

Rooted in Justice_ Centering Underserved Communities in CLT Practice

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Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 00:59

We're really excited to have you here today, and in a second I'll introduce I'll have our panelists. So I just want to start out by saying that today's event the first ever global community land trust summit, the 2026 Global Summit. Summit is a six week series of free, online events broken indigenous leadership traditions that give rise to the Community Land Trust community land trustee, Land Trust store globally, it's going to run from today. We are the first kicking off as a first one. And so the summit brings together practitioners, leaders and allies, to share experiences, reflect on practices, and advance the global CLT network. So grateful and for inner court and help in the summit. All right, let's get started. And we here at Rondo Community Land Trust, are which is rooted in justice, underserved community, underserved communities, and the CLT practice, and I will turn it over to Damon and Ashley to introduce themselves, and then we'll get

Damon Mason | Rondo Community Land Trust 02:25

started. My name is Damon Mason. I am Associate Director here at Rondo Community Land Trust, and I will actually be moderating the panel discussion later on in this in this meeting. Ashley,

Ashley Allen | Houston Community Land Trust 02:38

good morning everyone, or good afternoon or evening, depending on where you are in the world. My name is Ashley Allen, Executive Director of the Houston Community Land Trust here in Houston, Texas.

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 02:49

Ashley and Damon again, Mikeya Griffin, President and CEO of Rondo community land trust. And today I did, and I hope you really start grounding us in the history of us. Connie last in the first community land trust that actually started, which was rooted in our our black experience here through the Civil Rights Movement. And today, I'm honored to show the arc of justice, which is really again around in the history of the Community Land Trust movement, where after that, then Ashley and I will take you on a journey about the work that we do and how we support and ground black communities and our work here at Rondo CLT in Houston. So with that, Ben, I'm going to ask you To show the arc of justice and thank you.

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 24:43

I'm just going to take a second for everybody to sit with that for a moment. Thank you so much. I was about to start singing the last of that is one of my favorite hymns of all time. So gonna take us back to my church roots here. Alright, so what I'd like to do is get started with continue to ground us in our history, and spend a few minutes of grounding us in the work that's happening in St Paul, Minnesota and the history, and then more context as we think about what's currently happening in Houston In the state of Texas, here in the United States, all right, so as we continue to ground ourselves in the history, let's let's take it to another bit of history in the city of St Paul and the state of Minnesota, which is almost as far north as Canada, it's close where we always say we're kissing cousins to Canada. Go ahead with the next slide about Rondo CLT. And I always like to start this story with, you know, the cutest little black couple drove up from Port Gibson, Mississippi, from the south and the 30s. What you see right here is a map of a 1935 planning map from the city of St Paul, and where it's bordered in red, it says

the largest Negro section in the city at one time, the Rondo community land the Rondo the Rondo community itself was home to 90% of the African Americans that lived in the state of Minnesota. And I like to center on this map, because shortly after this map was drawn, up that two little, cute, little black couple that was really kind of moving from Jim Crow south to to the North for better jobs and opportunity were my aunt and uncle, and that's how my family came to the state of Minnesota. And I always like to say I'm a proud fourth generation Rondo community baby. Go to the next slide. You'll see this representation of, you know, in the 40s, when my my, you know, late 30s, early 40s, my family came here, that on the left side of your screen here, this is all the land that they came into. This was a very, you know, Rondo was a very inter generational, inter cooperative, Mutual Aid Society. And then in the in the late 40s, early 50s, when highway construction was starting across the United States, the community was really kind of devastated through the taking and seizure of homes and businesses in the community. And so over here, you'll see where the freeway, the highway has come through. And all of you know we have lots of super blocks, so we move from having a very collected neighborhood to, you know, homes and businesses being taken through, some through eminent domain, and some through very low cost, because of that box I show you, where they identify the largest Negro section. It actually, they actually condemned the whole entire neighborhood and labeled it slums. And I would like to say that, you know, it was a very economically mixed community for everything from day laborers to doctors and lawyers. And even though folks were escaping Jim Crow from the South to come north, there were only a few areas in the city that were really open to black people, even in the state of Minnesota, up north. All right, go to the next and historic Rondo today. You'll see some of the pictures here depicting life back in the day. And I'd always like again, this was a very strong cooperative community values. The community actually started at the first black credit union, the first cooperative grocery store, its first membership. What I wanted here on the side here where the woman is singing, that was the qrgifund society, when black people didn't have anywhere to go to kind of celebrate and have high society. They created their own spaces here in the state of Minnesota. And again, a lot of that was disrupted. I always like to say that the highway was one of the very first physical, deep, lasting wounds the community. But it didn't. It didn't stop the resilience of the community. Because I grew up here, and it was very much, you know, living in a with seeing my neighbors and my church and all of those things. Okay, we move on to the next slide, however, and that was in this the 60s, the freeway was completed in 1971 through that time, community was still having displacement and having issues around affordable housing. And in the late eight, in the mid to late 80s, community members got together and they started the Rondo community land trust. And so this is just a timeline. So from from Rondo 's own black experience, through seizure of land, through the highway and urban renewal, the voice raises and we start a community land trust. We're the first community land trust in the state of Minnesota. Today, there are 15 other community land trusts in the state of Minnesota, and we're formerly organized as a coalition, and we, if we were to put all of our single family homes together, we would probably be one of the largest community land trust in the in the state. That's all of the work that the 15 Community Land Trust do. So we're the first community land trust in the state of Minnesota. We actually were the first community land trust in the state of Minnesota to also apply the Community Land Trust movement to not just housing, but also commercial development. Move to the next one today, Rondo Community Land Trust, as you know, we're a nonprofit. We were based in the historic neighborhood, black neighborhood, serving the Rondo community. But today we serve two counties, and today we help small businesses and homeowners buy homes and launch businesses by keeping land affordable and in community, hands on, one. I started here at the Community Land Trust. I am the first black woman to a black person, actually, to run a community land trust in the state of Minnesota. Even though, you know, Rondo Community Land Trust has been around for 34 years, five years ago, five four and a half years ago, we really wanted to determine and take all of the work that we do, and the work that and the ethos by which the first community land trust, new communities was really trying to get to and move that into a reparative framework. And so we really are looking at, how do we repair past harm, but also build for bright futures? So our work is it's place based our place, and how we how we see the work moving and our our example of that work is in Rondo. And so it's place based in

Rondo, we know that there was all kinds of harm from Highway 94 coming through credit and market challenges in the community. And so we say, if we do more shared ownership and stewardship work, and we really move to a solidarity economy, that we take a more democratic approach to dignified labor, owning our own labor through more shared ownership, whether that's cooperative businesses, you know, more homes, and then culture as a source of healing and economic power. And then the will just kind of keeps going around, and we'll keep moving on our housing programs. We have pre purchase stewardship programming, post purchase stewardship programming. We have our buyer initiated program. We acquire rehab and resale properties, and we have we do new construction, and we're a developer, and then we really work to help foreclosure. However, in our reparative work, it's really around our neighborhood legacy. We've been able to raise funds. We have our right to return to Rondo, where we are really focusing on bringing folks that were have deep roots in history in the black community, to come back. So pairing them with significant, significant grants to come back to the community and or developing significant, significant parcels, purchasing and redeveloping significant parcels in the community. And then we have the inheritance Fund, which is a policy piece working with the city of Saint Paul for reparative measures, for a down payment assistance program that can layer with the funds that we have as Rondo community land trust to repair harms of families that lost their homes and through highway 94 then we have our right to stay where we're really helping families stay in the community, helping families purchase mom and dad's house and and Stay there, helping our seniors, stay in their community, rehab, those kinds of things. All right, next screen, because I know we don't have too much time. And here's just an example of some of our folks and people that we're supporting, and then our commercial programs. So again, our neighborhood legacy. We do business technical assistance. We have our business initiated program where we're working with business owners that want to have their own brick and mortar. We have an affordable commercial leasing program. We strategically acquire properties, and then we do new construction. And how that, how that lives in our reparative framework, is our right to return for business. So we really focus on supporting small businesses here in the Rondo community. We preserve businesses, and we'll have an example of that in the community. And really just focusing on preserving black owned businesses here in the community. As part of that, we purchased the beloved golden time Cafe, which was a 30 year anchor in the community, and when the rights were retiring, we wanted to ensure that their legacy moved on, as well as their that their property in the Golden Time Cafe became A neighborhood staple, and continue to be a neighborhood staple. So we purchase golden time, and then we turn it into two concepts, restaurant and bar and a cafe, and all of those are anchoring where we're reestablishing a black commercial district here in and the Rondo community. Go to the next slide picture of our grand opening. And then, along with that, we've opened a business incubator. At this point, we're incubating artists and culture bearers, and

Speaker 1 37:18

then we have the

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 37:21

Rondo African American arts and cultural district. So we've officially, we're officially launching that we've completed six public murals. We partner with 27 artists. We've invested over 135,000 and artist commissions. And we employ local contractors, and we can move on to the next slide. Now let's talk a little bit about capturing land. And so we just recently purchased a 17 acre site that was formerly held a lot of businesses and other property that were taken through highway 94 we plan on hoping to turn this into \$600 million redevelopment of housing and economic space, commercial space, housing and office space and civic space, and we'll just go ahead to the next that's what it looked like, and here's what we hope it looks like in the future. Rondo Community Land Trust continues to strengthen local businesses and create economic opportunities through our affordable commercial space. We're supporting 11 businesses where we're giving affordable commercial lease space, helping reduce overhead, pricing and overhead for our small businesses here, and providing business and technical support for

entrepreneurs, and then for our residential impact. Over since 2021, we've supported about 160 single family homes. We've expanded our rental housing. And, you know, we really are driving into our diving into our pre purchase education and our post purchase stewardship programming. All right, I'm actually going to turn it over to Ashley so she can give you a overview of Houston CLT work, and then I'll turn it over to Damon after that.

Speaker 3 39:35

Hello, everyone again. My name is Ashley Allen, and I'm the Executive Director of the Houston Community Land Trust. So Hughes Community Land Trust was established in 2018 and we sold our first home, our single family home, in 2019 so always say we're a baby in the CLT movement and have a lot to learn, but one of the things that I think we are learning, as Mikeya has just shown, is that the community land trust can be used in several different ways, that community is so much more than just the homes that are there, but it is about the people and the places and then also preserving the price of communities. So Houston is a city that people always have thought as being extremely affordable. We saw a lot of people move to Houston during the pandemic for more expensive areas to Texas in general, but Houston definitely got an influx of new residents. And before that, we experienced hurricane Harvey in 2017 which was the catalyst of the CLT being established. So it root. It was rooted in community, because we had neighborhoods, historic black neighborhoods, like Third Ward independence, heights, Friedman's town, that were thinking about community land trust and thinking about what would happen to their neighborhoods in the future because of where they were located, which was centrally located, close to downtown, close to a lot of thriving neighborhoods and work centers. And so these communities knew that eventually, what happens to most communities that are kind of centered in a near work centers and entertainment that they will be gentrified. So they were pushing for the community land trust for many, many years, but it was Hurricane Harvey that really made the city sit up and listen and think about pursuing the establishment of the community land trust. So if you live in an area where there is natural disaster, you will know that a lot of times we have what we call disaster vultures that will come in and speculate the land when people are out are at their most vulnerable. And that happened here in Houston after Hurricane Harvey. People were underinsured. People lost their documents to be able to get the supports from things, places like FEMA and from the local government. And so there were a lot of people that lost their homes, and a lot of neighborhoods that were ravaged because of the natural disaster. And so that was taken advantage of by the speculators. And so we saw a lot of people come in, buy a property, hold the property until it was time, and the pandemic was that time where we started to see a lot of development, development that was way more expensive than what the local residents could afford. And so that's where the community land trust started and get rooted in community and then supported by the local government for us to be established in 2018 we started with single family home ownership because, well, one that was what people in the community really wanted. They wanted the ability to be rooted in their communities. And also we understand the stigma when people say affordable housing. There's a stigma around affordable housing and rentals, people have this, I would say, ignorant idea of what that means they think of public housing, and you get a lot of pushback. And so because the Community Land Trust was new to Texas and to Houston, we were the second Community Land Trust in the state of Texas. And so people were not sure about the idea of owning the land collectively, and so we started with single family home ownership. Because one, this is something that we knew that city council would get behind to fund, that neighborhoods would get behind. And also this is what the community wanted as a way to find, as a way to be able to stay rooted in their community. So on the screen now are a few of the homes that are in the community land trust. We are a scattered site model, so we are not concentrated in one neighborhood. We actually have homes across the entire county, um Harris County, which is one of the largest counties in the country. So we do have some neighborhoods where there are more community land trust homes, and we have some that are in subdivisions that there's a high concentration of Community Land Trust homes. Actually, there's one subdivision that we have here in the city that has 23 homes, CLT homes in them. So we started with a partnership with the City of

Houston and our land bank, and they built homes. The city built homes on land bank lots, and then the buyers were able to either buy through the Community Land Trust for 75,000 or at market rate for 180,000 now we don't have \$180,000 homes anymore, because, as I mentioned, after the pandemic crisis definitely skyrocketed, but what we end up having was a high demand, and the city could not build homes fast enough, and so we then shifted to a home buyer driven model where the homeowner gets to pick where the home is. Now, there are some, you know, requirements for that home. One, it could not be in 100 year flood plain. It could not be in an environmentally hazardous area. We didn't want to perpetuate building affordable housing on areas that are environmentally hazardous. We do have what's called a cancer cluster here in Houston. We have several brown fields, and so we wanted to make sure we were not perpetuating that idea of building housing in areas that were unsafe and no major repairs in the first five years, because that's part of the affordability. If you have to go and get into a home as a limited income buyer, as we service homeowners under 80% of the area median income, having to get a new HVAC system does not equate to affordable. So we wanted to make sure that homebuyers were getting in the home and being able to stay in the home. And part of that also is our taxing agreement. CLT homeowners in Houston pay taxes on the restricted resale price and not on the market rate value, which allows for that stability and that low purchase price extends on to the actual long term affordability on the ownership side as well. So it's not just getting someone in a home, it's keeping them there. Next slide, we are traditional community land trust, so we do have post purchase stewardship, and that looks like that encompasses a variety of things. One our workshops so making sure that homeowners are successful in home ownership, you don't know what. You don't know when it comes to when you're when it comes to owning a home until you're in it. So things like how to file your homestead exemption so you can lower your property taxes while CLT homeowners already get reduced taxes. That additional tax exemption for it being your homestead absolutely helps senior exemptions, disability exemptions, those are things we want to make sure our homeowners know about, and that isn't normally discussed in depth. For homeowners to know to be able to take advantage of those incentives, our will and estate program is something that's really important, because we want to talk about how we always want to talk about with our homeowners the ability to pass that affordability on to their heirs. That's part of the wealth building, being able to maintain the asset, but then also being able to pass that asset down to your heirs. And so we have an estate planning program and a transfer on death deed program so that homeowners have a transfer on death deed so it's very clear what who their real property is to be transferred to upon their passing, and that avoids probate court, which could be very costly for a lot of families. Some of the other activities you see on the screen is our world world CLT day, that which we're starting to celebrate now and then some of our volunteer workshops and events that we have, we also have a holiday party that we do for our homeowners every year as a way to stay engaged with them, because they are all across the county. We don't always have the opportunity to get together in one space. So outside of our membership meeting, the holiday party is another event that we do every year to stay engaged with our homeowners. Next slide. And so here's just a list of what our stewardship program encompasses. We do have the tripartite board model because we believe that is essential to making sure that governance is in the hands of the residents. And we're a membership organization. Some of the other things that we're proud of outside of our transfer and deed program is we established a scholarship program for our homeowners. We've had our first graduate school graduate last year, and then we have our first undergraduate graduate in May of this year, next slide. And then we understood that we needed to expand how we support community, because the need is there and the need for affordability is there outside of single family home ownership. So we had our preservation and rehab program to support those who are currently homeowners, and one part of it is the advising of families that need want to know what to do with their property. So that's things like helping them read their surveys under doing a comparative market analysis, so they can know, if they work to sell their property, how much would they be able to get for their families? And then there's the preservation and rehab part. So the preservation is the conversation. And then for those who would like to move forward with the rehab of their home, we provided a repair subsidy between 100 and \$150,000 to be able to get their home up to code and for

them to be able to preserve the equity that they have in their home, but then also not be burdened by the equity once the home is repaired. We saw that a lot here in Houston after Hurricane Harvey won, but all other natural disasters was that people would get their homes repaired a lot of times limited income families, and they wouldn't know that they were responsible for the increase in their property taxes. And Texas does not have income tax. Our property taxes are really high, and so this preservation and rehab program allows for homeowners to put the home in the CLT, maintain the equity that they already have, get money to repair the home, and then maintain the affordability after the home is repaired, next Slide, and then our affordable rental. We understood that everybody was not ready for home ownership, but we were struggling to find affordable rentals when we were even looking for a building to then to purchase for rentals. I mean, the condition that people were living in and what they were paying was, was not okay. And you kind of got to see the disparities and how we treat the idea of affordable housing, particularly in the idea of affordable rentals, and understanding that we know landlords, they have to maintain the property, you know, using the income, excuse me, the rents from the renters. And sometimes that's not enough, if you have high property taxes and things of that nature, but the deferred maintenance on a lot of affordable rentals was was disheartening, and so we wanted to make sure that we had a rental building that was clean and somewhere that people could be proud of that was centrally located, because we understood that everybody doesn't have a car, and even in Houston, where people probably should have one, because our public transportation is not that great, that we wanted to make sure it was near bus lines and make sure it was near job centers so that people could get back and forth fairly easily. Next slide, um, sorry, so, and this is some of the pictures from the rehab that I mentioned before. So as you can see, we did an extensive rehab to the home. And this particular picture right here, they had a bad addition done to the home, and were taken advantage of by contractors, and the home was cracking in half, where you see this separation between the two rooms there, it was literally cracking in half and separating. The two parts of the home were separating. So a lot of work was done. We put in over 25 new piers underneath the home, in the foundation to stabilize it, and also we were able to make the home more accessible, because the residents were in their 90s and in their 60s, they needed a home that was a little bit more accessible for them. Next slide, and here's the picture of our affordable rentals. So as you can see, quality rentals. They're not huge. They're about 700 square feet, two bedroom, one bath. But I came from the perspective of, if I wouldn't live there, then we shouldn't be making anybody else live there. So when I went in and my team went in, that was one of the things, like, could we live here? Is this a place that we would feel safe living in? Is this a place that we would want to invite our family and friends over? And once we found that place, we knew that this is something that we could feel comfortable renting to others next slide. And lastly, as Mikeya talked about the idea of economic development and commercial space, we took a step in that direction. We're not fully in the rental, I mean, in the retail space yet, but we did purchase this property, a community and business space in Third Ward. So all of the our rental building that you saw, and this building is in the historic Third Ward community of Houston, Texas. It is the home of the greats as such as Felicia Rashad and Debbie Allen and Beyonce, our historic residents of Third Ward. Also, George Floyd is a resident, a former resident, of Third Ward in the CUNY homes development. And so right now, Third Ward is a neighborhood that is gentrifying very, very quickly, and they are trying to erase the culture and the history from Third Ward, and so it was important for us to be able to be rooted here in this community, because by the time we did our housing programs, the prices of homes in this neighborhood were so expensive that even with our subsidy of up to \$150,000 for buyers to buy a home, that was still not enough To purchase a home in Third Ward, and because the neighborhood was essential to us being able to develop the CLT, it didn't make sense for us not to have some type of connection. Texas Southern University was also part of our founding with the research from Dr Jeffrey Lowe, and Texas Southern is in third ward. So we are rooted in this community just off our founding and we had no homeowners here. So we decided that our rental building and our community space, slash office space where I'm sitting in right now would be in the historic Third Ward. So it was really important for us to purchase this property, and so now it serves as the headquarters of Houston Community Land Trust. It is also a community space where we host

events as part of our expanding our stewardship to not only our homeowners, but to the community at large. And we're supporting small businesses here as well. So we have three office spaces, and we're supporting a local bakery who is baking out of our kitchen at the moment, until she can find a retail space. So this has been just a place for us to gather and truly be a true community land trust and engage, engage the surrounding neighborhood outside of just our homeowners. Next slide, and here's just a few of our events that we've had recently this year. So we had our quarterly art exhibition. We partnered with a local organization, prominent organization here, Project Row Houses, and then third world culture district. So our property sits in an established cultural district, so we're proud of that, and we partnered with them to highlight local artists. And we're doing a rotation. So our first rotation happened in April, and as you can see, here's some of the photos from the art exhibit. And then also, I mentioned we had a bakery that is baking out of our kitchen, and she does pop ups here from time to time, and she's up at the top, Miss Ella Russell of crumb Ville, HTX. And so this is how we're staying rooted and really promoting and stabilizing the culture. Third, with cultural district and Project Row Houses have been doing it for many years. I believe they're both over 30 years old. And so as a member of this community, we wanted to make sure that we were also contributing to and supporting the culture and history of the historic Third Ward. And this is just one way we were able to do that, through supporting artists. And if you can see behind me, one of the one of the artists ' ' pieces is behind me right now, and then also supporting small businesses and local businesses here in the community. So as Mikeya mentioned it, the CLT can be used for so many things. You know that one house is just as important as these bigger developments, but to have true community, we need a mix of all of it. So we were happy to do one house, and we have 201 homeowners in the community. Lander's four rental units in our community's. And so we look forward to thinking about other we can do, community Andry doryagmar and making sure that the culture and thrymryafahnsbergah, that is all for me.

Speaker 2 57:43

Well, thank you so much, Ashley, that was beautifully said. Mikeya, thank you so much. Your words. Your deck has inspired a lot of questions. So even though we're about to move into the panel discussion, I don't want to break anyone 's heart, but we have some beautiful questions. We will be able to get to that shortly after the panel discussion, some of those questions, and maybe that'll be a point that we will go back and say, Hey, these were really good questions, and maybe we should address it later in this series as well, too respectfully. So with that being said, we have a small window to power through some questions for both Ashley and Mikeya At this time, and my first question to you is, what is what responsibility do you feel personally when it when working in historically black communities. Ashley, I 'll let you go first.

Speaker 3 58:49

Well, one, personally, I'm not gonna walk around in the community and not be doing something for the community, because at the end of it all, I have to walk into the local coffee shop, I have to walk into the church, I have to walk into and I want to make sure that people understand that I'm here doing the work with them, and that we are open space to really figure out these ideas and to support the work that's already being done. We're not coming in saying we have all the answers. What we are saying is that we're here as a tool. We're here as a support. And I don't want to be shamed when I walk into walk around the community and say, Well, you know what they did over at Houston Community Land Trust, they were responsible for pushing Miss Johnson out of her home. That's not what we want. And also I feel there's an obligation, not just to working in black communities, but also there's an obligation because of what we just saw with arc of justice, we are responsible for holding up that legacy. Who am I to erode the hard work of people who live and died for the privilege to be able to preserve and protect communities. So I think going in, when you're going into communities, particularly black communities, understanding that we are standing on the shoulders, I know that's a cliché term, but we just saw it in the movie in arc of justice. This is what they wanted. This is what they were fighting for. And I don't

believe that I or anyone else has the right to erode that work. What we do have an obligation to do is to continue it.

Speaker 2 1:00:34

That was brilliant. Mikeya,

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:00:37

well said, Ashley and I, I totally concur, especially I get a two for one because I am part of my historically black community that I get to come back and do work in. It's one of the reasons why I took the job four and a half years ago, almost five years ago, is because I wanted to continue on the legacy, rich legacy and history of Rondo, knowing that we had tall shoulders to stand on, not only in the CLT movement, as we've seen through the arc of justice, but also through the hard work and legacy that so many had done in my community here in Rondo, but then seeing kind of the continued disappearance of taking of land or losing homes and businesses and so and boy do I love and also Damon, as you know, get my little hands smack once in a time, once in a While, with community members, because my elders definitely keep us honest to what's happening and wanting to know what we are doing and how we're doing that and so in lockstep with the work that we're doing, as well as telling me exactly all the things that they want. So I have a large even though we span two counties, I have such a weight and responsibility as to be supporting not just this black community of Rondo, but black people in the state of Minnesota and everywhere that we can. It's really heavy and weighty for me.

Speaker 2 1:02:22

Thank you so much. Well said. The next question is, where do you see the biggest opportunities for system changes in the next five to 10 years? Mikeya, I'll let you lead off.

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:02:37

I think some of the some of the biggest changes that that I want to see our biggest opportunities, I believe that we have, is for Community Land Trust in its original form and architecture really to really be more than just a model, but a movement for people across the globe, and that at within itself, the Community Land Trust is systems change, and doing it in a way that weaves together self determination and, you know, collective land rights, but then kind of collective forward movement on What's happening on top of that land and so again, I always like to say we have, we've lived the answers that we seek, and what we can do is continue to continue to advocate for and move forward Community Land Trust. I hope we have million, hundreds of millions and millions of acres of land that are specifically, you know, affording upward economic mobility for communities across the globe.

Speaker 2 1:03:52

Beautiful. Thank you. Ashley,

Speaker 3 1:03:54

yes, kind of in the same vein, I would like the opportunity, I think now, is to shift the way we view land ownership. I think black communities and other communities of color have always been known as communal, communal and not individualistic, and we've thrived more so when we are in a communal and collective mindset. And so I think there's an opportunity here because of where we are. And there's a housing crisis everywhere. It's not just in one you know, we always think about the coast and oh, what's happening in California or what's happening in New York City, but it's happening across the country, in the United States and globally. Mikey and I just got back from a trip in Brazil and hearing from our colleagues from around the world. This is not a Texas, California, New York, Minnesota problem. This is a global issue, and so because we are at a time, a pivotal point where everybody's feeling the tension of housing affordability and their communities being erased that it is the perfect time

for us to kind of shift our mindset and really be advocating at the local, state and national level for more collective ownership, and us really kind of shifting that mindset from that individualistic how much money can I make for my property mindset? Because we see it has not worked for us in our communities.

Speaker 2 1:05:28

Well, say it very well. Said, I'm going to throw out a very interesting question to make sure that everybody stays stimulated. And the question is, what gives you hope and what keeps you going while you're doing this work? Ashley,

Speaker 3 1:05:45

Mm, hmm, honestly, it is a story of our homeowners, and I'll just have a few quick ones. So one of our homeowners, we were at the holiday party. She said, Hey, I'm graduating with my associate's degree next week. And we said, Oh, that's fantastic. And she says, Oh, and by the way, I'm going to go get a bachelor's degree. She said, once I was able to buy a home, I felt, well, if I can do that, I can do anything. And so anything was going back to school. And so that launched our scholarship program. And as somebody who experienced homelessness for a good portion of my life as a youth, I understand how stabilizing your housing really does shift your mindset. It stabilizes you, not just physically, but mentally. And so that was an example of somebody who was able to stabilize their housing, and it opened up their mind to think about all the other things they could do. I also think about, unfortunately, we lost our first homeowner in January, and she had a transfer on death deed and was able to transfer that property to her heirs without having to go to probate, because that transfer on death deed was in place. And so I'm just thinking about how her family, in the midst of their grieving, didn't have to worry about where they were going to live, because they were living in the home with their mother, and they didn't have to think about, well, what well, what's going to happen, and we got to go to probate court and all of these things. And so what gives me hope is that we are creating, and have the ability to create programming, not just housing programming, but really those support services and the programming that really focus on economic mobility, social mobility, mental health, it's all encompassing. Housing and your community is attached to all those things. And so being able to kind of create bigger systems and bigger impact is what gives me hope every day to keep going, because this is hard work.

Speaker 2 1:07:38

I appreciate you saying that. I think a lot of the conversation is around new CLTs that are emerging, starting, just acquiring their first property and so forth. They're feeling what you're saying right now. It's it's real. So thank you for sharing that. Mikeya, what gives you hope and what keeps you going with this work,

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:08:04

what gives me hope is, I think there's almost over 100 participants on this call, and that gives me hope. What gives me hope is to have seen the arc of justice and the movement from where it was and where it's gone to and from a community standpoint, what I the emotional ties that I have to just particularly just my community, which is really great to see hope in my from my elders and hope from my the younger generation, that we have been able to shift mindsets around what's possible, and that, that is what continues to give me hope, and actually that is what keeps me working and going in this work, is that we do have, I've have such a feeling of deep responsibility to to all that have come before, before us, and all that are going to come after us. And so bridging that, being able to be in a position to bridge the gap between what was, but what's also possible is is, is really what keeps me moving and activated and fighting, being in with our other we just like we said, I just came back from that global learning exchange, and that keeps me fighting, knowing that there are so many of us together, collectively

across the globe that are all fighting for the same thing, and that is what continues to give me hope, and that is what keeps me going in this work, and that is what will keep me fight fighting. I want all of us to know that we are the resistance

Speaker 2 1:09:56

that was that was brilliant. I really appreciate that. For the sake of time, we have so many questions in the chat. I really want to have us get to Lisa a few of those questions in the last a few moments of this inaugural conference, virtual conference. So a series. I don't want to butcher anyone's name, so please forgive me. So I'm going to say s Freeman. This is really, this is really a great question. And so it literally s Freeman was prompted by hearing folks singing. Can you share how art, that being music, visual dance is incorporated in and promoting justice at your CLT,

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:10:48

and I'm sorry I should just go first. We are such expressive and people and so our resistance and our our fight is directly related to our ability to continue to be culturally immersed and aware, and so we do. That's why we have the Rondo African American arts and cultural district. It's about almost mile and half, close to two miles of things that we're it's a stretch of of our commercial corridor, but it's completely centered in and moving towards being centered in arts and culture and so working with so many other culture barriers in the community, whether it's visual arts we're doing on our building that we have, we just painted the face and like likeness of the first community land trust homeowner in the state of Minnesota, and she was a black woman who lived here in Rondo, and so that's the for one of the first murals that we've done the district. We are working with Halle Q Brown, which is one of the oldest service and original kind of culture bearers of the community, over 120 years old. And we work with them. And we're going to have, in this mile and a half stretch, we will have pictures of people and places of Rondo. We always say it's the people of Rondo, and so those flags, district flags, will be up and down the streets here, where people can come and get a piece of their history. The restaurant and bar that we have, it's all you know, soul food, you know, elevated New Orleans to also from and then working to one of the first redevelopments that we're going to do along our arts and cultural district is a cultural scent so that folks can it'll be a hub where people will be able to do art and visual and all of those things. So we are centering art in everything that we do it. We are telling the stories. We are keeping our stories alive. We are not backing down from the fact that we want everyone to celebrate the rich history of Rondo, and that that history happens to be really firmly rooted in the black movement.

Speaker 2 1:13:24

Beautiful, if you like Ashley, you can or I can go on to the next question,

Speaker 3 1:13:28

just really quickly, yep. So we're partnering with our cultural district, as I mentioned, third work, cultural district and Project Row Houses, one of our premier arts organizations, and really highlighting all of the artists that are currently in our community space, our black artists that represent the roots of this community. And so we are going to be doing different things around the art, and it's going to be rotating out so that we're able again to as part of looks at the resistance is making sure that the visuals of the community remain in community space.

Speaker 2 1:14:04

Brilliant. That was nice putting the cap on that, Ashley, I am going to jump to the next question, and I do want to mention this in respect to s Freeman, and I hope that what both you and Mikeya just stated answered this question. And the question, pretty much was, how do you nurture incredible belief? And I hope that hearing these things, and it was, and it also the continuation, was that the belief is to know, the belief to know and commit to something that might not yet exist, like owning a new piece of land,

acquiring a new building, raising large amounts of capital. I hope s Freeman that what Mikeya Ashley has said thus far nurtures incredible belief that you can actually do this. So I hope that that's the takeaway from that the next person is James Jennings, and the question is this, what what might be two to three lessons that can be shared with young people based on this history and experience? I think that's great. I'll let either one of you jump in.

Speaker 3 1:15:17

I'll say that young people have a role in in this work, we have partnered with several of the universities and then in Houston to bring them in to what we're doing, because the more that they know what's happening, the more that they know what the issues and challenges are, the more equipped they are to address them. So for instance, working with Prairie View A and M University and Rice University 's architecture schools, so their architects, and they're going to go out and do this work, and probably wouldn't even know what a community land trust was, or even some of the challenges, particularly our rice students, because of where their school is located, probably don't even realize what's happening in how neighborhoods are being erased, and so being able to bring them in, so when they're going out back into the world to work on these projects, they're mindful about what they're doing. What what are you putting on the ground? Who are you serving? What impact? What impact does your work have on vulnerable communities? And so I hope that the work that we've done with Texas Southern U of H Law Clinic also supports our transformed deaf deed program, that as they're taking it further into their work, they're thinking back to the work that they did with us and the people that we support and the communities that they reside in. These students reside in these communities, thinking about those, thinking about the actual community when they take it into their work, whether that be a big architecture firm, law firm, wherever, you don't forget about what you learned in the field with with Houston Community Land Trust.

Speaker 2 1:16:52

That's fantastic. Mikeya, did you want to chime in?

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:16:55

No, we do a lot of the same similar work with our universities here as well as our high schools here in the community.

Speaker 2 1:17:09

Beautiful. Thank you for that. Okay, so this is a pretty big question, so I want to make sure that this might be a continuation, and I or I hope, that via the presentation there might be, because this is the model, so it might need a little bit more time and clarity, and so don't want to again, butcher anyone 's name. So this is O Raheem. And the question is, could you please elaborate further on these the buyer initiated program, pre purchase and post close stewardship. And I want to be careful, because it's it's simple to articulate, but sometimes it takes a little bit of time. Is this something that we want to table and then circle back? Or would you ladies think you can summarize those things and answer this question from Oh Raheem,

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:18:03

my Ashley, what do you think I can take the buyer initiated and you post purchase, and you did such a great job of explaining your post purchase, stewardship, programming, and we kind of offer some of the same similar things. I think what we could do is, if you're comfortable with it. Maybe we can send out the list of things that are on there, and then I think you did a good job of explaining the buyer initiate. So yours is buyer driven program. Our Homebuyer initiated program, same where it is a it's a grant that we we pair with someone who is mortgage ready. And our pre purchase stewardship programming, we help people get ready to be paired with a home, you know, get ready for a mortgage so that they can

be paired with either our Homebuyer initiated program, or a new home that we built, or a rehab that we've acquired and put together. And so in our regular work, it's \$150,000 grant that we pair with someone's mortgage, and then they buy their they can so they have more buying power in the market that we're in, and then, and then we also pair that with an additional 60 to \$80,000 of rehab. So we want the first 10 years the useful life of HVAC, mechanical systems, roof, all of those things to be not to not be so onus on, on the homeowner So, and I believe Ashley's is the same program, and our neighborhood legacy and our right to return, we pair with up to \$200,000 and then you can blend that with other down payment assistance programs and all of that. And that's that's how we work. Those two programs.

Speaker 3 1:19:56

I'm not just adding quickly. What's really important about the pre, pre purchase stewardship is you don't want to have a CLT in homes. The people in the community, or your target audience is not ready for a mortgage to be able to buy set home. So just think about it as kind of like your Homebuyer education, all of your CLT education, and that post purchase is the supports that you give the homeowner so they're successful in home ownership. Because if you think about if you are a homeowner, you know that you don't the maintenance and the property taxes and the insurance and all of these things are not that easy to understand. And so how do you make sure that the new homeowners have that information so they're successful in home ownership? So pre help them be ready to buy the home. Post, make sure they can stay in the home successfully,

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:20:39
right?

Speaker 2 1:20:40

Brilliant. I love it. Last question and we're going to wrap this up. So thank you, everyone for sticking it out with us. The last question is from will Blake, is there a hand holding and or baby step process that AIDS other communities in developing their community land trust and cooperative housing initiatives. This is a huge question. Every conference I go to, whether it be in the United States or abroad. This is a really big question. So ladies, I'll let you take maybe a minute and a half a piece to answer. That is there hand holding? Well,

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:21:16

I tell you what, hopefully, Ashley, you don't mind. You know we're available. We're available for it to come out. Ashley has done consulting. We're looking at like, what kind of things can we do collectively together, but I've done some consulting as well. So we are available in there, there is there's hand there's some hand holding. There are some practical things, of course, that you need to know before you do. But I don't, I also don't want folks to, you know, get so caught up in the minutia of that that, you know, they it's difficult to start. So that's the that's the one thing that I want to say, Oh, yep, and Ben Harris is available from the CLT as well, International Community Land Trust Center as well, to support some of our global folks, or, you know, those kinds of things. Ashley, I'll leave it up to you.

Speaker 3 1:22:15

Yeah, yes, there's some hand holding, and there are baby steps. We're not asking people to jump full in and go 100 homes and yay, because that is really hard. It takes a lot of money. But I think the hand holding part that is really important is one that CLT education to all your stakeholders. That's where you start, because you you may believe in the CLT, and members of your community may believe in the CLT, but you want to have philanthropy, you want to have the city, you want to have and I'm saying that as somebody who had the city support no longer has it, because administration's change, and that's why it's really important to have everybody behind you, not just one stakeholder, but that education

component is really important in Getting people to learn about the CLT, see its benefits. Give them real life examples of CLTs around the world, not just in the country, let them know this is an international model, and there are people all over the world doing a great job with the community land trust. And I think getting people to buy in on the front end will ease your work on the back end. So the baby steps, yes, and that first step is educating people on the Community Land Trust and talk to as many stakeholders as you can speak to in your area.

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:23:27

I would also recommend starting with the argon of justice. Whenever we bring people, especially community members, together, we start there, and then we start going through the education, and we give a broader view of what it looks like nationally and internationally, and then how, you know, how people are supported, whether it's you know, our our government folks, our philanthropic folks, and then just people, even In the community, who are always willing to sometimes donate land and those kinds of things. So thank you, Ashley.

Speaker 2 1:24:06

Well, thank you so much. Ashley, thank you. Mikeya, thank you for the attendees. Ben, it's turned back over to you to close us out.

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:24:16

I think I'm closing us out. Or Ben, who's closing this out. Ben, go ahead. Ben, close this out.

Ben Harris 1:24:22

I'd be happy to I just want to say thank you to everybody. It's been great to have all of you here, and I'm not going to take up too much time or space. Just please feel free to fill out the exit survey that's about to pop up. Please feel free to register to any and all the upcoming sessions for the first ever global CLT virtual Summit. And thank you all very much. Have a great day wherever you are. And

Speaker 13 1:24:52

can you send us these questions? So absolutely, Yep,

Ben Harris 1:24:56

I'll send them all out. We'll

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:24:58

get an answer out for all the questions. And thank you. Thank you so much.

Ben Harris 1:25:02

Bye.

Mikeya Griffin | Rondo Community Land Trust 1:25:08

Is that are we back in the

Speaker 5 1:25:14

I think we're good to go,

Speaker 14 1:25:16

everybody.

Speaker 5 1:25:18

Bye. Bye.