Inequality and Democracy Research Fellowship Program

**L.A. CO-OP LAB**

not business as usual.

**Name of research supervisor at organization:** Gilda Haas

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**Title of research project:** Food Sector Incubation Project

**Scope of research:**
The L.A. Co-op Lab has been training, teaching, and coaching emerging worker cooperatives in L.A. for the past two years. One of the sectors most accessible to our target communities (i.e. working class communities of color) and where they have the most experience and skill is the food sector.

The purpose of this research project is to inform and jump-start the design of a food sector incubation strategy that will allow us to generate some economies of scale and knowledge in this area. Examples of successful incubation strategies in the worker co-op world include the Arizmendi Bakeries in the Bay Area and the co-ops incubated by the Baltimore Roundtable for Economic Democracy.

**Location of research and other activities:**
The L.A. Co-op Lab works out of and meets at a co-working space in Koreatown (Ethos Society). However, much of our work takes place in the workshops and classes and coaching events that we do in the community (largely East and South L.A.) and the researcher is welcome to accompany us and play a role in those domains.

A big advantage of the L.A. Co-op Lab as a small local collective (for the researcher) is that we are trusted members of a very diverse national peer network of worker co-op developers which is an amazing resource of information and relationships.

**Research methods to be used:**
- Interviews with selected co-op incubation projects around the country
- Survey of industry journals and other sources to derive best practices for developing small scale enterprises in the food industry
- Some best practices research on business incubation for this target population (and if possible, in the food sector)
**Deliverables:**
A report of the above that includes recommendations/alternatives for a preliminary L.A. Co-op Lab food sector incubation strategy design.

**Qualities of the research fellow:**
- High communication skills and ability to work with diverse populations
- A strong capacity for synthesizing and codifying various streams of information into a coherent whole
- Ability to work both collaboratively and independently

Our team is interested in co-creating the research design of this project with the research fellow.