Case Study: Resist
Interview Date: Dec 20th, 2023
Interviewee: Seth Kirshenbaum (he/him), eight years as Co-Director of Resist, currently, Seth is a Co-Director of Movement Sustainability Commons, a project of Resist.

Organizational Background:
- **Mission:** Resist is a foundation that supports people’s movements for justice and liberation. We redistribute resources back to frontline communities at the forefront of change while amplifying their stories of building a better world.
- **Region:**
  - Resist is a national organization with a central office located in Boston, MA.
- **Size:**
  - 4 staff members
  - 5-6 board members
  - Annual budget above $1 million
- **WSDN Status:**
  - Resist was founded in 1967. The organization went through a major culture shift in 2016 that led to a two-day facilitated retreat, resulting in the realization that they needed a new organizational model. Following that retreat, they “took a leap of faith” on the worker self-directed model and have been functioning as a WSDN since.

Structure:
- Resist is managed by a General Circle of all staff. This circle has final authority on 99% of organizational decisions and delegates to the satellite circles of staff members.
  - **Satellite Circles are:**
    - Resource Distribution
    - Radical Philanthropy
    - Communications and Storytelling
    - Sustainability (formerly Finance and Operations) - currently merged with Radical Philanthropy
- Resist engages community members in standing circles. The members of these groups are all paid stipends for their work.
  - **Grant Making Panel:** a group of 5-7 individuals representing groups who received grants from Resist in the previous year. The Grant Making Panel makes all grant-making decisions with the exception of rapid response grants. The group is facilitated by a non-voting staff member.
  - **Circle of Elders:** a body shared with the Movement Sustainability Commons, the Circle of Elders is made up of community members who handle moments of conflict and harm. The Circle of Elders also has final decision-making power on firing for Resist.
- **The final regular circle is the Strategic Design Circle,** which is intended to form and dissolve as needed. This circle is responsible for the long-term direction of the organization and the creation of other circles.
● All staff members are responsible for both dynamic work (direct programming work) and static work (paperwork and administrative responsibility). This ensures everyone has a balance of both types of work.

● **Board of Directors Structure:**
  ○ The Board of Directors is considered a light-touch board with final decision-making power on the annual budget.
  ○ The Board is facilitated by a staff member who sits on the board whose job responsibilities include board oversight.
  ○ Resist utilizes the Owl titles for board roles. These roles include:
    ■ Radical Philanthropy Owl
    ■ Circle of Elders Owl
    ■ Resource Redistribution Owl
    ■ Sustainability Owl
    ■ Legal Owl
    ■ Worker Self-Directed Nonprofit Owl
    ■ Movement Sustainability Owl

What has been integral to making this work for your team?
● **Resist Principles:** a guiding set of principles. All of the circles have created their own principles as well.
● Fiscal Sponsored Library
● Resist Covenant: a guiding set of ways of being and community commitments that is revised each time a new staff member joins.
● Accountability tools have been important to building trust. These tools have included an Organizational 360 degree review, an Individual feedback tool, and Covenant review process.
● The Resist team has used Slack as a formal agreed-upon communications tool. This has been important in keeping the team members connected.
● Transparency. The team has maintained a high level of transparency throughout the transition into becoming a WSDN. This included a blog series tracking their process. They also publish all staff salaries publicly online.
● A cultural shift in the organization, naming how they want to be in relationship to each other and the world, has established care and trust for people at the center of the org which has been an important part of organizational health, success, and sustainability.

What are some of the challenges you have faced since becoming a WSDN?
● Since Resist first made the transition to a WSDN they have gone through several changes and adaptations. They do not consider these to be challenges. It was always the intention to adjust as they developed the organization.
● Some of the significant changes they made include:
  ○ Evolving the covenant to become crisper and cleaner in laying out community agreements and ways of being
  ○ Establishing an ongoing value of adaptability
Committing to balance with the line, “We commit to balancing work and home to the best advantage of both”

What are some highlights you have experienced since becoming a WSDN?

- This transition felt like it was the onramp to the offramp to the nonprofit industrial complex.
- The organization feels aligned with its mission and overall goals. The WSDN structure has de-siloed internal structures and disseminated responsibility across the team and made it possible for Resist to support others in making similar changes.
- There is real opportunity for things to grow and for the team to direct that growth. The Movement Sustainability Commons grew out of Resist because of this opportunity.

What advice would you give to an organization considering shifting to a WSDN?

- Invest time and energy in mutual support and accountability structures. This is what will make it possible for your organization to adapt to changes and challenges.