

Growing Democracy PODCAST

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Ashley (Co-Host): Hi, I'm Ashley Nickels.

Casey (Host): And I'm Casey Boyd-Swan.

Ashley (Co-Host): We're podcasting from Northeast Ohio. This is the Growing Democracy Podcast, a space for citizens, experts, and advocates to create community together. Each week, we invite a guest to talk about civic engagement, governance, and how to grow our democracy.

Casey (Host): This episode is part of our series, Race and Democracy in Northeast Ohio, a collaboration with the School of Peace and Conflict Studies and the Center for Pan African Culture. The project includes a 10 podcast episode series focused specifically on the intersections of race and democracy in Northeast Ohio. We're also planning community workshops on the topic of race and democracy and developing online curricular materials such as activities, toolkits and concept pages. This series is made possible with funding from Mark Lewine and the John Gray Paynther Program. Check out our website to learn more about our upcoming events and stay up to date on new content. You can find us at www.growingdemocracyoh.org. And this is my first time hosting an episode with you, Anuj. And this was a great episode. You brought me a fellow theater nerd.

Anuj (Co-host): Well, I'm glad to be of help. But you know, again, Katie is somebody I know. And again, community theater is one of the many hats she wears and she is a very, very inspiring and well admired member of the community. And she has connections with almost everyone. She's very, as you saw, well connected with the immigrant refugee communities, too. She engages them. When I think of inclusion and diversity, a lot of the work that Katie does is right in there.

Casey (Host): Yeah. And it's interesting because, you know, I think on the national stage, Cleveland gets a lot of attention in the Northeast Ohio area and Akron gets relatively little outside of any association with LeBron James, but there's so much more going on in Akron than I think most people know. And Katie was really able to speak to a lot of that.

Anuj (Co-host): Yeah. Yeah. And I think it's very positive that there is a lot of investment within Akron and even neighborhoods like North Hill. I think it speaks a little bit about how there is more and more capital and investment that is being brought in just by the influx of refugee and immigrant communities. And I always felt, these are the kind of stories that would make a mark, but considering these are local, sort of micro stories, they don't get as much attention. There's always gonna be political division, polarization around the topics of immigration. I get that.

However, if you look at places like North Hill and Akron, there are a lot of positive stories. There are a lot of positive relations being created, a lot of positive networks being created. And Katie, I think, represents that very, very well.

Casey (Host): She absolutely does. So joining us today is Katie Beck. And Katie is a very well-known and admired young community leader in Akron. She's worked in community development, community organizing and is a pioneer in the local community theater scene. She's the co-artistic director of Gum Dip Theater and former executive director of North Akron Community Development Corporation. Her awards include Akron Chamber's 30 For the Future Award in 2019, Arts Alive Outstanding Artists and Theater Award in 2018 and Knight Foundation Arts' Challenge Awards. So thanks so much for joining us today.

Casey (Host): Alright. So we are so glad to have you with us today, Katie, and as we kind of start off all of our podcast episodes, can you tell us a little bit about yourself? What's your story and how would you describe your journey so far?

Katie Beck: Sure. Thank you so much for having me. So I was born and raised in Akron, Ohio. I am the granddaughter of a rubber worker and the daughter of a marketing entrepreneur. So I have sort of three generations of this entrepreneurial spirit within my family that has always driven me. I went to St. Vincent-St. Mary High School, which is known as LeBron James' high school, but I like to make that connection that there's more than one champion that went there. And then I went to Allegheny College in Northwestern Pennsylvania where I got my degree in theater and community and justice studies, which is an intersection of performing arts and community organizing. Originally when I left Akron, I thought that I would never come back, which I think is a common hometown teenager kind of feeling. But once I discovered this process of community-based theater where it's co-creating with specific communities, I decided that I wanted to come back home and try that process here. So I moved back to Akron in 2014 and moved back to the neighborhood of North Hill, which is one of the most racially diverse and socioeconomically mixed neighborhoods in the country, and just fell in love with the community and started doing some of my own organizing and theater producing shortly after I moved back.

Anuj (Co-host): Well, thank you, Katie. I am glad that you brought up your own life as a local in Akron specifically in North Hill because I wanted to ask you, since you were a local in the Akron area and you grew up there, you represent generations of Akronites there. As you know, Akron has gone through a lot of changes, right? Economic changes, demographic changes in the last few decades and so on. So I was just wondering if you could speak a little about the diversity and these changes you see in Akron as somebody who grew up in Akron. As an adult you see these changes today, right? I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about that.

Katie Beck: Yeah. It's a pretty interesting perspective to be a boomerang as they call it. Growing up in Akron I grew up, part of my adolescence in Firestone Park, and

the other part in South Akron. So why I make that distinction specifically is, I sort of lived in two different houses, which was separated by a redline on Archwood Avenue. So I saw this direct change in my living situation from when I was younger to being in high school in South Akron. So I think that's the first noteworthy thing for me was that I lived in the same couple mile radius growing up, but I saw this huge infrastructure difference, economic disparity difference, just in how that area of Akron works. And of course, like many other urban areas, redlining was a common practice.

Casey (Host): Katie, I wonder, could you just for our listeners real quickly explain what redlining is? Because I think a lot of people don't understand that concept.

Katie Beck: Sure, yeah. I will do my best. And then y'all can add in if I don't say everything correctly. So redlining was the process of defining boundaries in cities when it came to urban planning where, it would distinguish if certain populations of people could live in an area. And it was obviously a very racist practice and it still affects housing and the neighborhood makeup of cities today. So Akron did have very distinct redlining and you can still see the differences even now, decades later. Yeah. So I know specifically in South Akron with Firestone park, it was a company town that was literally designed and built by Harvey Firestone himself because his factory was in the area. And so he built the housing and the schools and the churches to help nurture and cultivate his workers' lives.

Katie Beck: Because at the time there was a lot of labor development happening in terms of the eight-hour workday and strikes and all of that. So he was really trying to invest in the quality of life for his workers. And so, as many of us are aware, starting in the 1980s, there was this flight of the rubber industry from Akron, like so many other rust belt cities. So when those companies left, people were left without jobs, they were left without income in order to pay for these homes in these neighborhoods. And they sort of lost a sense of pride because so much of their identity and their livelihood was based on this identity with the rubber industry. So I say all of that as context to say that I grew up in the nineties in Firestone Park and it was right at the cusp of when that was happening.

Katie Beck: And I just remember there being this sort of deflated air around living in that area and living in Akron. And I think I was too young to fully understand the cultural context at the time, but looking back, I remember just sensing this huge loss in the community without fully understanding it. So growing up it was interesting because it just felt like the city didn't have any energy or any drive and even downtown was not what it is now. It was kind of empty and dead. So growing up here, I just didn't see potential in it and I just was like, I need to get out of here. And I'm gonna move to New York or Chicago and become an actor. But that didn't happen. Thank goodness.

Katie Beck: So then yeah, when I went to a college in a very small town it was 13,000, which is smaller than the North Hill neighborhood in Akron. And seeing that difference with this more rural culture was really interesting as well, way more conservative in that area. It was a huge culture shock for me. And so then

coming back to Akron, there was just way more momentum happening with foundations investing more in public space and the arts and downtown having a lot of movement in terms of new businesses and rebuilding the infrastructure. So I feel very fortunate of the time that I came back during because I think it was around the same 2014 or 2015 where we got a new mayor. We had the same mayor for like 30 something years. So there's just a lot of fresh energy and momentum happening in Akron that I'm very grateful to have sort of joined the wave of what's been happening in our city.

Casey (Host):

Definitely. I mean, and you alluded to a little earlier that, like other rust belt, quote-unquote, cities like Akron went through a period of decline. Cleveland similarly faced that period of decline, Pittsburgh too. But they all kind of took different trajectories to rebuilding or rebranding or rediscovering their identity in your experience. How did this Akron, or a neighborhood just like North Hill, make sense of these changes and come to this point where they've kind of rediscovered their identity as a city?

Katie Beck:

That's a very interesting question. I think the neighborhoods differ in that progress. So for example, with Firestone Park where I grew up, there's still this old guard that's there, that's very resistant to change because the neighborhood has been just like this older population for so long. Whereas North Hill, there's been an influx of refugees and immigrants being resettled in the neighborhood. There's always been that history of European immigrants resettling here and even a shift in the population with urban renewal and the destruction of a predominantly Black neighborhood next to downtown. There's all these external factors that have directly affected North Hill. And in a lot of ways the neighborhood has always been in some sort of transformation, whether that's good or bad. So I think when there was the biggest influx of refugees coming started in 2007 with Nepali speaking Vietnamese refugees.

Katie Beck:

And so that was sort of the reinvigoration of new populations coming into the neighborhood. And yeah, specifically with new folks coming into a neighborhood, they have an entrepreneurial spirit. So they're opening businesses, they're wanting to buy homes, they have young families that are going to the schools. Just seeing this neighborhood that was once identified as Italian and Polish and Irish, of immigrants who helped to build the infrastructure of the city, like the canal and the roads, literally, and them also working for the rubber factories. And seeing this transformation of these newer populations now coming in from Southeast Asia and Central Africa and the Middle East has been really interesting because they're bringing in their own changes. And what's kind of a cool fact is that North Hill was the first Akron neighborhood to have a population increase in the last few decades. So even that in and of itself is important because the city has been trying to increase the population now for a while. So like just with the population increase with these changes and cultural identity and economic opportunity, I think that that reinventing of community identity has happened organically and has happened whether longstanding residents wanted it to or not. Whereas these other neighborhoods where

there's not as many diverse populations, they're not really forced to change, literally.

Casey (Host): So if I'm hearing you correctly, I'm just thinking of Shaker Heights, where there's some kind of intentionality behind maintaining some diversity. That there is a sense of pride up there that, that the residents of Shake Heights like to say, we're very diverse. But it sounds to me like in Akron and at least in some neighborhoods that it was this organic development of diversity that came about. What do you think was the foundation for that? What was it about Akron or those specific neighborhoods that had that kind of organically evolve?

Katie Beck: Well I guess if we're talking about like, over a hundred years ago, the rubber industry was like the biggest attraction for immigrants coming to the city. And then on top of that, like building the canal and the roads, they hired mostly Irish for that kind of thing. And then the other asset that we have in the North Hill neighborhood is the International Institute of Akron. They've been around for over a hundred years and their home has always been North Hill. So I think their presence and their advocacy and great work has continued to support this resettling of former refugees and immigrants in the area. So because of their intentionality in wanting to support these populations they have really invested in the neighborhood by making these really meaningful connections and providing respite for folks coming in.

Anuj (Co-host): Yeah. I want to mention, especially with the point about the International Institute, I think Katie's very correct. At least in the beginning, in the 2008 to 2010 period, when we were bringing in new refugees, you can see all the settlements sort of around International Institute because you know, refugees needed all the resources they could get. And they were housed very close to International Institute because they didn't have any means of public transportation. They didn't have any cars, at least not at that point. So you could still see a lot of sort of, I shouldn't say encampment, but a lot of the initial housing was still around International Institute. Which is very interesting.

Katie Beck: Oh, I was just going to say there was an excess of housing stock around that time as well because of the population loss from the rubber industry. So I think that's important to know that there was potential here for new neighbors coming in.

Casey (Host): In one way you could say, there's the destruction, that people are leaving. There's the out migration, which really did set up a space for people to move in with the idea that there was a pretty significant system of support. So, yeah. No, that's very interesting. Thank you.

Anuj (Co-host): Alright. So Katie, I don't know if you remember this, but in 2018, I think it was October, we had this community dialogue in Patterson Park, I believe. And you were there and there there's this thing you said, which has stayed with me after all these years. Because I think we were talking about what diversity looks like in North Hill, in Akron. Different populations coexisting together. And you said, and I'm paraphrasing a little bit, we have all this diversity that we talk about in

Akron, but they all happen to be contained in silos. And I think you were sort of referring to some kind of tension, maybe some kind of detachment within communities. Right. So I was wondering, has that changed or is it still continuing today?

Katie Beck: Yeah, I mean, I think siloing is natural for people, especially when there are cultural and linguistic factors to consider in the differences of people. So specifically, if you only speak one or two certain languages, and they're not another language that other people speak from other communities then it already makes it harder to build a connection. On top of, specifically for immigrants coming to the US and still learning how things work and how to navigate the system, there is comfort in being with your own community and more discomfort in trying to build connections outside of that. So I think humans naturally are attracted by their own communities or communities that they can find commonalities with. So I think it's never an intentional thing with people, but it's been happening naturally.

Katie Beck: And then even, you know, within American born communities, there is a divide with white and Black Americans in terms of culture and history and all of these factors that have affected our political, economic and social standing in society. So I think all of these different factors coming in, externally, internally with people, it really divides, even psychologically, people to not interact as much. So yes, it's still happening, but I would like to think that with some of the work I've done, with some of the work that we've done, Anuj, with North Hill CDC, there has been more of an effort to build spaces that are welcoming to everyone and cultivate an opportunity to build relationships with different people. Because in a lot of ways when I first started kind of getting to know this community, I had to meet people in order to know what things were happening with those communities.

Katie Beck: There weren't on any platform or media site that I was aware of. So I had to literally meet people to find the route to meet them. But I think there is a lot more effort now with community development corporations and neighborhoods. And then also with artists, because I will always advocate for artists as well in trying to curate happenings that are supportive of these cross-cultural relationships. And for me specifically, I find that it's easiest or most fun to do that through the arts and story sharing. Because I think we can only really get to know people who are different from us by hearing their personal experiences and finding the commonalities that way.

Casey (Host): So I'm curious, we talk a lot about grassroots democracy on the show. And I'm curious about what you think is a useful or necessary or needed tool that could kind of promote some democracy for the residents of North Hill or Akron. Is it that community organizations can be the most flexible to respond to some of these needs of these residents, or is there also some more structural, systemic change that could happen on the part of government? Or is it something kind of in between that would work best to support residents of North Hill?

Katie Beck: Yeah, I think I see two ways of how that can happen. One thing that I've noticed since the pandemic started and it really started happening even before the pandemic, but really in the last few years, is this effort to create collectives or networks that are organized to have a constant feedback loop with organizations who are either connected in services or have similarities in the populations they're serving. And I've really enjoyed seeing that because I've seen it with entrepreneurial efforts from the city of Akron. We have a Greater Akron immigrant and refugee service provider network now that has been taking shape for the last few years. I've seen several other versions of that. And I think that's really important because nonprofits have to function within capitalism. There is always this drive as an individual organization to raise enough money and do enough work.

Katie Beck: And so that can easily disconnect them from what other people are doing in the city. So now I'm really happy to see more of these systems or larger collectives that are creating more of a cohesive system and network to better inform and support, so that way we aren't duplicating services. And then we're also working together strategically for the purpose of justice and advocacy in our communities. So I think from a high level, I'm really enjoying seeing that. And also within all of that, community development corporations are still new for Akron. They've been, they've been very successful in Cleveland the last 30, 40 years, but Akron's still like in the first 10 years of our development with them. But CDCs specifically are centered in that intersection of the social, the cultural, the political, the economic, the grassroots fabrics of a community.

Katie Beck: And so having organizations like that, that are making informed decisions with and for neighbors and residents is really important to building a healthy democracy within the neighborhood. So then on the other side of that, because I have many hats that I wear and that I enjoy speaking in and thinking about. So on the other side of that, I think from a personal level in building democracy with residents, my interest is in using theater as a vehicle for people to practice empathy and to even build their own sense of self confidence when it comes to being in the world as themselves. So I really think that theater and story circles are an opportunity to practice factual and imaginary versions of oneself. And that is so important in understanding and identifying who we are as people, because we have to have the space of processing traumatic or negative events that have happened to us and celebrating what has been good and what we love about our communities. And doing that in a space where you're working on an end product, you're working on this thing that will culminate in a catharsis, which is one of the original intents of theater, to have a catharsis and to purge ourselves of these emotions that we've been holding on inside of us.

Katie Beck: So I think having that process, whether people are part of a story circle and are sharing things about their lives, or we have artists who are creating a script and practicing it, or audience members who come to the final performance, there is this very beautiful space of acknowledging and reflecting on the woes of society and envisioning the future that we want to see in a space that's not really combative or aggressive. What I love about art is you can respond to the art and

have these hard conversations without there being accusatory interactions. Or it's helpful because it can also invite people in who wouldn't normally be a part of that discussion because as y'all have probably experienced, you can hold a talk about this or that, injustice, but the people that show up are not necessarily the people who need to have that conversation. So I think art, specifically in the active form of theater, there is that space for that dialogue to happen safely and productively.

Anuj (Co-host): Yeah. I love that perspective on re-imagination in a safe space. I think we all need a whole lot more of that in a lot of different spaces. So, alright. Speaking of art and theater, I see you as somebody whose passion lies in community theater and social justice. I just wanted to give you this space so you can talk about some of the incredible projects that you have organized in Akron. Especially in relation to community theater, representation of artists, as well as social justice.

Katie Beck: Sure. Thank you. Gum Dip Theater is our company that is co-owned by myself and my partner Neema Bal, who is a Bhutanese and Nepali theater artist who is really focused on movement based work. So we've spent six or seven years now creating community based theater, which is a process that uses story circles and personal interviews and historical research to create a play with the community, for the community and about the community. So the initial few years of Gum Dip's work was really focused just on coming into the community and learning about them and building relationships and then creating a play. But more recently with the pandemic and the changes we've had to make logistically because it's still hard to gather larger groups of people in an intimate space doing theater work, which is right in each other's faces. So, it's been harder.

Katie Beck: In our adaption, at the heart, we're still focused on creating plays that highlight and center marginalized voices, but our process has really integrated more artistic development within that community organizing as well. So, this last year we were working on a first rendering of a project called Brokers Without Borders, which is a multiethnic immigrant ensemble that has explored the role of the culture broker or someone who serves as a bridge between their community and their families and navigating the US system. So we had three young artists and when I say young they're on their twenties, they're not necessarily like adolescence. One is Vietnamese-Nepali. One is Karen, which is an ethnic minority of Myanmar and one is Congolese, and they each are very strong personalities and have been advocates and leaders in their community for many years now.

Katie Beck: And so we worked through a devised process to create this first draft of what will be a full production. From July to November, we were just in the process with them. We would have story circles, we would do free writes about their experiences of language differences and difficult situations they've had to navigate for their families. And then we would also do some theater training and learning how our bodies and voices and imaginations can activate and create these pieces. And so we really grew a strong bond through that process to create this production that we premiered in November. And so for us as a

company, no work is ever complete. And earlier in the year we had applied and then received a Knight Arts Challenge Grant of \$60,000 to continue the development of this work.

Katie Beck: I'm really excited about that because that's a huge investment for us to really take the time that we need to work with the artists. Not only on developing the narrative structure and what the performance looks like, but also giving them time to invest in themselves for developing their own skills. So that's a cool project because we're going to be doing that through next year. And already the response that we've had has been interesting because an audience member told me that they were pushed out of complacency when they saw their performance because they're thinking around refugees and speaking with people who are former refugees and what they go through. A lot of audience members described having this experience of being kind of gently slapped in the face. Not in any bad way. Just like, oh, I never realized I was doing this kind of thing.

Katie Beck: So we really liked that response. And now we want to build more on how we can have this conversation in a more nuanced and detailed way because I think that's an important one, especially for how they all identify. And then the other project that we've been working on for going on our third year now is called, Three Countries: One Mother, and it is a solo performance based on the Bhutanese-Nepali history and culture and specifically highlighting the Tamang tribe. So we also received a Knight Arts Challenge Grant at the end of 2019 to do this project. So the pandemic really threw off all of our original plans of the piece. We really wanted to be this huge like community play that everyone was involved in and had all these instruments and dancing, but with the pandemic we had to majorly pivot.

Katie Beck: So now it's a solo performance with Neema Bal and every year from 2020 to 2021 to now we've done something and then torn it apart and then redid it again. So it's been a really interesting process because it's also very personal because it's inspired from Neema's family story. It's inspired by stories we've gotten from the community about that history of having to leave Bhutan and then having to leave Nepal to come to the US. We've been exploring the unique spirituality of the Tamang tribe, which is kind of a combination of indigenous shamanism and Buddhism. And just seeing how those spiritual influences affect their outlook on life, in the greater framework of this refugee history. So it's going to be an immersive experience. We're going to have smaller audiences and it's gonna feel like you're in someone's home. So I'm really excited because it's a different form than we've taken with our work before.

Casey (Host): Yeah. I'm really curious because as you know, we've done for the Growing Democracy Project, many community-based projects or workshops or events. But as somebody who's also got a theater background, I know how hard it is to get people involved when they kind of aren't necessarily from a theater background themselves. So how is your approach to community in such a way,

but that you can pull them into engaging with these events, because that seems like it would be quite a challenge.

Katie Beck: Yeah, that's a very theater question. I appreciate that. Because we have these rituals, right? Like if you show up on time, you're late. All these things that are very strict. So I'm super adaptable and flexible, that's just the bottom line with community. Like everyone's coming from different places. They're juggling jobs and families and all of these expectations. I think the biggest thing with community based theater is having that flexibility. Sometimes rehearsal starts an hour late and sometimes people cancel last minute and it sometimes drives me crazy, but I also have to be adaptable to understand that not everyone has the capacity. Or even the experience and following kind of the rituals or the guidelines of theater. We're always giving rides to people.

Katie Beck: That's always the thing I say too, that it's not a community based theater play if you're not giving someone a ride, there's always transportation. And also I've had to embrace this mindset of the final performance isn't ever going to be perfect, but as long as the artists or the people involved feel good about it and are proud of what we're doing. And that's what matters. Artists can be really perfectionist or really over-detailed about or exaggerating things about what has to be, what it is. And for us it's like, as long as we're putting in the effort that we have with the people and what they're willing to give them that, we're happy with that. Because the process is more important than the product in the end. Of course audience is a major factor in it all, but like the process with the artist is what's important to us.

Anuj (Co-host): Alright. I have one more question. So obviously I know Katie personally, I've worked with her and Katie is very well admired in the community. I see you as an inspirational figure because you wear so many hats. It's not just about community theater. It's also by community development, community organizing. I remember a few years ago when Exchange House used to be this hub of energy, almost like this activism energy that Katie used to organize. So if we have young listeners listening and trying to be the future Katie Beck, even though they might not do exactly everything you do, what would you advise them? Or what, what would you recommend? How would you guide them in moving forward in being as inclusive, inspirational and as representative as you have been?

Katie Beck: I thank you. That's very flattering. Everything you just said. I think for me, I really went through this time in college of self-doubt and questioning and you know, all these existential thoughts, which I think is like a common college experience. That's what it's for. Just realizing how crazy and kind of horrible the world is sometimes. Because there's just a lot of realities that we can't change personally. And so I was only comforted by the fact that I could affect or influence what's around me. There's this larger global perspective that very few can really influence. And then there's even a statewide or regional circle that is still kind of far. But I was really grounded in the idea of okay, I can't do anything

about these huge climate change issues or political scandals, but I can invest in my corner of the world and in my neighborhood.

Katie Beck: And I think that mindset really helped me come to terms with the reality of the world and the potential of what we have and understanding that building personal relationships is so much of what life is supposed to be about in- person, personal relationships. Like doing weird things together, having fun, not just these online presences, I think that's so important for a healthy community. I guess my first sort of point of advice would be to find that corner of the world that you want to invest in and know that your investment is making an impact in some way. The second part for me, which I'm now learning, is establishing self-care and sort of maintaining capacity and expectations. I think I've always been driven by my ambition coming from where I came from and wanting to do something to feel like I'm contributing something good to the world, but in building that personality trait and the work that I was doing, I just left behind like any sense of taking care of self.

Katie Beck: And part of that is like rules that I established for myself as a child, which is how a lot of people are affected psychologically as adults. What happened to you in your childhood and how you had to set boundaries for yourself affects you now. I've been dealing with that because even when the pandemic started, I feel like I was working even more than before because I was so taken aback by how much this was affecting every member in every corner of the community. So I think it's just so important now to establish, especially establishing boundaries. I think the other part of community work and community organizing work is the line between work and personal is very blurred. And in the last five years or really, I've been living in this neighborhood like eight years, but like in the last five years of working in community development, organizing in the neighborhood, I've had people knock on my front door when they're in distress or I've had these things come up that are really tragic or are challenging to see because I know these people personally.

Katie Beck: So maintaining that sense of self-care and even drawing those boundaries when you need to kinda take a step, I think is really important because community organizers get burned out really easily because it's so much about being with people and taking the time to know them and understand them. You can build social capacity over time, but it comes at a cost, too, depending on how you're treating yourself. So yeah. I think those are the two biggest points for me about that.

Casey (Host): Well I just want to say, theater can be an extremely competitive environment but at the same time, I don't know that I've ever created the kinds of bonds outside of that environment as I did within it. And for you to take this as a tool to create those bonds and facilitate creating those bonds among community members is really powerful. So I just want to thank you for sharing your journey with us.

Katie Beck: Yeah. I always say that if you can do theater, then you can do anything in life. Because you learn working with all people, working with all personalities, making stuff up as you go, setting deadlines. All of these things, public speaking, collaboration, all of that stuff is so important in any aspect of life. So I wouldn't have been able to do what I did in community development without those skills.

Casey (Host): Thank you for joining us. We really appreciate having you on.

Anuj (Co-host): Yeah. Thank you. Was wonderful. Yeah.

Katie Beck: Thank you for having me.

Anuj (Co-host): Thanks for listening to the growing democracy podcast. I'm Anuj and my Co-host this week was Casey. Our podcast is edited by Gheramy Deremy at Golden Ox Studio in Cleveland, Ohio. This series is supported by Mark Lewine and the John Gray Panyther Program. If you like our show and want to know more, check our website, www.growingdemocracyoh.org. If you want to support the podcast, as well as get access to behind the scenes content, live chat and swag, featuring designs by Donuts and Coffee, head over to patreon.com/growingdemocracyoh. Join us next time, when we continue this conversation about race and democracy.