

## **Democracy Of the People with Amaha Kassa**

Amaha Kassa is the executive director of African Communities Together, a nonprofit organization that works to empower African immigrants to integrate socially, advance economically, and engage civically.

### **Start of transcript.**

My name is Amaha Kassa, he/him. I am the executive director of African Communities Together. I am a Black man with a beard, wearing a blue suit. And I'm here at the Ford Foundation.

Democracy is a belief in the capacity of regular people to govern ourselves, to care for each other, and together to make a good life and a good place for all of us to thrive in. And it can be discouraging, in this cultural and political moment, to think that that's possible if we're only looking up at the heights of power.

But it's a different story if we look down and if we look across, if we look at the communities, the neighbors, the community-based institutions and organizations; and how we are caring for each other, how neighbors are protecting each other and wrapping their arms around each other, and how people are coming up at the grassroots level with really innovative ways of relating to each other.

And that is at its heart what democracy is. It's an experiment in, "How do we live together?" And I think one thing that's important as a leader of an African immigrant organization is the idea that we never know where the next great democratic innovation is going to come from.

The next idea for how we live together, how we care for each other, how we solve our conflicts without them becoming crises—we never know who or where those solutions are going to come from. And in a way, it's an experiment that everyone in this country and everyone in the world is engaged in together at the same time.

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