

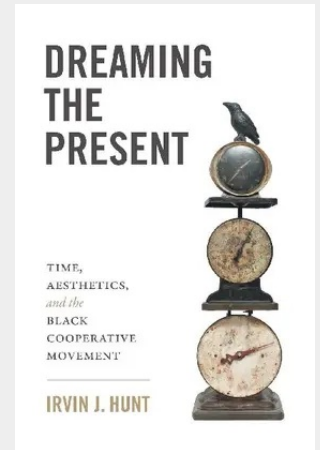
Irvin J. Hunt is assistant professor of English and African American studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## Dreaming the Present

Time, Aesthetics, and the Black Cooperative Movement

In their darkest hours over the course of the twentieth century, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ella Baker, George Schuyler, and Fannie Lou Hamer gathered hundreds across the United States and beyond to build vast, now forgotten, networks of mutual aid: farms, shops, schools, banks, daycares, homes, health clinics, and burial grounds. They called these spaces "cooperatives," local challenges to global capital, where people pooled all they had to meet all their needs. By reading their activism as an artistic practice, Irvin J. Hunt argues that their overarching need was to free their movement from the logic of progress. Steeped in the wonders of this movement's material afterlife, Hunt extrapolates three non-progressive forms of movement time: a continual beginning, a deliberate falling apart, and a kind of all-at-once simultaneity. These temporalities describe how these leaders, along with their circles, maneuvered the law, reappropriated property, expressed the pleasures of resistance, challenged the value of longevity, built autonomous communities, and fundamentally reimagined what a movement can be. Hunt offers both an original account of Black mutual aid and, in a world of diminishing of futures, a moving meditation on the possibilities of the present.

This is a story of art and movement building at the limits of imagination. In their darkest hours, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ella Baker, George Schuyler, and Fannie Lou Hamer gathered hundreds across the United States and beyond to build vast, but forgotten, networks of mutual aid: farms, shops, schools, banks, daycares, homes, health clinics, and burial grounds. They called these spaces "cooperatives," local challenges to global capital, where people pooled all they had to meet their needs. By reading their activism as an artistic practice, Irvin Hunt argues that their primary need was to free their movement from the logic of progress. From a remarkably diverse archive, Hunt extrapolates three new ways to describe the time of a movement: a continual beginning, a deliberate falling apart, and a simultaneity, a kind of all-at-once-ness. These temporalities reflect how a people maneuvered the law, reappropriated property, built autonomous communities, and fundamentally reimagined what a movement can be. Their movement was not the dream of a brighter day; it was the making of today out of the stuff of dreams. Hunt offers both an original account of Black mutual aid and, in a world of diminishing futures, a moving meditation on the possibilities of the present.



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