

Raye Winch :

Welcome to Amplifying Voices: People Sparking Change. Today we are speaking with Natalie Brewster Nguyen, who is an activist, an artist, a social justice trainer, and an anti-capitalist developer. Thanks so much for being with us today.

Natalie Brewster Nguyen:

Thanks so much for having me.

Raye:

Natalie, what are you the most excited about right now?

Natalie:

I'm really, really excited, not just in building affordable housing, but being in a position to try to rethink the housing model altogether. I really deeply believe in shared resources and we actually need a lot less space. One shared resource can serve a lot of people. I really want to start a development company with that as a focus. I'm also interested in thinking about the development of affordable housing and tiny homes projects for specific communities--trying to rethink the way that we do renting. So that renting is not just something where you're throwing money away forever, but that you're building some equity that you can take away with you when you move on.

Raye:

And you're actually going about making some developments now, what does that look like?

Natalie:

So, right now I was able to acquire this Splinter Collective Art Studio Warehouse, which is a historic warehouse that's been in the hands of artists since the sixties. We're taking this resource and trying to make it available to the community--as an event space, for fundraisers. I'd like to take that model and continue to build that, to sort of create these community centers that can anchor spaces and have there be the real genuine shared resource for the community. But as someone who has always valued community over currency by a lot, it was interesting to have to learn how to really make the money happen and how to make a space like this thrive.

But I was able to do it. And in part I was able to do it because I've invested a lot in my communities over a really long time. And so I was able to pull money from multiple places, to get zero interest loans from people who really believed in the vision of what I was doing. And, you know, hustle hard as well. I really think that we can continue to replicate that model and that it doesn't have to be huge investors with lots of money. It can be a pool of us who are investing smaller amounts of money to make these spaces happen. Because once you have a commercial space, it starts to generate its own income. And it can be something that really

supports itself. It's just getting over those hurdles of having a little bit of money to like, make something happen in the first place. The group of people that I was working at when working on this project. But, you know, we're kind of like, okay, we pulled this amount of money and it goes to this project now. And then as soon as we can, we pull it out and it goes into the next project. And we kind of have this like rolling, collective chunk of down payment or financing that we can use.

Raye:

I know you're also working on Justice Movement. Could you share a little bit about that project?

Natalie:

Sure. So I've been an anti-racist Diversity, Equity, Inclusion trainer for 20 something years. We have an allyship course that's a month long course and 12 hours. And then we have a three months peer space holder course, where we're trying to really build people's confidence and comfort in discussing these and dealing with a lot of the emotional stuff that comes along with it. And we do a lot of really intimate sharing and community building along the way so you have a cohort of people that supports you.

Raye:

You've been an activist for a long time. I wonder what advice you have for other artists and activists?

Natalie:

Biggest piece I have is don't fall victim to urgency to have some patience, to listen to the voices that might be slower to speak up or let something develop organically and know that there is enough time. Sometimes things are really urgent and we need to be ready to push really hard when that happens. But the rest of the time, you know, have that patient so that we don't burn out. And so that we don't run out of resources and run out of energy.

Raye:

How can people support you in your work?

Natalie:

Well, there's a number of different ways. I would really encourage everybody who has an interest to come join us for a justice movement. Course. We also offer consulting for corporations and community organizations and a sort of social justice overhaul justice movement.org is our website. And you can join our courses there. They're really powerful. And they've been just really wonderful to be doing this whole year. I really believe in shared resources. So I also welcome you to contact me, to utilize this space, to elevate your own stuff and just keep activating spaces together. And if you're interested in the kind of affordable

housing community centered development that I'm working on, you can contact me about investing in community affordable housing, an arts center development projects. One project is a tiny homes project for trans women of color that is founded by, uh, Monica Jones, a black trans activist, and it's called the Outlaw project. We are purchasing land in Tucson and we'll be starting those tiny homes. We have a GoFundMe going on. You can find me on social media, Natalie Brewster Nguyen, on all the things. You can also find the Outlaw project and I can direct you to our GoFundMe and other things like that.

Raye:

Thanks so much for being here today.

Natalie:

It's been my pleasure.