



# **Giving Our Best, Ready for the Worst:**

*A Participatory Workshop on Mutual Aid,  
Solidarity, & Building Grassroots Power*

# About Us

## Alexa (she/they)

26 years old

I am currently in STL but love to travel. I am interested in food sovereignty and distribution, as well as disasters, in every form, that impact us. I've spent a few years now working through disaster relief in communities, as well as facilitating conversations to help prepare communities for future disasters.

## Payton (he/they)

27 year old



I'm an organizer with the Mutual Aid Network of Ypsilanti (The MANY) in southeastern Michigan. I'm fascinated by decentralized, anti-authoritarian, and directly-democratic models of community autonomy and have spent time invested in networking with and traveling to communities across the country practicing mutual aid. I also love growing food!

# Housekeeping



## “Hand Raise” Function to share insights

*There will be points where we'll ask for participation. We'll call on folks using the “hand raise” function!*

## Expect and Respect a Lack of Closure

*We have lots of content to share and only a little time together, so we'll try our best to offer touch stones, but can't dive all the way into every detail. Bring this work back to your communities to process deeper!*

## Land Acknowledgement


*Everyone of us is on stolen land*

*Not only stolen land but also:*

*language, labor, time, bodies, & minds*

*Climate justice work is based upon  
Indigenous and Black liberation movements*

*Study where you live, build connections, and  
center resistance histories*



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# DEFINING TERMS TOGETHER

Mutual Aid  
Solidarity  
Charity  
Liberation  
Power Dynamic  
Accountability

D



**MUTUAL**

**AID**



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**SOLIDARITY**





**CHARIT**



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**LIBERATION**







**POWER**

**DYNAMI**



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**ACCOUNTABILIT  
Y**



# HIERARCHY IS NOT THE DEFAULT

We've all be indoctrinated by top-down structures, and that impacts the way we view community

- In our schooling, housing, workplaces, healthcare, etc.
- It's taken our voices away and convinces people they can't participate
- We have to come from a trauma informed perspective to actually build power
- Disasters generally are defined by and responded to through a capitalist perspective where property and assets are more valuable than human life.

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# COMMON MYTHS of MUTUAL AID

It's a white people thing

It's structureless

It automatically means  
liberation



# MUTUAL AID IS NOT NEW!

*Last year, it felt like every neoliberal and nonprofit was saying it.  
Let's take some time to dissect a few myths.*



## **MYTH No. 1 | “IT’S A WHITE PEOPLE THING”**

- Mutual Aid has been practiced in name by anti-authoritarians around the world for hundreds of years.
- The spirit of mutual aid has existed among indigenous people since the dawn of humanity.
- Black and Indigenous peoples worldwide have had their cooperative societies ravaged by white supremacy and have used mutual aid as a resistance against colonial violence ever since.
- Some mutual aid networks today have replaced the state in some regions controlled by communes of indigenous people.

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## MYTH No. 2 | “IT’S STRUCTURELESS”

- There’s a myth that decentralized organizing has no structure because its power isn't consolidated into a single group or person with a rigid, top-down command model.
- When there’s no centralized authority or power-holders, it’s easy to assume that there’s no direction unless you’ve done the work to unlearn the expectation that there should be.



## **MYTH No. 3 | “IT MEANS LIBERATION”**

- Just because we say we do mutual aid doesn't mean we're liberated.
- Power dynamics crop up that we have to intentionally counter with accountable structures & stronger relationships.
- Mutual Aid is just a piece of the puzzle. Not liberation itself and needs to be complimented by decolonial principles and long-term strategies for care work and resistance.
- Broad community involvement and base-building is key. Otherwise, your group will become a silo.





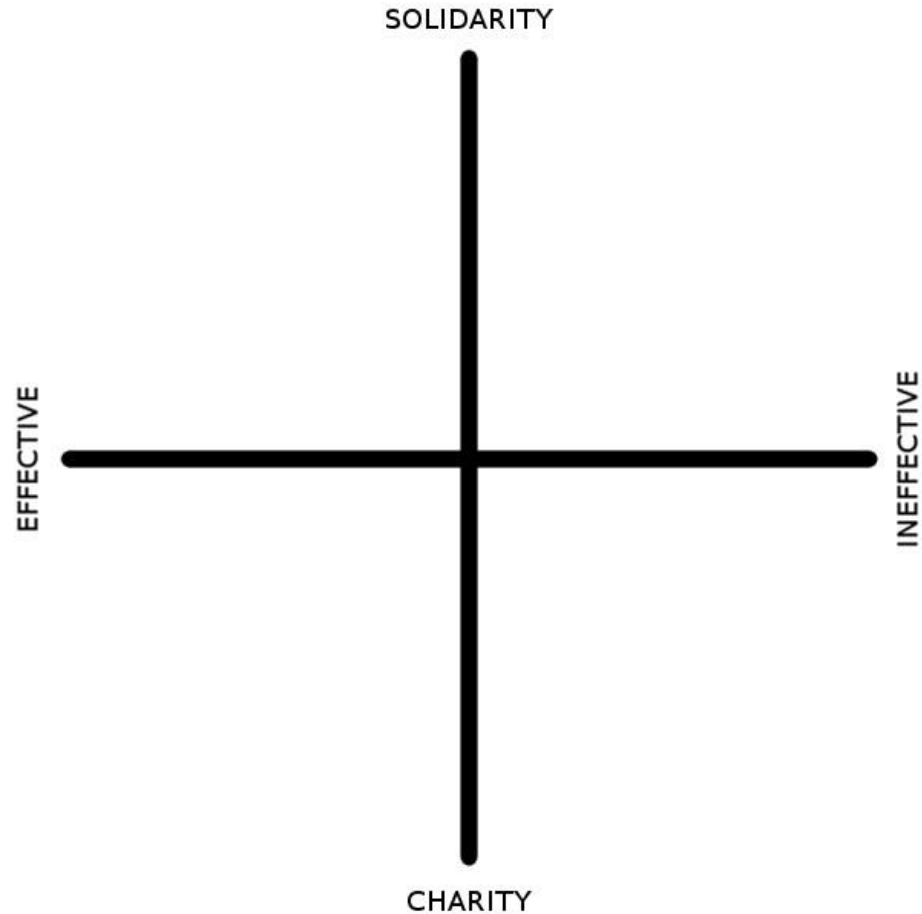
# GOALS OF MUTUAL AID ORGANIZING

1. Reduce harm & build trauma informed consent
2. Build equitable participation
3. Draft clear boundaries
4. Collectivize resources
5. Make decisions without bureaucracy
6. Abolish and replace oppressive systems that inhibit care



# SPECTROGRAM STORY-BASED ACTIVITY

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# **BUILDING LONG-TERM GRASSROOTS POWER**

Life isn't a linear binary and community relationships are complex. But, the spectogram and these examples can help you gauge organizing models and build collective accountability while fighting for liberation. Check out the Mutual Aid Disaster Relief website to learn more stories and useful tools.