



On July 30, 2026, the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) brought together artists, cultural workers, students, funders, organizers, allies, and systems changemakers for *A Better Future Is Possible*, a one-day convening in Berkeley, CA, exploring successor economic, social, labor, and creative models.

Held during CCI's 25th anniversary year, the gathering invited participants to look beyond systems that too often leave artists and communities without the resources, agency, and support they need to thrive—and to learn from people who are already building different systems.

Building a Better-Together Future

Throughout the day, 200 participants encountered artists, organizers, researchers, and other “world-builders” creating community-centered approaches to ownership, economic security, healthcare, housing, education, collective decision-making, and creative practice.

The convening was rooted in a belief that culturally-rooted economic systems that center community ownership and governance create the conditions for economic and cultural flourishing. The foundation of these successor systems are the relationships and trust that a community builds with each other towards a sense of vision and shared purpose. Convenings like *A Better Future Is Possible* offer important connection opportunities between economic system builders, those interested in building, allies, and funders. Relationships are powerful; they provide access to different models, hard-won lessons, safe places to share challenges, and they offer the support to persist in the face of many obstacles. . For people coming from across the United States, the convening brought

together existing relationships and saw new ones forged. People were so glad to be together; there is real hunger for this kind of people and planet-centered reimagining.

CCI President & CEO Angie Kim, in her opening remarks, invited participants to see themselves as world-builders: to be curious, make new connections, reaffirm existing relationships, and consider what they might build together.

That invitation shaped the day.

A Solidarity Fair (think science fair posters but for solidarity economy practitioners) featuring 41 presenters from across the U.S. provided an interactive and lively start to the event. Attendees learned more about the presenters and captured their personal reflections in their [EVENT ZINE](#). Through interactive sessions, workshops, shared meals, and informal



conversations, participants exchanged ideas and resources, discovered new models, and made connections across sectors and geographies. Attendee feedback underscored the importance of those relationships, with strengthened partnerships emerging as one of the gathering's most meaningful outcomes.

Another highlight for attendees was the intergenerational nature of the convening. Through the [Youth Research Council](#) programs at Johns Hopkins University and George Mason University and [Next System Studies](#) Teach-In program, 14 students participated in the event, bringing fresh perspectives and inquisitive energy to the day.

From Possibility to Practice

A Better Future Is Possible was designed not simply as a space to imagine alternatives, but as an opportunity to practice what building them requires. And those futures are not possible without the deep involvement of artists and culture-bearers.

The work represented at the convening reflected a wide range of approaches, but shared a common premise: communities should have greater power to shape the systems, resources, and decisions that affect their lives. Local experimentation, collective ownership, shared stewardship, and community-led models can offer pathways toward greater resilience and self-determination.

At the same time, localized efforts cannot thrive in isolation. Connections across communities, disciplines, and geographies allow people to exchange knowledge, share tools and resources, learn from one another's experiments, and recognize that their work is part of something larger.

This was reflected in a comment by Nia Umoja, Creative Director and Lead Organizer at the Cooperative Community of New West Jackson. Nia shares, *"people exchanged ideas, discovered new models, shared resources, and found collaborators. Conversations continued long after formal sessions ended."*

It was also beautifully expressed in [this write-up from Next System Studios](#), where a participant shared, *"Community and that energy means everything when it comes to making things happen to actually help people."*



What Comes Next

The convening ended on July 30, but the work was never intended to end there.

Participants were encouraged to carry the relationships and ideas from the gathering forward: to follow up with a new collaborator, share a resource, make an introduction, support an emerging model, or find a way to participate more deeply in efforts already underway.

For CCI, the convening reflected a broader commitment to supporting artists and creative communities not only within existing systems, but also in imagining and building better ones.

A better future requires more than believing it is possible.

It requires us to make it real.

With Appreciation

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