**Questions and Answers**

**Question:** Paula 07:00 PM

We see successes and failures in resilience in Paradise, CA after the Camp Fire. So many of the homeowners didn’t have enough money to rebuild because of the costs of unprecedented cleanup. There are also rules against living in RVs or trailers long term for those without financial means to build to the new standard. You effectively only have agency if you have money and want to live life a specific way. The government and NGOs didn’t come together to help the community truly rebuild for everyone. It’s a community that’s now reduced to a tiny percentage of what it once was. Those who were most impacted didn’t really have a voice because they had to find new housing elsewhere. I’m worried the same thing has happened in our local mountains as well. Any other ideas on how to really preserve and rebuild our mountain community for everyone not just for people with lots of money?

**Answer:**

*From Gina:* This is part of what I was trying to answer about how those who are most affected (those whose homes were destroyed, in this case) should have a lot of say in policies and procedures moving forward (in this case, for re-building). For example, the county could choose to change the laws about RVs and trailers. This might not only benefit those who lost their homes, but also those who are unhoused in our community, so there are ways to make things better for even more people out of a tragedy like this. Naomi Klein does not only write about disaster capitalism, but also disaster collectivism. What might disaster collectivism look like in our community? Maybe something similar to Habitat for Humanity where a community comes together to help build homes? Maybe in the process we could also build some tiny homes for those who are unhoused? The point is, WE as a community have either created these structures or allowed them to continue, so WE can change them too.

*From Mike:* If they have not done so already, the County should formally waive its rules about living in an RV or similar housing while rebuilding a home that was destroyed or partly destroyed by the fires. If there are concerns about health and safety, they could work out a program for a very quick inspection of the arrangement to make sure that there is a secure waste disposal system in place, and safety with respect to electricity and water, etc. Of course, they will want to be clear that there is some time-line for completing the project, but they should be generous in this regard. I think you should take this issue to your supervisor, who, if you are living in San Lorenzo Valley or Scotts Valley is Bruce McPherson or if in Davenport, Bonny Doon, or the coastal area, Ryan Coonerty. If you copy me on anything you send them or want me to join you in a virtual meeting with them to discuss this issue, please let me know.

**Question:** Jim Griffin 07:14 PM

I am not versed in the lexicon of community resilience, but phrases like community networking and social networking do come to mind. Social networking often gets co-opted by digital technologies which, one could argue, often leads to social isolation. Perhaps community networking is a more hopeful phrase; how do you develop community networks in your area?

**Answer:**

*From Gina:* I agree about co-optation of digital technologies re networking. I think mutual aid network networks are good examples. There has been at least one mutual aid network in SC since the pandemic started (see <https://www.pandemicoflove.com/> and look at all the cities/counties, including Santa Cruz!). Another type of community network of sorts in SC Co is YARR (<https://yarr-sc.org/>) and Pajaro Valley Rapid Response (<https://www.facebook.com/PVRapidResponse>). It is also the case that communities of color have done very deep networking for years. I’m thinking about students of mine who are Latinx and are able to attend UCSC due, in part, by Aunties making and selling tamales through their religious institutions, neighborhoods, etc. A reference you might be interested in is an open source article by Dean Spade: <http://www.deanspade.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Mutual-Aid-Article-Social-Text-Final.pdf>

*From Mike:* Things have changed radically with respect to how one might develop a community network in an area since the Pandemic. In the past, I would have said you need to go out and knock on some doors to get started by talking to neighbors. That is not really an option now. So I would suggest one might start by contacting one or two neighbors that you know and asking them to contact the folks that they know. It will be slow at first, but I think you could develop a social media network through this process. You could also get some initial contacts by asking if one or more of the existing networks (that often cover too large an area to work for a serious organizing project) send out a message asking people who live in the area in which you are interested to join in on a Zoom call or at least begin to exchange emails. Santa Cruz Neighbors is one such group. And if you want to follow through on this suggestion, let me know and I will suggest some others. (openup@ucsc.edu)

**Question:** Patricia Jameson 07:08 PM

My observation of the COVID pandemic is that capitalism has been very good at efficiency, but very poor at resilience. That needs to be fixed!

**Answer:**

*From Gina:* Yes! And it might not be right to look to capitalism to fix it. I think we have to fix it in the face of capitalism. Naomi Klein does not only write about disaster capitalism, but also disaster collectivism. My graduate students and I have a paper that just went under review for publication, charting how social toxicity and social possibility sit side by side during the pandemic, and in the context of capitalism. You can email me in about 8 months to see if the paper is being published ☺. If it ends up in this journal, it’s open source so you’ll be able to access it. Email me at Langhout@ucsc.edu And, in the meantime, you might be interested in this open source article by Dean Spade: <http://www.deanspade.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Mutual-Aid-Article-Social-Text-Final.pdf>

*From Mike:* I would add that the “efficiency” that capitalism introduced into the world is a declining characteristic of the system. The bureaucracy that accompanies the later stages of capitalism (the period we are in now), grows exponentially and often impinges significantly on any efficiency created by the system. Perhaps more importantly, efficiency is a characteristic of the competitive stage of capitalism (and earlier forms like the mercantile period), but once you get to monopoly capitalism (where a few large firms dominate most, but not all, of the sectors of the economy), firms do not compete any more over price, but over market shares. More and more of the creative energy in the system is directed at marketing, sales, and financial manipulation of the firm’s resources rather than in producing a needed product or service at the cheapest price. There are certainly some exceptions, but there is nothing efficient about Fortune 500 companies that put their energy into investing their profits into non-productive financial manipulation, tax avoidance, and the like.

I don’t think we are going to wake up some morning in a different economic system than capitalism, but there are reforms to the system that can make it more serve the interests of resilience for human communities. Through that process we can begin to move more toward a socialist alternative to the capitalist system. But even with a socialist society, one needs to make sure that resilience is a top goal rather than say, maximizing the material goods that everyone lusts after. Many of these reforms are ideas that were born in the United States in the past, but blown past by our society. But we can see them at work in European nations or other countries. Michael Moore has a great documentary on this topic: Where to invade next.