carol Zippert’s outlook and ongoing role in cooperative development in the Southern Blackbelt Region. “Stewardship theory draws from sociology and psychology to offer an alternate view in which organizational actors see greater long-term utility in other-focused pro-social behavior than in self-serving, short-term opportunistic behavior (Hernandez, 2012, p. 172).” Carol is also the director of the Society of Folk Arts and Culture (Black Belt Community Foundation, BBCF, n.d.) that sponsors the annual Black Belt Folk Roots Festival in Greene County. Since 1986, Dr. Zippert has been on

the board of the 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, where she assists with designing curricula and implementing training for young people from a community-directed perspective. Since 1985, along with her husband, John Zippert, Carol has published a weekly tabloid publication titled *Green County Democrat*, which they distribute in African American communities in the Alabama Black Belt (Tbuen, 2016). In 1998, Carol led an effort to bring together multiple entities to establish the Black Belt Community Foundation, supporting cooperative efforts in eleven counties in the Alabama Black Belt region (BBCF, n.d.). The BBCF honored Carol at their 2015 Legacy Awards Dinner. (BBCF, 2015). Carol holds a BA in English-Journalism, 1966, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, formerly University of Southwestern Louisiana; an MA in Rural Sociology, 1969, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge; and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1985, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa (BBCF, n.d.). She is the author of two volumes of poetry, *I Don't Want to be Rich, Just Able* (1997/2002), and *Meeting Myself 'Round the Corner* (2010).

**Tim Huet** is a founder of the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives and currently a member of the Association's Development & Support Cooperative, a technical support collective. Tim participates in everything from writing business plans to training worker-owners in democratic business management; he also serves as in-house legal counsel. Tim also supports other cooperatives as an attorney and organizational consultant. He lives at a housing cooperative in Oakland, where he also serves on the board. Tim has published articles on worker cooperatives and self-management in *Dollars & Sense*, *The Stanford Law & Policy Review*, and *Grassroots Economic Organizing*. He served on the founding boards of the California Center for Cooperative Development (CCCD, n.d.) Western Worker Cooperative Conference, and the United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives (International Summit of Cooperatives, 2016, Speaker section). Tim has also been an

Advisory Board member for CooperationWorks! He helped them to develop curriculum and served as a trainer in their cooperative education and development programming.

"CooperationWorks! is a national network of co-op developers doing work in all fifty states and across co-op sectors" (CooperationWorks!, n.d.). Huet travels throughout the United States and internationally to give presentations and train other coop developers. He has been a featured speaker at the International Organization of Industrial and Service Cooperatives (CICOPA), the Western Worker Cooperative Conference; the Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy; the Midwest Worker Cooperative Conference; multiple U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperative conferences; multiple Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation conventions, the annual meeting of International Organization of Industrial and Service Cooperatives, CICOPA, in Oslo, Norway, and the 2016 International Summit of Cooperatives in Quebec, Canada.

### **My Relationship with the Interviewees (Context)**

As an emerging cooperative educator, developer, and scholar, I attend relevant workshops, presentations, and conferences whenever possible. I met Tim Huet a few years ago when he came to speak at the Los Angeles Eco-Village, a cooperative housing community established in the Korea Town area in 1993. I was fortunate to encounter both Carol Zippert and Tim, again, at the 2017 California Coop Conference in San Francisco, sponsored by the California Center for Cooperative Development. Carol Zippert was the keynote speaker for the conference. I gravitated towards her warmth, experience, knowledge, and philosophy that she wove into her story, a lifetime of engagement in co-operative development and the Southern Federation of Cooperatives' origins. She spoke passionately about the power of cooperative development and values to empower civic participation and cultural enlightenment in poor black communities. Carol also led a workshop titled: *The Cooperative as Cultural Steward and Advocate*: "Hear examples of African American

cooperatives that preserved cultural arts and opposed federal, discriminatory financial activities, and the role of cooperatives in protecting and preserving communities of color (CCCD, 2017).” The description of her workshop implies that the cooperative itself is the leader, the steward; a complex system that takes on meaning and purpose through the practice of democracy and the acceptance that everyone is of equal value to the project. Tim Huet led a workshop that was titled *Structuring Worker Cooperatives to Encourage Growth* (MCLE):

Workshop discusses strategies to recognize the sacrifices of founding members by structuring financial incentives to reward decisions to grow the number of jobs rather than the typical arrangement that punishes job creation. How to establish benchmarks for restructuring cooperative governance for crucial stages in its growth. (CCCD, 2017)

I was inspired and moved by the speaker's clarity, openness, and generous demeanor in both workshops. I noted to myself, and both Carol and Tim that I would communicate in the near future. So here we are.

### **Analysis**

I chose to interview Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet because the cooperative entities they continue to work for and helped build from the ground up are successful and appear sustainable. I came to the interviews with the assumption that their success is due to working democratic practices and ongoing cooperative education implemented by knowledgeable and ethical cooperative leaders. My thinking was accurate, but it is the breadth of humanity, consciousness, and the conviction to a cooperative philosophy expressed by Carol and Tim that is most inspiring. Again, my inquiry included the following questions: 1) Can you talk about your inspiration and your pathway to become a leader in the cooperative movement? 2) What is the purpose and value of cooperative businesses to the community you work in; 3) What types of cooperatives do you work with? 4) How is the

democratic structure implemented inside the cooperatives you work with; 5) what is the function of education inside the cooperative and in the community; 6) How do you view your role as a leader in the cooperative movement, and 7) What do you think is the most important cooperative principle? Though presented to the interviewees in the above order, these questions are not in the same sequence in the final analysis. Most of the themes are woven into the narrative of each interviewee's story. Still, before I move into Carol and Tim's independent journeys, I will address the last two questions, #6 and #7 by pulling them forward for emphasis and deeper consideration as one reads the rest of the narrative.

### **Cooperative Leadership**

Carol veered away from the leadership language when I asked how she views her role as a lifelong leader in the co-operative movement. She responded:

We are embedded in community. That is my perception. Everything grew out of, almost like, a religiosity of working cooperatively. It defines my life. It defines me and whatever I do, I can't do it alone. I have had experiences where there have been folks outside of the coop movement who wanted to meet with me to discuss some project they want to do. I said, I can't meet with you alone. I have to bring other folks. If you want to talk about something for the community, I can't meet with you alone. They have to hear it, and they have to have input, and then we can take that to a larger group. It has defined my whole approach of how I try to live; with a consciousness that I live in a community; I don't live alone. That's how the cooperative movement had affected me in my life; it gives me a sense of my own empowerment. I am empowered through my community, not through myself. (C. Prejean Zippert, personal, communication, January 23, 2018)

Tim Huet explained that anything he does to support other people, or a group, to achieve collective ends is leadership. For Tim, the day-to-day work is about developing other

people's leadership capacities, as well as one's own. At this point in his life, he sees himself as a mentor for the next generation of cooperative leadership. He continued to say that his former role as chair of the board for the California Center Cooperative Development, or his role as a coop educator, might fit the more conventional idea of a leader.

### **The Key Cooperative Principle**

As to the most relevant cooperative principle, both Carol and Tim without hesitation, pointed to the central tenet of the second cooperative principle. Carol replied that the bottom line is equity:

*One member, one vote.* I always focus on that because that is what lifts the value of everyone. One member is as relevant and as valuable as the next. It does not matter if one member invested more than another. Everyone had a vote, and everyone was of equal value. Everybody was doing the best they could. They contributed what they could whether in time or other kinds of resources or assets. It was like having a potluck. Bring it all together and make that meal. (C. Prejean Zippert, personal communication, January 23, 2018).

Tim was brief but precise, "*One person, one vote* comes to mind for me. It's all about giving voice to the people who are most impacted by the decisions (T. Huet, personal communication, January 28, 2018)."

### **Inspiration, Purpose, Value, Types of Cooperatives, Education, and Structure**

The remaining topics of inquiry are given different weight and interwoven in the following narrative based on the nature of each interview. My questions to each interviewee were the same, yet the conversations varied in many ways. As a storyteller and poet, Carol illustrates her long life in cooperative development with great detail and purpose, integrating memories of people and events. Her account disclosed the close connection between the civil rights movement and the cooperative movement in rural Black communities in the South. She

led me to a fantastic discovery of the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia. Through adult education programs, the Antigonish Movement inspired cooperative economies, not only in maritime Nova Scotia but also throughout the world, including the Southern Federation of Cooperatives in Louisiana. Tim's responses to my inquiries were more abbreviated and to the point. His insight allowed me to examine, more closely, the arguments for cooperative development as an alternative to current-day capitalism, as a social safety net, and as a demonstration of democracy. I also took an in-depth look at the philosophy of Fr. Arizmendiarieta, founder of the Mondragon Cooperatives in the Basque area of Spain. His project was an inspiration to Huet.

### **Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert's Inspiration and Pathway**

Carol Prejean, now Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert, grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana. In her teens, Carol learned about cooperatives from Father Albert J. McKnight, a priest of the Spiritan Order (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; McKnight, 1994). McKnight, originally from New York, was the first black priest in the all-Black Catholic parish at St. Paul Church in Lafayette. He ran youth education programs to engage young people in conversation and invite them to explore who they were and what they wanted to become. Carol described the sessions as coming of age workshops. They called him Father Mac. McKnight also implemented adult literacy classes where he generated discussions amongst the locals about standing up for their rights, the contemporary Civil Rights Movement, the work of Martin Luther King, protests and demonstrations, and the freedom rides. Carol went along with her older brother, Charles Prejean, a volunteer literacy teacher (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; McKnight, 1994). "From 1954 through the 60s, he (Prejean) worked with Father McKnight to promote adult literacy and educate people about cooperative economics, starting credit unions, and supporting cooperative development (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014, p. 195)", Carol recalled the questions from the students to Father Mac:



If we can speak and read better, will we get better jobs? Will we get any jobs at all? Will it make our lives better?... He began to talk to various groups of adults about the concept of owning things and creating businesses cooperatively, working together where everybody benefits. (C. Prejean Zippert, personal communication, January 23, 2018)

McKnight encouraged the students to explore their existing community assets and put their unique ideas on the table and examine how to use the resource they have as a group to benefit the group. Lafayette is a rural farming community where folks raised chickens, and every household had pecan trees in their yards. The pecans would bring in a supplemental income for individual families. They bagged them up and sold them to an intermediary, always a white man, who would make an additional profit. Through the cooperative sessions with McKnight, community members imagined how they could market the pecans directly and cut out the middleman:

The first formal cooperative we organized in Lafayette, we called the Southern Consumers Cooperative. It was a bakery that produced fruitcakes.... We produced caramelized pecans and pecan candies that we bagged and sold.... The bakery had a retail outlet, but the biggest sales were through mail order. The bakery isn't there today, but it existed for a long time. (C. Prejean Zippert, personal communication, January 23, 2018)

In his 1994 autobiography, *Whistling in the Wind*, McKnight writes:

In November of 1964, the Southern Consumers Cooperative received the first loan of the “War on Poverty”—the Economic Opportunity Act of President Lyndon B. Johnson. The loan of twenty-five thousand dollars enabled us to buy a building and start a full-time bakery. Acadian Delight fruitcakes are still produced annually (p. 27).

Early members opened cooperative bakeries in Lafayette and Lake Charles (Booker, 1967,

p.16; deJong, 2016, loc.108), which corresponds with Fr. McKnight's movements directed by the Catholic Church. The Church authorities placed him in a different county to try to avoid controversy around his radical cooperative organizing work. It appears their efforts caused the movement to spread rather than to inhibit it (McKnight, 1994). According to Greta de Jong, in her book, titled *Invisible Enemy: The African American Freedom Struggle after 1965*, “by 1962, McKnight was responsible for founding over 2000 cooperatives in southwestern Louisiana (2010, p.163).” Carol supported her college education by working on the mail-order side of the cooperative bakery in Lafayette. She was attending what was then called the University of Southwestern, Louisiana. At the time, Black students were not allowed to live in the dorms on campus; they could not have social organizations on campus. Carol lived at home and helped launch the SCC. To support her college education, she packaged and shipped fruitcakes, and she worked on a newsletter to promote the growing cooperative movement. Carol remembers when they found the proper tins and individual boxes for sending the fruitcakes.

Cooperative movements that prioritized education were activated in diverse African American communities around the country as early as the 1800s (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014). Since the 1930s, much of the cooperative activity in the Southern rural communities in the United States was inspired by the Antigonish philosophy and the kinds of adult education programs that Fr. McKnight activated in Lafayette. Miles W. Connor, an African American educator and former student of the co-op study tour in Antigonish, back in 1938, shared the “study-learn-implement” model with African American communities in the United States (Connor, 1939; Gordon-Nembhard, 2014, p.88). The workshops that Carol attended with her brother mirrored the Antigonish education platform. The philosophy was to meet people where they are at, in the moment, and support them to analyze the specific problems their communities face and to develop unique solutions according to their needs. Carol

remembered, in the early 60s, when the original leaders of the Southern Consumers Cooperative attended the cooperative training at the Coady Institute at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014, p. 94; McKnight, 1994, p.23). In the following years, she also attended the training in Nova Scotia. The SCC sent their youth leaders to St Francis Xavier University, where they took courses in cooperative development and learned about credit unions and cooperative financial institutions (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014).

In the 60s, Black people were 20 - 30% of the population in Lafayette. They were nearly 100% of the cooperative movement that was nurtured and empowered through the collective democratic process. Carol talked about how, through the civil rights movement, there was a realization that Black people still did not own anything. There had to be something else, beyond desegregation, that could build communities that allowed the depth of participation that Black people desired and to which they felt they were entitled. She emphasized the direct link between the democratic practice inside the cooperatives and the increase in participation in the political process:

The connection is the realization what self-empowerment really meant. People began to recognize and give voice to their needs, self-empowerment. Yes, we have power. Power is stronger when we are together. They began to see that individually they couldn't move much or change anything but when communities came together, that's where the power was.... You have to register to vote as an individual but you weren't the only one. Often times, we would go in groups to register to vote so that you had that security and the comfort level. You weren't by yourself. So if people came out against you, they had to come out against the whole group, the whole community, not just one individual. Of course, there was more resistance to that component than to the cooperatives themselves. In the rural areas, in St Landry Parish, they really tried to

legally block every kind of effort that was going on in regards to organizing cooperatives. But people stuck together, and that made the difference. (C. Prejean Zippert, personal communication, January 23, 2018)

Carol mentioned that there were a few white college students that got involved, but they were not looking to benefit in the same way because they were not “of the community.” There were also a few white Catholic women from the local Grail chapter, who assisted as facilitators in the cooperative education programs; they were there throughout the movement. “They represented the white face in the coop movement in Lafayette and St Landry at the time. There were no white farmers who participated; I think they were afraid to” (C. Prejean Zippert, personal communication, January 23, 2018). The Grail is an International Women’s Movement. Members “are called to create a sustainable world, transforming our planet into a place of peace and justice (Grailville, n.d. Sec 1).” McKnight writes about the Grail. “The Southern Consumers Cooperative’s first office in Lafayette was constructed of material which had been salvaged from a convent destroyed by a tornado...in the backyard of the Grail house in Lafayette (1994, p. 29).” He also notes, “Susan Leis and Una Mae Hargrave, of the Grail, served as volunteer secretaries for the Cooperative and the Foundation (p. 29).” In time, McKnight raised funds, their first grant of \$1000, to pay Una Mae Hargrave a small stipend to enable her to continue to work for the cooperative (p. 29). Carol said she was also involved with the Grail organization. She attended a summer youth program at the Grailville Farm in Loveland, Ohio. With young people from different parts of the country, she worked on the land and participated in progressive political workshops. The Grail’s central offices are still in Loveland, Ohio, where they have a retreat center, meditation sessions, labyrinth, and outdoor public trails (Grailville, sec 5).

### **Types of Cooperatives**

Carol put her training to work. Early on, she participated in efforts to create two credit

unions, financial cooperatives, each based in one of the local Black Catholic Churches. She also helped launch a cooperative finance company, Southern Cooperative Development Fund, which was initially supported by the Ford Foundation. Community members from Lafayette County and St. Landry County began to share resources and participate in cooperative training sessions together. It was through this collaboration that Carol met her husband, John Zippert. He was working in Landry County as a volunteer member of CORE to help build agricultural cooperatives with poor Black farmers. CORE assisted poor farmers in the development of the Grand Marie Sweet Potato Cooperative, a farmers' marketing cooperative. Carol emphasized again; the key was to get rid of the middleman, the white guy, to maximize the surplus returned to the community.

A marketing cooperative is a business organization owned by farmers to collectively sell their products. It allows producers to accomplish collectively functions they couldn't achieve on their own. Most agricultural producers have relatively little power or influence with large agribusinesses or food companies that purchase their commodities. Joining with other producers in a cooperative can give them greater power in the marketplace. In addition, cooperatives can give producers more control over their products as they make their way to consumers by allowing them to bypass one or more middlemen in the market channel. Farmers capture more of the returns that would otherwise go to others. (United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, 1998/2000)

The August 14, 1967 edition of *JET* magazine (Booker, 1967) features an article, with black and white photos, about the Southern Consumers Cooperative, Acadian Delight Bakery, and the Grand Marie Sweet Potato Cooperative. The photo on the cover features Leon Benoit, also a student at the then, University of Southwestern Louisiana. Wearing a Santa Claus outfit, she presents a bountiful display of fruitcakes in tins and the pecan treats

that Carol describes in our interview. The inside article, titled *Black Pride Xmas Story*, includes a chart with a menu of the bakery products and prices for mail orders. The author, Simeon Booker, promotes the local cooperative projects in Lafayette and St. Charles, Louisiana; and he notes that they are struggling. He targets the Black middle-class market. At that time, the primary buyer was a cooperative grocery chain in Berkeley, CA (Booker, 1967).

### **Threats and Opportunities**

The timely *JET* story provides a sympathetic portrait of the cooperatives in Louisiana that immediately follows a political attack on the Southern Consumers Cooperative, SCC, and the Southern Consumers Education Foundation, SCEF. McKnight explains that by that time, the SCEF was handling millions of dollars in federal funds. They had more than seven hundred people on their payroll. The powers that be, the white politicians, started to take notice of the dollars and jobs under Black ownership and control. On December 7, 1966, the headline of the local newspaper targets the cooperatives: “Communists Infiltrate Poverty Program (deJong, 2016 loc.109; McKnight, 1994, pg. 32).” The state legislature passed a resolution to allow an investigation of the SCEF by the Louisiana un-American Activities Committee. Though the investigation found nothing amiss in the business of the SCEF, the targeted campaign was a huge set back for the start-up cooperatives (deJong, 2016; McKnight, 1994). McKnight writes:

In March of 1967, the un-American Activities Committee held several days of hearings. No one from SCEF testified because the committee refused to subpoena anyone, a legal counsel advised us against appearing voluntarily. The only communist infiltration unearthed by the committee was the suspicion that a person working in a program funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity in New Orleans may have had some connection with the Communist Party. (1994, p. 32-33)

In the interview, Carol noted how cooperative efforts in Landry County stirred up more controversy, though she did not go into great detail. She said the Black population in Landry was larger than in Lafayette; so organizing cooperatives presented a more significant threat to the white farmers and the white middleman. White farmers already had their marketing cooperatives in which Black farmers could not participate. When I learned about the targeted attack from McKnight's autobiography, I asked Carol about the communist-baiting threat in the 60s. She said that the focus of the red scare in Landry County was on her husband, John Zippert, as an organizer for CORE. CORE was one of the key activist organizations in the early civil rights movement. They sent youth leaders, from around the country, to the South to do non-violent training and voter registration. "Starting in late 1961, voter registration became the new civil rights priority, and CORE focused on Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina (History.com)." Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner, the students who were slain by the Klu Klux Klan in 1964, were in Mississippi as CORE organizers. The 1967 *JET* Magazine article seems to be part of an effort to rebuild public confidence after the debilitating campaign, strategically organized by white power brokers. It is not the last political disruption that members of the cooperative movement in the Black rural south would overcome. (Bethell, 1982; Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; McKnight, 1994; deJong, 2010 & 2016).

The early cooperative organizers in Louisiana began to connect with efforts in other states and to build a structure that encompassed everyone in a broader southern network. Carol described how members traveled by car, from state to state, to meet with each other and to form the initial board of the Federation. "We called ourselves the grassroots cooperative movement in the South" (C. P. Zippert, personal communication, January 23, 2018). Their collective efforts evolved into a cooperative of cooperatives. In 1967, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) was incorporated to promote cooperative

economic development with Black communities in the broader rural south. Carol Prejean, her brother Charles Prejean, John Zippert, and Father McKnight were all founding members. Charles Prejean became the Director, a position he held for more than a decade (McKnight, 1994; Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; deJong, 2010 & 2016). Carol explained that there were early members in Texas, and all the way in South Carolina, going up to Arkansas, the boot hill, parts of Missouri, Arkansas, and even parts of Appalachia where they recruited the first white members. Each state was entitled to a representative on the Board of the FSC. Cooperatives from each state come together to democratically select their representative for the Board. The Federation was originally based in Lafayette, but members soon realized they needed to provide training, research, and marketing for the member cooperatives, especially the poor rural cooperatives. They acquired land and opened an education center in Alabama. The Rural Training and Research Center, run by John Zippert, is in full operation today. In 1985, the Federation merged with the Emergency Land Fund to become the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF). Stewardship of the land and retention of Black ownership became a new aspect of their cooperative development programs (FSC/LAF, History/Mission section; Gordon-Nembhard, 2014, p. 194).

The FSC/LAF today is a network of rural cooperatives, credit unions, and state associations of cooperatives and cooperative development centers in the southern United States. The FSC/LAF provides technical and legal assistance, financial support, education and advocacy for its members and low-income populations in the South. In addition, the organization promotes and supports state and federal policy changes and legislation favorable to small farmers and low-income rural populations. The FSC/LAF is the heart and soul of the African American cooperative movement. (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014, p. 193-194)

### **Purpose, Value, and Structure**



The FSC/LAF has a customized version of the cooperative principles that maintain the tenets of the universal principles and at the same time include suggested business practices unique to the business to reduce overhead and raise capital to support the success of the cooperative:

- **Open Membership:** A co-op is open to all persons who have a common need or interest.
- **One Person - One Vote:** Co-ops are democratically controlled by their members.
- **Limited Return on Investment:** To ensure that the benefits of the co-op go to those who use it most, the co-ops will depend on their members to be owners and customers.
- **Benefits Returned According to Use:** In a co-op, any margins earned on operations above expenses, and a reasonable reserve, are available for return to members based on their patronage of the co-op. In a co-op, any of the expenses that can be reduced by voluntary efforts of the members reduces the cost of the item to all of the members.
- **Business for Cash Whenever Practical:** Co-ops must raise most of the capital and operating funds from members because granting credit is expensive and always risky.
- **Constant Expansion:** Members will earn increased services from the co-op if it is effectively serving its members.
- **Constant Education:** Since the cooperative form of economic organization is new to most people, especially poor people, education is constantly needed by the members. (FSC/LAF, n.d., principles section)

Carol explained the democratic decision-making process inside the cooperative

businesses. Each cooperative has its own board that is elected by the membership. The local cooperative boards might have 11, 13, or even 21 members. The board meetings are open to all members, and through the selected board members are the ones to vote on most issues, they are incredibly attentive to the voices of members who provide input at the meetings. The representatives answer to the folks they represent. Everyone is considered equal in the process; everybody knows each other and feels secure that the board hears his or her concerns. The fundamental principle, *one person, one vote*, is taken very seriously by all members. At the end of the interview, Carol mentioned that the Federation was currently exploring worker-cooperatives. The younger people were attentive to the worker-owner model, and they were exploring options within the federation. (C. Prejean Zippert, personal communication, January 23, 2018).

### **Further Inquiry Needed**

The story in the *JET* magazine (Booker, 1967) is a sign of the times in more than one way. The three by five-inch, two-toned, black and red, vintage magazine sold for 20 cents in 1967. Black and white photos illustrate the activities of the cooperatives described by Carol Zippert. The two-toned images also show the male leaders at the forefront of the efforts and the women working in the background. The tagline under one image reads: “some of the brains of the Co-op are (l-r) John Zippert, Charles, Prejean, Alfred McZeal, and Fr. Albert J. McKnight.” It seems that it is mostly the male leaders in the cooperatives who participated in various interviews and photographs, not just in the 1967 article in *JET*. When I reconnected with Carol, I asked her about the women missing in the written materials about the Federation. She acknowledged that it was that way back then, in all communities, not just the Black community. Indeed, even the most current research on the Federation only includes interviews with the male leaders with minimal references to the founding women of the Southern Federation of Cooperatives (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014; de Jong, 2010, 2016).

Names of women connected to the cooperative movement in the rural south in the 60s show up randomly in the materials I have reviewed. They include Leona Benoit, Mary Freeman, Dorothy Mire (Booker, 1967), Carol Zippert (Gordon-Nembhard, 2014), Melbah McAfee (GEO, 2016), Susan Leis, and Una Mae Hargrave (McKnight, 1994). Rusty Neal writes about the women of the Antigonish Movement and how, finally, they were written into the history of the influential cooperative movement of the 1980s:

Since the 1980s, and in particular since the Topshee Conference on Women cooperatives, in 1985, the history of the Antigonish movement has been rewritten to take into account the contributions of women. New studies now acknowledge the significant contributions Maritime women, such as Sister Anselm, Sister Marie Michael, Kay Thompson Desjardin, Zita O' Cameron, and Ida Gallant Delaney made to the Antigonish movement. Recent accounts of the Antigonish movement identify them as the leading women, organizers who used their skills to establish auxiliary programs for women and support the work of male leaders. By telling their own stories and discussing the historical work of women in co-operatives, some of these people have helped to awaken a new interest in the roles women played in the movement (Neal, 1999, p. 58).

Soon after I spoke to Carol about the women not represented in the literature, I was pleased to find a new article on a blog on the *We Shall Not Be Moved* website, titled, *Carol Prejean Zippert—The Creative Voice of the Federation* (Blackwell, 2018). The write-up, with photos, acknowledges Carol's presence at the origins of the FSC, her life-long commitment, and her role as an inspiring artist in the movement. Research on the critical work done by women leaders in cooperative movements is a separate but much-needed inquiry if we are to understand the success, and failures, of the cooperative movements, past and present. Carol Prejean Zippert's history in the movement is a testament to that. Her life-story must be told

beyond this case study. She is not only a founding member of the Southern Federation of Cooperatives; she is an expert in credit union development and cooperative financing; she is a journalist and publisher; she is an artist and a poet; and she is always an educator and a philosopher.

You need not look  
into the mirror  
Just look into the face  
of another  
When you see your love there  
You will see yourself,  
your image  
Who needs to look  
into a mirror anyway

(Prejean Zippert, 1997/2002, pp.88-89)

### **Tim Huet's Inspiration and Pathway**

Reflecting on my question as to what inspired him to get involved in cooperative development, Tim Huet, co-founder of the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives, said that it was a long road. In his previous life, he was active in what he calls “oppositional” type politics; protest orientated activities. He explained that oppositional politics was organizing work that protested against something rather than creating a positive vision that a person or organized effort can work to build. Examples of the kinds of protest politics he was involved in include the anti-apartheid movement, Latin American solidarity work, anti-military protests, the sanctuary movement, anti-racist work, and union organizing. Tim eventually concluded that the economic system was at the root of most of the problems addressed in

confrontational politics. After many years, he did not see a good solution in that realm, and he did not have anything more to say about what could be done from that perspective. He no longer wanted to be completely oppositional; he was motivated to build part of the solution. Tim realized that the economic system was at the root of the solution as well, a cooperative economic system. In the interview, Tim made it clear that he did not think protest politics were bad, and he had not left them behind altogether. Huet read about the Mondragon Cooperatives in Spain and was fascinated. He wanted to look for opportunities to figure out how to import those ideas into the U.S. He started a study group with Jaques Kaswan and Steve Sutchter to investigate why cooperatives were so successful in other countries. The team traveled to the Basque region of Spain to investigate the structure and practice inside the Mondragon Cooperatives. They also studied cooperatives in Italy (Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives, 2016). Huet, Kaswan, and Sutchter founded the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives in 1995.

The Arizmendi Association is named after Father José María Arizmendiarieta, the founder of the Mondragon Cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain. Founded in 1956, Mondragon is probably the most well-known large-scale network of worker-owned cooperatives in the world today, even though there are larger, more extensive examples in Italy (Huet, 2013). Today, Mondragon has more than 80,000 worker-owners in 266 businesses (Mondragon Corporation, Companies, and Cooperative section). Mondragon is inspiring a new wave of cooperative development around the world. The Mondragon Corporation holds up ten basic principles adopted at their first Co-operative Congress in 1987. The Mondragon principles encompass the critical concepts in the ICA principles, but their framework addresses, more specifically, the relationship between labor and capital inside their businesses. “They include a set of ideas forged over more than thirty years of operation as a co-operative” (Mondragon Corporation, n.d. principles section). Below is the

condensed version of the Mondragon principles as published on their website:

- **Open Admission:** The MONDRAGON co-operative experience is open to all men and women who accept these Basic Principles without any type of discrimination.
- **Democratic Organization:** The basic equality of worker-members in terms of their rights to be, possess and know, which implies acceptance of a democratically organized company based on the sovereignty of the General Assembly, electing governing bodies and collaborating with managerial bodies.
- **Sovereignty of labour:** Labour is the main factor for transforming nature, society and human beings themselves. As a result, the systematic recruitment of salaried workers has been abandoned, full sovereignty is attached to labour, the wealth created is distributed in terms of the labour provided and there is a will to extend the job options available to all members of society.
- **Instrumental and subordinate nature of capital:** ECapital is considered to be an instrument subordinate to labour, which is necessary for business development. Therefore it is understood to be worthy of fair and suitable remuneration, which is limited and not directly linked to the profits obtained, and availability subordinate to the continuity and development of the co-operative.
- **Participatory management:** The steady development of self-management and, consequently, of member participation in the area of company management which, in turn, requires the development of adequate mechanisms for participation, transparent information, consultation and negotiation, the application of training plans and internal promotion.

- **Payment Solidarity:** Sufficient and fair pay for work as a basic principle of its management, based on the permanent vocation for sufficient collective social promotion in accordance with the real possibilities the co-operative has, and fair on an internal, external and MCC level.
- **Inter-cooperation:** As the specific application of solidarity and as a requirement for business efficiency, the Principle of Inter-cooperation should be evident: between individual co-operatives, between subgroups and between the Mondragón co-operative experience and Basque co-operative organizations, and co-operative movements in Spain, Europe and the rest of the world.
- **Social Transformation:** The willingness to ensure fair social transformation with other peoples by being involved in an expansion process that helps towards their economic and social reconstruction and with the construction of a freer, fairer and more caring Basque society.
- **Universality:** Its solidarity with all those who work for economic democracy in the area of the Social Economy by adopting the objectives of Peace, Justice and Development which are inherent to the International Co-operative Movement.
- **Education:** To promote the establishment of the principles stated above, it is essential to set aside sufficient human and financial resources for co-operative, professional and youth education. (Mondragon Corporation, n.d. principles section)

Father Arizmendiarieta held up human dignity as a critical factor in building social justice.

In his written reflections, he proposes that we are intelligent beings, and if we so choose, we can collaborate and create a dignified, higher quality of life for all people.

Wherever there are human beings conscious of their dignity, lovers of their freedom, willing to apply the demands of social justice, and able to accept a regime of solidarity which benefits everyone equally, there exists the basis for cooperativism and optimum results can be expected from it. (Arizmendiarieta, Herrera, & Azurmendi, 2000, Reflection 025)

Tim Huet's deep-seated philosophy is aligned with Arizmendiarieta's call for human dignity and the belief that education and knowledge are central to implementing real democracy and bringing forth new cooperative leaders. There are some differences regarding the initial push behind Arizmendiarieta's work and the original inspiration that moved Huet into cooperative development.

Father Arizmendiarieta went to the Vitoria Seminary where he was "was educated by a brilliant generation of intellectual priests committed to the social question and what Catholics called the 'redemption of the worker's world.' Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) had provided the practical content for the church to articulate an integral social initiative in response to the clashes arising from the new liberal world order and the Marxist response. (Molina & Miguez, 2008, p. 286)

Arizmendiarieta believed that worker-ownership and workplace democracy was central to establishing economic equity in the broader society; there was no discussion of dismantling capitalism. The Catholic social doctrine proposed to mitigate violence and civil unrest in the growing industrial economy while at the same time improving the quality of life for disenfranchised workers. Arizmendiarieta's reflections indicate that he grappled with the workings of the capitalist infrastructure that surrounded their cooperative enterprise.

The capitalist world that surrounds us can rest easily the day that it sees us living a life of privilege, since this will result in the reduction of our investments or the weakness of our enterprises. This will mean the reduction of our expansive and



combative forces as well as the rupture of our solidarity with the workers' world.

(Arizmendiarieta et al., 2000, Reflection 509).

The inspiration behind Mondragon is based on humanizing work and workers controlling their workplace. Arizmendiaretta's philosophy that activated this approach is an integration of "humanist theology, Marxist social democratic ideas, personalist socialism and the social doctrine of the church (Molina, & Miguez, 2008, pg. 294)."

Huet believes that cooperatives can be a pathway to reorganizing ourselves to create an alternative to capitalism. In 2004, he published *A Cooperative Manifesto* for the GEO, an online cooperative newsletter (Huet, 2004). The creative essay takes a deeper dive into Tim's philosophy about the importance of cooperative development:

"while" chaining oneself to a tree might be sexier; while blockading WTO meetings might seem more "front-line"; while busting-out Starbucks windows might seem more cutting-edge; There Is No More Important Social Change Work You Can Do than Cooperative Development, hereinafter, TINMISCWYCDTCD (Huet, 2004).

In the essay, Tim lays out six premises that he came to, in his twenties, which motivated him to work in cooperative development as a strategic move away from capitalism.

**Premise 1:** Regulation and reform will not keep capitalism from destroying our environment and creating disastrous social cleavages; fundamental change is needed.

**Premise 2:** There's no point convincing people of the prevailing system's intrinsic and inevitable failings if you can't offer hope of anything better.

**Premise 3:** The overwhelming majority of people cannot be convinced with theoretical arguments, but require demonstrative proof.

**Premise 4:** You can't simply wait for capitalism to collapse (or work to "tear down capitalism"), with the expectation that "after the collapse" people will "get

revolutionary consciousness” and be receptive to your arguments about building a truly democratic society and economy.

**Premise 5:** Efforts to tear down the system or protest its injustices do not develop the constructive skills and habits of mind that a democratic economy and society require.

**Premise 6:** You cannot achieve true democracy without economic democracy, democracy in the workplace... Or we need to build cooperatives as bases for a democracy movement. (Huet, 2004)

In the interview, and his *Cooperative Manifesto*, Tim discusses the broader purpose and value of the Arizmendi worker cooperatives, and he emphasizes the importance of connecting the broader political issues to programs on the ground that implement democracy and economic ownership. “We intentionally choose businesses that will have a lot of customer interaction and visibility because we are trying to show people that there is a different way of organizing society” (T. Huet, personal communication, January 28, 2018). He regards the cooperative businesses like schools, or laboratories of democracy, inherently democratic demonstration projects.

### **Structure, Philosophy, and Practice**

The Arizmendi Association of Cooperative’s Organizational mission reflects the universal cooperative principles (ICA, n.d.), and the Mondragon Corporation’s principles, but they rewrite the key points to meet the specific needs of the Association through eight objectives:

1. Assure opportunities for workers’ control of their livelihood with fairness and equality for all
2. Develop as many dignified, decently paid (living “wage” or better) work opportunities as possible through the development of new cooperatives
3. Promote cooperative economic democracy as a sustainable and humane option

for our society

4. Create work environments that foster profound personal as well as professional growth
5. Exhibit excellence in production and serving our local communities
6. Provide continuing technical, educational and organizational support and services to member cooperatives
7. Seek to link with other cooperatives for mutual support, *and to*
8. Provide information and education to the larger community about cooperatives  
(Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives, home page)

The six Arizmendi bakeries are situated throughout the Bay area, in communities with varying demographics. The Bay area is becoming less diverse as gentrification takes on more neighborhoods, and poor people are pushed out. Tim said the Association was struggling with that. It is a problem if the worker-owners cannot afford to live in the community where they work. The population of Marin is more homogeneous than other areas; the population of the East Bay is quite diverse. The cooperatives themselves are quite diverse. The majority of the Arizmendi workers are people of color, and there is quite a mix of people with different levels of education, from high school to postgraduate. The worker-owned bakeries provide highly skilled but still manual jobs, which are disappearing. Good physical, hard-working jobs used to be a pathway for people to gain financial comfort and even a retirement fund. The Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives is creating high paying jobs that do not rely on people having privilege or a formal education. I asked Tim, “Why don’t you just create the business and hire people to do the job?” He responded:

If we create successful businesses and hire people, they go about work in a normal way. It would not have the transformation we are aiming for, which is to create situations where people are engaged citizens in their business and affecting things and

developing skills and knowledge that will carry over to other parts of their lives. (T. Huet, personal communication, January 28, 2018)

The Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives is supporting the development of worker cooperatives, until recently, mainly bakeries, pizza shops, and the original cheese shop, The Cheese Board. There is also a technical assistance collective, the Development and Support Cooperative, where Tim is a working member. Most recently, the Association is piloting a landscaping design and a construction business. Both of the new businesses are worker cooperatives. The Cheese Board is a worker-owned business founded in 1971 (The Cheeseboard Collective, n.d.). Upon the request from Huet and the start-up team for the Arizmendi Association, The Cheese Board gave them a substantial loan, their business plan, and even their recipes to support the new initiative. The successful bakeries follow suit. When they can, they loan a percentage of their surplus dollars for investment in new cooperative efforts. This is in line with the seventh cooperative principle, Cooperation Among Cooperatives (ICA, n.d.).

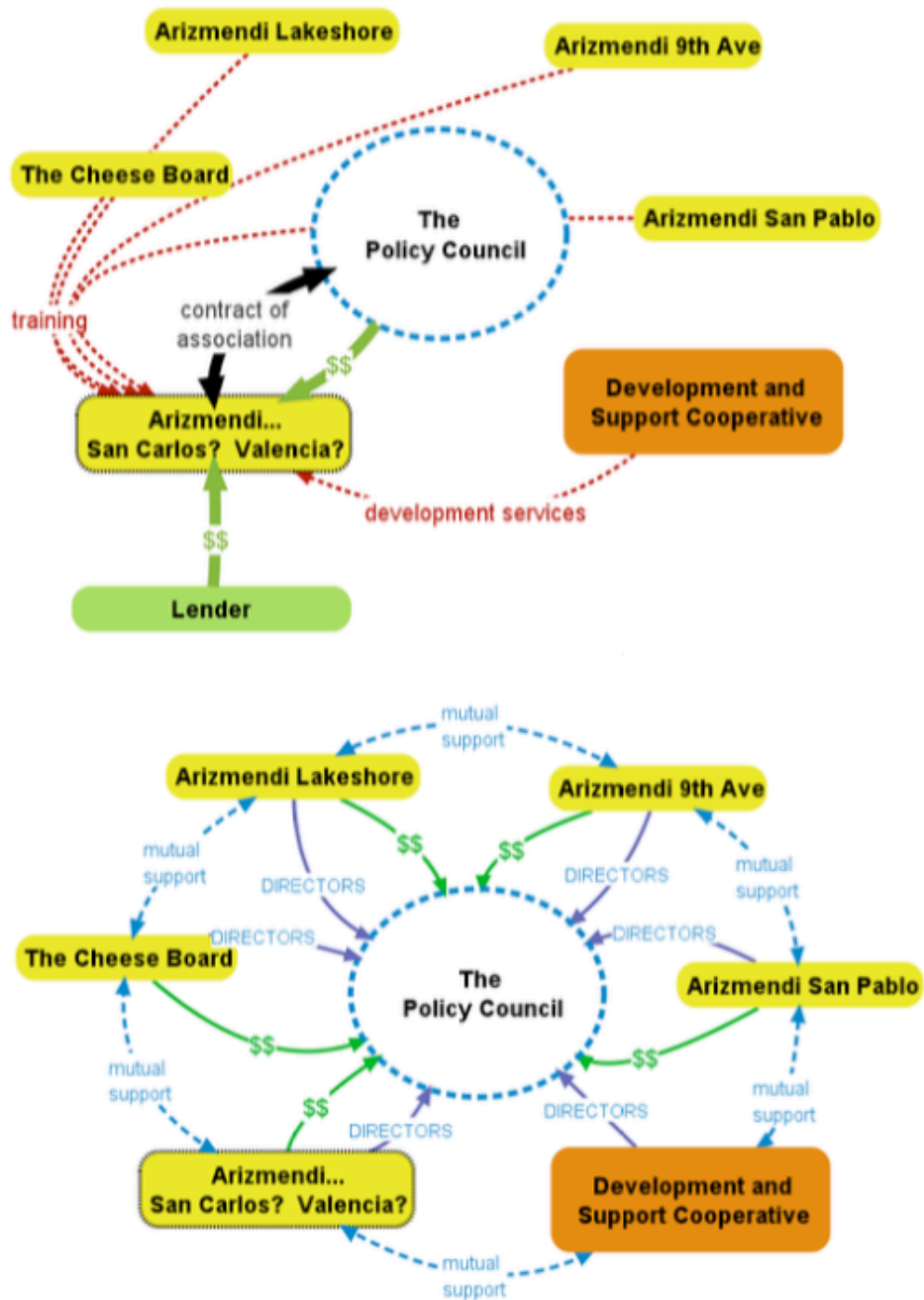
Tim said the Association is like a hybrid, a consumer cooperative, made up of worker-owned businesses. Everyone that comes on to work at one of the bakeries expects to become a worker-owner, after a six-month candidacy process. There are no long-term employees without an ownership interest. New workers are voted in by the existing membership after a vetting process and six month candidacy period. Everyone voted in as a working member is also on the board of directors. One of the bakeries has close to sixty workers on their board. In each bakery, there are committees empowered to take on designated tasks so that not every detail needs to be decided at the general board membership meeting. The working committees include hiring and evaluation, or personnel; production committee; community relations committee/marketing; site and repair committee; office finance committee and collective evaluation committee. The Hiring and Evaluation

Committee assesses individuals, and the Collective Evaluation Committee evaluates the overall collective, and the performance of each committee. The Collective Evaluation Committee organizes an annual comprehensive audit of each coop, but on a more regular basis, their job is to bring difficult topics and problems to the broader group, to talk about and constructively resolve those issues. Every worker-owner serves on at least one committee. Each cooperative has the same committees, and sometimes they meet together for training or skillshare opportunities hosted by the Association. Coop members choose the committee that they work on except for the committees that involve more confidentiality like the Hiring Committee or the Evaluation Committees. For those assignments, members are elected based on specific criteria, skill sets, and needs of the cooperative at the time. Workers can volunteer for the production, finance, or community relations committee. The Association has a central board or Policy Council comprised of two members of each cooperative.

Joe Marraffino is a former member of the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives; he is currently the Co-Director of the Cooperative Conversions program at the Democracy at Work Institute (Democracy at Work Institute, DAWI, staff-board section). In 2009, he wrote an article illustrating the model that the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives is implementing to duplicate and expand democratically run businesses in the Bay Area (Marraffino, 2009). When he wrote the article, the Association was made up of the Cheese Board, three Arizmendi bakeries and the Development and Support Cooperative. Today, there are three additional bakeries and they are launching a construction business and a landscape design business.

The Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives is a network, incubator, and technical assistance provider that is owned, governed and funded by the member workplaces it creates and serves. Our primary activity is to replicate and offer continuing support to new retail bakeries based on a proven cooperative business model. (Marraffino, 2009)

Tim confirmed that the structure that Marraffino illustrated in 2009 is still in place. The business design incorporates a franchise model so that new bakeries start with a proven business model in place.



(Marraffino, 2009)

## Education

Father José María Arizmendiarrreta began his efforts by building a school, the Escuela Profesional, which started its first academic year in 1943 with twenty-one students. (Mondragon Corporation, History section). "It was, like many of our other institutions, a creation, above all of Father José María, and his slogan "socializing knowledge truly democratizes power" is an accurate reflection of the motivation behind Eskola, one of his most cherished projects (Mondragon, History section)." The Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives has an education program, and all worker-owners agree to participate. There are six modules: Democratic participation, conflict resolution, cooperative history and principles, finance, coop law, and democratic meeting process. Before they are eligible to be voted in as an owner, workers must complete each module. There is also ongoing education in the work environment. Inside the cooperatives, the workers move around on different tasks, so everyone understands the different aspects of the business. They also offer mediation and facilitation training. Tim explained that they are mentoring people to be the internal leadership, specifically inside the evaluation committee. They are the members whose job is to initiate things from inside and develop others' cooperative leadership capacity.

Some people say that cooperatives are not for everybody, but Tim has a more profound response. He suggests that it may be more difficult for individuals with neurological issues or people that have been traumatized by society. Some people have what they call employee mentality. They are used to being on the subservient side of a dominant relationship, whether in school, work, prison; it may be hard to change mentally. The Arizmendi Association is structured to move people from that mental space to a place where they can take ownership of their lives and work. Tim believes that, when given the opportunity, most people can respond to and thrive in a cooperative environment where they are valued.

### Lessons Learned

For clarification, the Southern Federation of Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund, FSC/LAF, and The Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives are both a cooperative of cooperatives. The businesses that make up their membership are different types of cooperatives. The FSC/LAF is comprised of 35 agricultural marketing cooperatives, 19 community development credit unions, and their membership includes 12,000 Black farm families (FSC/LAF, n.d., History/mission section) across eight states (FSC/LAF, n.d., Annual Report section). In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives' member businesses are worker cooperatives; businesses owned and run, democratically, by the people who work there. The demographics of the worker-members are diverse, over 50% people of color. In both the FSC/LAF and the Arizmendi Association, the members have representation in a consistent, well-defined democratic process. Education programming is embedded in the structure and made accessible, often mandatory, to all members who share ownership and equal decision-making power.

As established in the exploratory interviews for this case study, one-member-one-vote is the critical principle driving the work of Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet. You, the reader, have been inundated with multiple iterations of the cooperative principles and without analysis of the unique differences. That is for another project. A review of the multiple versions of the principles shows that the tenet of equal value, and equal participation, is central to them all.

Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises jointly owned and democratically controlled by and for their members to realise their common socio-economic needs and aspirations. As enterprises based on values and principles, they put fairness and equality first, allowing people to create sustainable enterprises that generate long-term jobs and prosperity. Managed by producers, users, or workers, cooperatives are run



according to the 'one member, one vote' rule. (ICA, n.d.)

From Spain to San Francisco, from Nova Scotia to Louisiana, members of all types of cooperatives write the core principles in their own language to meet the specific needs, understanding, and experience of the immediate community. To regard the equal value and dignity of every individual as a constant practice is a profound religiosity for Carol. For Tim, it is his manifesto.

Most who read this case study, or know them in their work, will readily agree that Carol and Tim are essential leaders in the cooperative movement in the United States. They will both deflect the leadership language to start a broader, more inclusive conversation. The goal inside of cooperatives is to develop every member to act as a leader, an active decision-maker, and a cooperative partner through education, experience, and the practice of democracy. Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet embrace a cooperative philosophy that integrates democratic and educative practices that can be aligned with contemporary discussions of leadership as a process. The democratic process that is put in place, and practiced daily, becomes the leader (Reeler, 2017).

Education means “bring forth,” or “lead out,” from educare, which means, “to lead out.” To lead out, in this sense, means to consider the whole person, through democratic workplace practice. Education, in this sense, is also a measure of the cooperative’s success or failure (Lorenzo, 2000, p. 271).

Dignity and equal human value; ongoing education; self-awareness and reflection; and consistent democratic practices determine the success of cooperative efforts. These values form the philosophy of the cooperators that inspired Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet. There is a deep assumption that when a person understands the broader context of their surroundings, they can define their own needs, and then create their own solutions, together. To build a sustainable local economy is not only related to profitability but to a process that

generates individual energy and self-worth that empowers and benefits whole communities. (Arizmendiarieta, Herrera, Azurmendi, 2000; Reeler, 2017).

The paths that led Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet into cooperative development, and the communities they work in, are divergent, yet the roots of their inspiration and the profound philosophy they share are directly connected. In both cases, the cooperative education tradition and the true regard for human value that inspired the interviewees go back to the Catholic social doctrine published in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, 1891. At a young age, Carol was inspired by Father McKnight when he implemented youth and adult education programs in Lafayette, Louisiana, that were modeled after the cooperative education platform developed by Catholic priests Moses Coady and Jimmy Thompkins, founders of the Antigonish Movement and influenced by the contemporary social Catholic doctrine. As the Antigonish Movement grew, a cooperative training program was created through the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. In the early 60s, Father McKnight attended the cooperative training in Nova Scotia, like many cooperative leaders from around the world. In the following years, many of the early leaders of the Southern Consumer Federation, including Carol Prejean, traveled to Nova Scotia to attend cooperative education training at Xavier University. Under the stewardship of "Father Mac", Carol, her brother, Charles Prejean, her husband, John Zippert, and many more, became the leaders in a contemporary cooperative enterprise that continues to be relevant and critical to the Black economy in the Southern United States. Tim Huet was motivated by the success and organization of the Mondragon Cooperatives in Spain. The founder, Father Jose Marie Arizmendiarieta's informative years in the seminary, were influenced not only by the social doctrine of Pope Leo III; he was inspired by contemporary social thinkers and cooperative theory. "On 10 August 1943, under the banner of 'socializing knowledge to democratize power', Arizmendiarietti launched the

Professional School of Mondragon, with support of local companies.” (Molina & Miguez, 2008, pg. 292). Through inspirational talks made available to students, he recruited a core group of youth to explore the philosophy. He saw to it that a group of young men were trained in the Catholic social teachings and cooperative principles. He supported them through advanced industrial education programs in prominent universities. The first students of the Professional School of Mondragon, created the first cooperative industries of the Mondragon Cooperatives. They continued their active membership until their retirement, or the end of their lives. The former students of Arizmendiarieta passed on their philosophy, skills, and practice to future generations now owning and working in an expanding cooperative enterprise. McKnight and Arizmendiarieta were contemporaries in different parts of the world. Arizmendiarieta’s work on cooperative development projects began earlier, with his assignment to Mondragon, in 1941 (Molina & Miguez, 2008, pg. 288). Despite the influence of the same Catholic doctrine, close philosophical origins, a similar implementation of adult education programs, and the cultivation of leadership, over multiple generations, I have not yet found a reference, to indicate whether Father Arizmendiarieta had connection with the leaders of the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia, as Father McKnight did. Beyond that, the original motivation of those influenced by social Catholic doctrine and the discussion of relationship and purpose of cooperative development within a capitalism economy, go hand-in-hand. Are cooperatives an expansion of (MacAulay, 2002) or are they an antidote to a capital economy? Are cooperatives socially contrived local “formations ” (Schneider , 2016) created by Catholics to alleviate widespread poverty, mitigate social upheaval, and stunt socialist formations (MacAulay, 2002)? Tim Huet espouses, that cooperatives are social demonstration projects to teach people to organize themselves economically in a new way, so everyone benefits. Can a cooperative economy replace the existing capitalist economy as a more humane organization of our purpose and our work? Is it

enough to improve the lives of individuals on a local level or is it inevitable that we must replace the capitalist system because it cannot be reigned in; its nature demands constant growth and accumulation of wealth by the winners, rather than equitable distribution of resources amongst everyone. I did not have a conversation with Carol regarding the role of cooperatives surrounded by a capitalist economy, so I looked to her poetry (Prejean Zippert, 1997/2002 & 2009). Her poem titled, *Look At This World* (Prejean Zippert, 1997/2002 pp.88-89), eludes to the source of inequality and injustice, and calls upon the power within us to build something different.

**Look At This World**

Look at this world	Look at this world
and see a people	We see its people
crying	naked, cold and trembling
as they gaze on	with fear of those who hold the key
padlocked silos	to the bulging, padlocked
bulging from green seeds	silos
that yield tall harvest	Take up a nation
Look at these people	and rise from the slush
and see a nation	that your children
dying	may live to feel a warm sun
in its	Take up a people
own tears	Fill your hands
as its people wrench	with each other's
in pain from absent wringing	That you will share
of idle hands	in the earth's bounties
Look at this nation	you bled for
and mourn the babe	Take up a people
born	Look at this world
in the midst	and build a nation
of plenty with nothing	
to eat	(Prejean Zippert, 2002, pg.152-153)

Both Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet emphasized the connection between cooperative development, building a broader political awareness, and increased civic engagement. When an individual understands their value and worth through cooperative work and democratic decision-making, it is natural that a person will recognize the broader injustices in society and realize they can correct those injustices, even more so, collectively.

### **Further Investigation Needed**

Through this case study, I identified many areas for further exploration and research. First, we must account for women's roles in cooperative movements and give voice to their stories, to understand the success or failings of a cooperative project. Carol Zippert's initial training in cooperative philosophy, her life long work in the cooperative development in the Southern United States, and her steady philosophical way of doing that work is clearly key to the success of the now 50+-year-old Southern Federation of Cooperatives. Second, there is a need for further inquiry and debate regarding the purpose, value, and ultimate goal of cooperatives within the capitalist economy that engulfs us. Do cooperatives offer an alternative to capitalism, or are they an extension of capitalism, where wealth and ownership are distributed just a little more evenly? Third, what are the shared values, and the unique characteristics found in the customized principles of diverse cooperatives worldwide? Fourth, it is critical to look at examples of cooperative economic behavior in humans, outside of Western hegemony, to understand the breadth of possibilities and the tendency of humans to be cooperative or not. Fifth, how does cooperative philosophy and practice fit into the discussion on leadership and change? Similar values, strategies, and themes investigated in leadership literature are aligned: self-knowledge and awareness of others (Foucault, 1984; Freire, 1973; Sinclair, 2007), dignity (Hicks, 2011), ethical leadership (Northouse, 2016), dialogical leadership (Foucault, 1984; Freire, 1973; Schedlitzk & Edwards, 2014; Sinclair,

2007), democracy (Altman, Rego, & Harrison III, 2010; Klein, 2016; Sutherland, 2015; Woods, 2016), stewardship (Hernandez, 2012), and process as leader (Reeler, 2017).

In a future project, it will be informative to create a chart to compare similar and unique characteristics that different cooperatives assign to their thinking and practice and align them with traits or themes in leadership discussions.

### **Conclusion**

The interviews with Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet and the investigation into the origins of the Southern Federation of Cooperatives and the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives raised many questions and opened up several topics for further inquiry. Tim's movement into cooperative development is not dissimilar from my own. We both come from activist roots in anti-capitalist and anti-racist movements. We both concluded that we wanted to help build part of the solution through cooperative education and development. At the same time, I am fascinated with the Catholic connection. I am a former Catholic, born and raised, and was not looking to go down a path to discover the impact of Catholic doctrine on cooperative endeavors around the world. As I uncovered my original political enlightenment embedded in my Catholic upbringing in a recent personal reflective exercise, I should not be surprised. Although I am not a believer, I felt a strong pull to what Carol calls her religiosity to live and work with others democratically, as equal participants, for everyone's benefit.

This exploration aimed to identify the qualities of leadership and the inspiration that back up successful contemporary cooperative endeavors. Dignity, equity, democracy, self-awareness, civil engagement, positive communication, ongoing education, shared wealth, improved quality of life, and open participation are values represented in Carol and Tim's work and in the structure and operation of the cooperatives they work for.

Inside the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund and the Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives, the leading premise is *one member, one vote*. There

is an assumption that all individuals, with ongoing education, can understand the political context of their circumstances, practice democracy, and create economic and political solutions collectively. Though it is necessary to understand, in greater detail, the day-to-day structure and the operational democratic processes that move successful organizations forward, it is clear that cooperative economic development done ethically can transform the lives of individuals returning home from prison or jail, as well as other people who are in socially and economically marginalized communities. Beyond the guiding principles, what is demonstrated by Dr. Carol Prejean Zippert and Tim Huet, and their mentors, is that leadership guided by a philosophy that embraces the equal value of all human beings is essential to the success of a cooperative.



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