

## Case Study: The Jackson-Kush Plan

The [Jackson-Kush Plan](#) is named after the capital of the State of Mississippi, Jackson, and the eighteen contiguous majority Black counties of the Kush District that border the Mississippi River -- not all of which fall within that state's boundaries. The identification of and struggle for the Kush District is part of the long history of struggle for independence and self-determination by people of African descent in the region against colonization, enslavement, exploitation and white supremacy.

The initiative, manifested through [Cooperation Jackson](#), is further contextualized in a system of economic progress contingent upon race facilitated by the state:

Rather than stimulating growth and maximizing profits through increased production and trade, the local white ruling class has prioritized a strategy of containment that deliberately seeks to fetter the Black population by limiting its access to capital and decent wages, both of which constitute a critical source of labor power and strength in a capitalist society. "Money doesn't talk as loud as race in Mississippi," as an old saying goes." (page 4)

As such, the definition of power that defines their goals is "for Afrikan, Indigenous, and other oppressed peoples and exploited classes living on this landmass to control our own lives and determine our own destinies". This pursuit of new ways of being is reflected in the mission of advancing "the development of economic democracy in the city through building a solidarity economy anchored by a network of cooperatives and other types of worker-owned and democratically self-managed enterprises."

The Kush delta region is defined by a shared history and ecosystem, rather than the confines and boundaries of the state system. This self-definition reflects the specificities of the history of the city of Jackson, the state of Mississippi, and the overlapping interdependence within the region. These politics of conscious becoming and cultural production allow for the organization of autonomous, self-organized and executed social projects.

Long-term projects are not supported or organized by the state government or the formal economy as it exists there today. They range from organizing community gardens and people's self-defense campaigns to housing occupations and forming workers' unions to building worker cooperatives. The projects function as serve-the-people survival programs that help communities sustain themselves and acquire a degree of self-reliance. They also provide resources and make time available for other kinds of engagement and organizing.

Ordering their lives together over the long term occurs alongside strategic "temporal" engagements with the state to address the immediate needs of people and communities in relation to state policy. While strategically complicated, and internally contentious, after ten years of work, accomplishments include electing the late Chokwe Lumumba as mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, in 2013. Part of this process was picking key pre-electoral fights around immediate issues of saving Jackson's public transportation system and passing an ordinance against racial profiling. This work is considered to be an "engagement" with state power, rather than acquisition or "wielding" of it. Relating to power in this way is based on an understanding of both the internal limitations of individual office holders, and on attempts to address the contradictions inherent of the "wielding" of state power in the pursuit of self-determination.

All of this work is built on decades of educational work and on building a range of alliances and coalitions across a variety of racial and class divisions. This work to construct new, embodied, productive relations of power avoid competition, create productive divisions of labor, and build interdependent and vested relationships.

Central to the work are democratic processes of institution building. The most important institutional vehicle for this work is the People's Assembly through which people "exercise their agency, exert their power, and practice democracy." Democracy is defined here as "rule of the people, for the people, by the people" such that people can ultimately make "direct decisions about the economic, social, and cultural operations" of the community. Significantly, after 20 years of experience, they have determined that if a body engages at least one-fifth of the total population in a defined geographic area (neighborhood, ward or district, city, state, etc.) it acquires "sufficient numbers, social force, and capacity to effectively implement the decisions made by the Assembly and ensure that these actions achieve their desired outcomes." (page 8)

This multi-faceted political project, grounded in decades of social moment work in the region is creating a symbiotic relationship between politics and the economy as it strives toward *economic democracy* through the building of *solidarity economics*. It pursues these goals through short-term strategic engagement with existing institutions within their jurisdictions as well as long-term practices of institution building within, across and beyond them.

As it works to transform the lives of working-class Jacksonians and people in the surrounding Kush delta region of western Mississippi, it also seeks to secure national and international coalitional and material support necessary to build its next political system. With this support, it has the potential -- and intention -- to become the first major network of predominately worker cooperatives to be established in an urban area.

