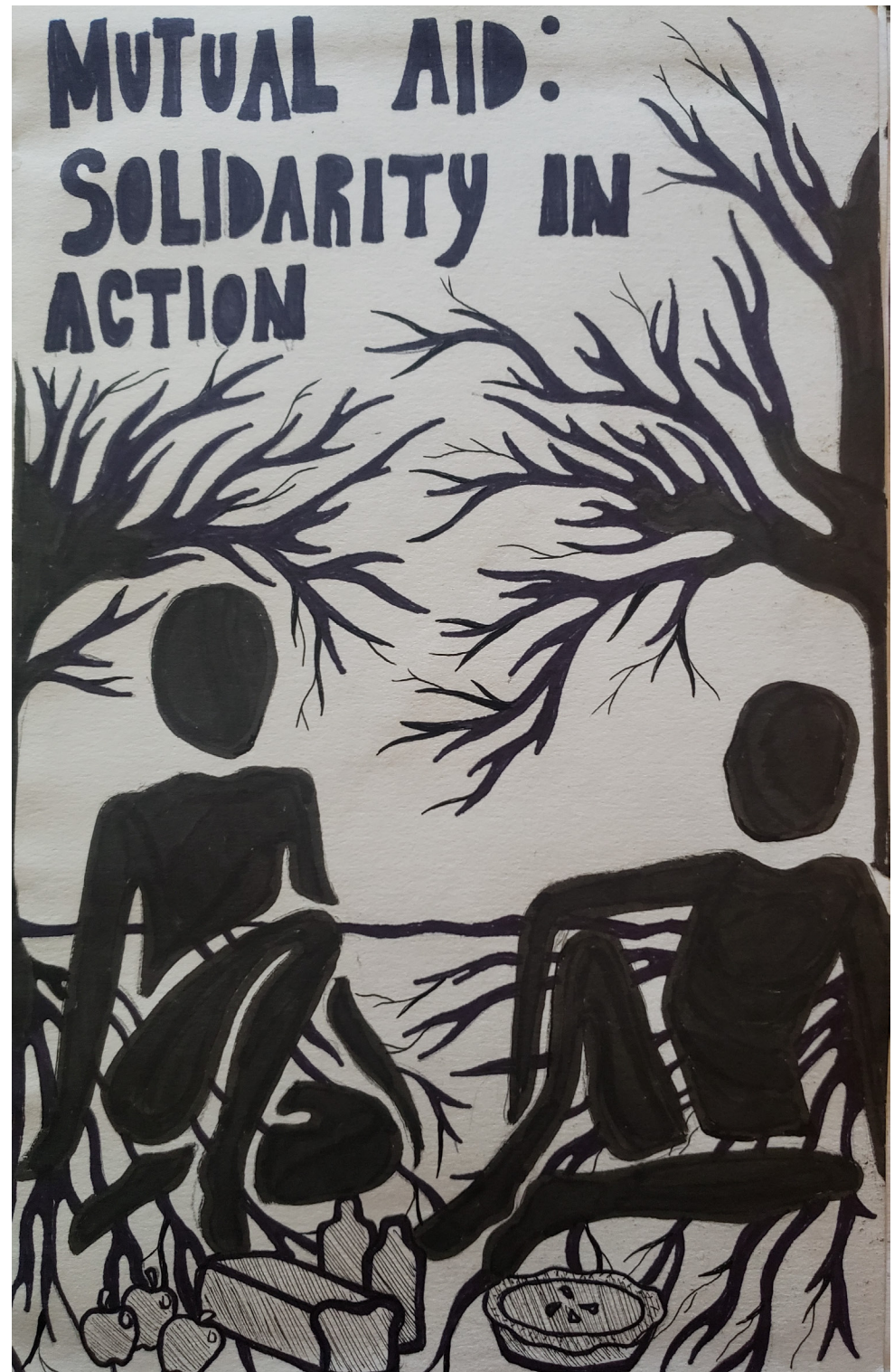


Contact us at [boisemutualaid@protonmail.com](mailto:boisemutualaid@protonmail.com)  
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# MUTUAL AID: SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

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evidence of different types of oppression, such as social oppression, institutional oppression, and economic oppression.  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppression>

Transphobia: "Transphobia is the fear, hatred, disbelief, or mistrust of people who are transgender, thought to be transgender, or whose gender expression doesn't conform to traditional gender roles. Transphobia can prevent transgender and gender-nonconforming people from living full lives free from harm."  
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/transgender/whats-transphobia>

Racism: "the formalization of a set of institutional, historical, cultural, and interpersonal practices within a society that more often than not puts one social or ethnic group in a better position to succeed and at the same time disadvantages other groups in a consistent and constant matter that disparities develop between the groups over a period of time." Racial discrimination commonly occurs in law enforcement, courtrooms, employment, housing, health care, and education.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Societal\\_racism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Societal_racism)

Settler Colonialism: "We can begin by defining settler-colonialism as it relates specifically to Indigenous peoples of North America. The goal of settler-colonization is the removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity. According to Laura Hurwitz and Shawn Borque's "Settler Colonialism Primer," "This means that settler colonialism is not just a vicious thing of the past, such as the gold rush, but exists as long as settlers are living on appropriated land and thus exists today." <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/what-is-settlercolonialism>

Sexism: "Any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice, or behavior based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline... sexism is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women — which leads to discrimination and prevents the full advancement of women in society."  
<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/sexism-definition-council-of-europe-equality/>

Solidarity: Solidarity means associating together as equals in order to satisfy our common interests and needs. Forms of association not based on solidarity (i.e. those based on inequality) will crush the individuality of those subjected to them.



training, please email us at [rosehipmedics@gmail.com](mailto:rosehipmedics@gmail.com).  
<https://www.rosehipmedics.org/who-we-are/>

• Seattle Solidarity Network: "Seattle Solidarity ("SeaSol") is a volunteer network of working people who believe in standing up for our rights. Our goal is to support our fellow workers' strikes and struggles, build solidarity and organize to deal with a specific job, housing, and other problems caused by the greed of the rich and powerful. Join us! Let's fight to win." <https://seasol.net/>

## Glossary of Terms

Ableism: "Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability... Ableism classifies entire groups of people as "less than" and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities." <https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/>

Anti-semitism: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

Homophobia: "Homophobia is the fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual... People who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual may experience harassment or discrimination from people who are scared of or uncomfortable with these identities." <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation/sexual-orientation/what-homophobia>

Islamophobia: Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets believers of Islam, Muslims, or people perceived to be Muslims. Islamophobia is experienced in a range of ways – from physical to verbal violence and intimidation, and from socio-economic discrimination and exclusion to the entrenching of racism in our broader civic life. <https://www.islamophobia-definition.com/>

Oppression: Oppression is malicious or unjust treatment or exercise of power, often under the guise of governmental authority. Oppression may be overt or covert, depending on how it is practiced. Oppression refers to discrimination when the injustice does not target and may not directly afflict everyone in society but instead targets specific groups of people. No universally accepted model or terminology has yet emerged to describe oppression in its entirety, although some of the scholars cite

Do you ever spend time thinking about where the food you eat, or the clothes you wear come from? What about the labor and materials that went into building your house or your car? Left to fend for ourselves without the comforts of community, few among us would survive a week. None of us would be able to produce the food, medicine, clothing, shelter, and everything else our lives depend on. We need each other.

## WHAT IS MUTUAL AID?

"Mutual aid" is when a community is empowered to meet their own material needs (housing, food, and healthcare) by caring for one another, while also organizing against the system that created the need in the first place.

The term "mutual aid" was created by the famous Russian evolutionary biologist Peter Kropotkin in his book "Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution", which argued that cooperation, not competition, is the driving force behind evolution. Kropotkin demonstrated that species who were able to work together, were able to better adapt to their environment, and were granted a competitive edge over those species who didn't or couldn't. The earliest human societies practiced mutual aid as a matter of survival. There are countless examples of its logic within the plant and animal kingdoms.

It is human nature to practice mutual aid, especially in times of hardship and crisis. This is nothing new to indigenous cultures and Black communities surviving racism in the so-called United States. Between the Underground Railroad that supported fugitives escaping slavery to the maroon societies (communities created by Black and Indigenous people who fled slavery and colonialism) existing in isolated regions outside of the eye of the U.S. government. Black and Indigenous folks have a long history of practicing mutual aid for survival that is worth recognizing and learning from.

## Our Origin Story

Before the pandemic, we were a group of friends who took care of each other. We intuitively practiced mutual aid with each other every time we cooked for each other, drove each other to the airport, used each other's laundry machines, helped one another move, took care of sick friends, watched each other's pets while we were out of town, and so on. While some of us may benefit from the privilege of having a supportive network, not everyone has a community that they can depend on.

There's nothing like a crisis to uncover the truth that many of us are alone -- left to survive or die by ourselves, because our society doesn't guarantee access to food, shelter, and healthcare.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a run on the grocery stores in Boise, Idaho during mid-March of 2020 leading to bare shelves and people fighting over basic necessities, like toilet paper. When the lockdown went into effect we were encouraged to stay-at-home and to socially distance from one another.

Autonomous groups mobilized across the country to provide mutual aid to their neighbors and those hit the hardest by the fast spreading virus. Corporations laid-off workers as the economy slowed. Those of us already living on the edge of eviction and homelessness found ourselves with even less income and a stimulus check that barely covered rent and bills.

Folks living outside reached out to us for material support. People were trying to avoid getting the coronavirus but had nowhere to go to escape the rain/snow/wind/cold. Some of the requested material support included: tents to keep people from getting wet sleeping bags/blankets to help ward off the cold and make folks less vulnerable to sickness/death.

Many had been told to not return to local shelters or couldn't because of discriminations experienced, not being able to be in crowded spaces for long periods of time, differences in religious ideology/practices, etc. Folks who engage in small infractions of typical behaviors (such as cussing, defending themselves from oppressive behaviors of others, being impaired, arguing with staff, etc.) which have been outlawed by shelter workers/administration are met with unnecessary programming requirements that align with punishments given by the punitive system of law enforcement and/or are kicked out of the shelter for a certain number of days or banished permanently.

We started a group text with our friends and comrades that we knew were interested in doing this work with us and asked everyone to start reaching out to their networks and social media followers to donate what was needed. We used social media and direct communication to locate resources that were needed. People were eager to help and started collecting requested items.

A couple of the original Boise Mutual Aid organizers set a date with the folks who were sleeping outside that we were in communication with. On March 30th, 2020, six of us showed up downtown to the agreed-upon location and distributed survival gear. We thought it might be comforting to have a healthy, warm meal and water to serve along with those requested items and collected PPE (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer) to be able to serve food and items while preventing the spread of COVID.

Originally planned as one distribution event, we saw the need for continued long-term aid in this community. Once the word was out and donations kept rolling in, we decided to ramp-up with these efforts.

• Guerilla Gardening: "the act of gardening on land that the gardeners do not have the legal rights to cultivate, such as abandoned sites, areas that are not being cared for, or private property... The land that is guerrilla gardened is usually abandoned or perceived to be neglected by its legal owner. That land is used by guerrilla gardeners to raise plants, frequently focusing on food crops to feed the community." (Wikipedia)

• Indigenous Mutual Aid: "An information and support network with an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist framework. We exist to inspire and empower autonomous Indigenous relief organizing in response to COVID-19. We seek to grow the organizing of this effort into a collective hub of organizers from throughout what we recognize as Turtle Island." <https://www.indigenousmutualaid.org/directory/>

• Mutual Aid Disaster Relief: "a grassroots network whose mission is to provide disaster relief based on the principles of solidarity, mutual aid, and autonomous direct action. By working with, listening to, and supporting impacted communities, especially their most vulnerable members, to lead their own recovery, we strive to build long-term, sustainable and resilient communities. Mutual Aid Disaster Relief responds to disasters, educates about community organizing as disaster preparedness and collaborative neighborhood crisis response, collects and disseminates lessons learned in the field, and supports and provides a connective tissue between other grassroots groups doing response work." <https://mutualaiddisasterrelief.org/about/>

• No More Deaths/No Mas Muertes: "The mission of No More Deaths is to end death and suffering in the Mexico–US borderlands... No More Deaths maintains a year-round humanitarian presence in the deserts of southwestern Arizona. We work in the remote corridors into which migration has been pushed, where people are walking 30 to 80 miles. Volunteers hike the trails and leave the water, food, socks, blankets, and other supplies. Under the direction of our medical team, volunteers provide emergency first-aid treatment to individuals in distress" <https://nomoredeaths.org/en/>

• Rosehip Medic Collective: "a group of volunteer Street Medics and health care activists active in Portland, Oregon. We provide first aid and emergency care at protests, direct actions, and other sites of resistance and struggle. We also train other street medics and put on community wellness trainings. We believe in democratizing health care knowledge and skills, in reducing our community's dependence on corporate medicine, and that strong networks of support and care are essential to building a sustainable, long-term movement for collective liberation. We are working to create one facet of the healthy and diverse infrastructure we see as necessary if we are to build another world. Our group includes EMTs, nurses, Wilderness First Responders, herbalists, teachers, and more. To request our group's support at an action or event, for general information and questions, or to ask about our



mutual aid, survival programs, direct actions, self-defense, resistance planning, revolutionary music & art projects, free classes & meetings. We have served and fed hundreds of people over the years with various programs such as DC Free Store, Feed The People, People's Pantry, People's Garden & Water Relief. <https://www.radical-guide.com/listing/food-clothing-resistance-collective-maroon-movement/>

We are also the founders of the Maroon House/Maroon Movement which was established as an intentional and collective house and movement created by Black Queer Womxn and Femmes. We have participated in protests, lectures, hosted music concerts, films, conferences, art showcases, workshops & meetings while staying constantly active in the struggle for autonomy."

• **Food Not Bombs:** "a loose-knit group of independent collectives, sharing free vegan and vegetarian food with others. Food Not Bombs' ideology is that myriad corporate and government priorities are skewed to allow hunger to persist in the midst of abundance. To demonstrate this and to reduce costs, a large amount of the food served by the group is surplus food from grocery stores, bakeries, and markets that would otherwise go to waste, or occasionally has already been thrown away." (Wikipedia)

• **Four Thieves Vinegar Collective:** "People are disenfranchised from access to medicine for various reasons. To circumvent these, we have developed a way for individuals to manufacture their own medications. We have designed an open-source automated lab reactor, which can be built with off-the-shelf parts and can be set to synthesize different medications. This will save hundreds of thousands of lives. The main reasons for people being disenfranchised from medicines are price, legality, and lack of infrastructure. Medicines like Solvadi which costs \$80,000 for a course of treatment, are beyond the reach of most people. Mifepristone and Misoprostol are unavailable in many places where abortion is illegal. Antiretroviral HIV treatments even when provided free, have no way of getting to remote locations in 3rd world countries. The design will be published online, along with synthesis programs. The system will also have a forum system for users to communicate and contribute to the development of the system. With time, the system will become self-sustaining, much like other open-source movements." <https://fourthievesvinegar.org/>

• **Free Skools:** "a decentralized network in which skills, information, and knowledge are shared without hierarchy or the institutional environment of formal schooling. Free school students may be adults, children, or both... The open structure of free schools is intended to encourage self-reliance, critical consciousness, and personal development. Free schools often operate outside the market economy in favor of a gift economy... Generally, these are formed at a grassroots level by a group of individuals acting collectively and autonomously to create educational opportunities and promote skill-sharing within their communities." (Wikipedia)

It turns out people have care for the collective in their hearts no matter what individualism we've learned from the toxic culture we've been raised in. After building relationships with some of our unhoused neighbors many of us soon learned about the city of Boise's unethical legal efforts to criminalize poverty and houselessness.

## Martin v. City of Boise and the Continual Attacks on the Houseless Community

In 2009, a handful of people sued the city of Boise for repeatedly ticketing them for violating an ordinance against sleeping outside. Those sleeping outside were constantly harassed with tickets they weren't able to pay, and were targeted with arrests and seizures of the belongings that they needed to survive the elements.

This was a clear attempt by the city to make it comfier for those of higher economic statuses to shop and spend their leisure time downtown without having to witness the poverty that exists in our community. While Boise officials later amended it to prohibit citations when shelters are full, the 9th Circuit eventually determined the local law was unconstitutional. In December of 2019, the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of this decision made by the City of Boise.

Although Martin v. City of Boise does protect folks' right to sleep outside, it hasn't changed the reality of police harassment of houseless folks. Based on recent reports from those who experience houselessness here, the police continue to ticket folks for parking violations and regularly confiscate and destroy their belongings, including tents, sleeping bags, camp stoves, tarps, and other items necessary for surviving the elements. The police aim to run houseless folks out of town, even resorting to throwing survival gear into wood chippers. The courts cannot prevent the police from continuing their cruel treatment of our houseless neighbors, only the broader community can.

The city of Boise would have us believe that ticketing people experiencing homelessness would solve the bigger housing crisis. In reality, ensuring housing, not handcuffs, is the only way to end houselessness. Our collective has limited capacity and resources, but our vision is a world where everyone can live in peace with secure housing. In the meantime, we will continue to distribute survival gear to replace whatever the police steal away from our neighbors.

# How We Operate our "Mutual Aid Monday" Distro

## Outreach

Compile a list of requested items from those living outside that we have relationships with.

The list is then shared online through social media. In these posts, we include news of what's happening and the needs of those living outside. We partner with local individuals and groups and acquire food for the hot meals and for the sack lunches we offer at distro.

## Gathering

Our collective accepts:

- items from the request list
- monetary donations to purchase the needed items

In our collective, we have designated collectors of donations

- Community members reach out to them and they arrange either a drop-off or a pick up of the donations
- Another member of the collective receives all cash donations and shops the day before distro to pick up any items that weren't already donated from the list of requests.

We are currently working with sympathetic businesses and community spaces to have a permanent drop off location. Multiple collective members store these donated supplies and bring them to distro every week before distro begins.

We've partnered with the Idaho Harm Reduction Project so folks have access to items and education meant to enhance safety with sexual and substance use engagement.

We have a list of volunteer cooks and lunch preparers that we rotate through regularly. Both the warm meal and sack lunches are transported to distro every Monday.

## Distro

- We meet at Rhodes Skatepark every Monday at 5pm. We show up with the requested items we were able to buy or gather, a warm meal, sack lunches, clothes, and hygiene supplies
- We have designated police liaisons who are trained volunteers that know how to speak with the police, diffuse tense situations, and know what our legal rights are
- We have trained legal observers present to document police interactions and presence throughout the time that we're operating in the space
- While people are getting access to a free meal, volunteers are organizing the donations for distribution

the project's collection. There is no cost to prisoners." (Wikipedia)

• Bystander Intervention: a type of training to prevent sexual assault, harassment, and unwanted comments of a racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or anti-homeless nature. (Wikipedia)

• Chicago Childcare Collective (ChiChiCo): "a group of volunteers who support the participation of parents, especially mothers, in racial and economic justice work. The collective matches volunteers with community organizations across the city to have fun with kids while their parents participate in and lead organizing efforts to defend their rights and build a better Chicago." <https://chichico.org/about.html>

• Common Ground Collective: "a decentralized network of groups offering support to the residents of New Orleans. It was formed in the fall of 2005 in the Algiers neighborhood of the city in the days after Hurricane Katrina resulted in widespread flooding, damage, and deaths throughout the city... Some of the services and facilities they provided free to residents included debris removal, aid distribution centers, roving medical clinics, bioremediation for toxic areas, house-gutting, roof-tarping, building neighborhood computer centers, free tech support for non-profits, stopping home demolitions in the Lower 9th Ward, supporting community and backyard gardens, anti-racist training for volunteers, a tree planting service, and legal counseling services. Common Ground volunteers established seven health clinics and nearly 100 community garden projects within a year." (Wikipedia)

• Community Bail Funds: A bail fund is a community-driven project that collects money to post monetary bail for those in jail on pre-trial detention.

• Cop-watch: a network of autonomous organizations that observe and document police activity while looking for signs of police misconduct and police brutality. They believe that monitoring police activity on the streets is a way to prevent police brutality.

• Food, Clothing & Resistance Collective (FCRC) is a Radical Anarchist Black Womxn who created Mutual Aid/Direct Action Collective. We center Black, Brown, Indigenous, Womxnist, & Queer resistance supporting anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-authoritarian, anti-poverty, anti-heteropatriarchal, anti-racist, anti-ableist, people's independence & liberation movements. We support non-hierarchical, anti-state, prison abolitionist, self-defense, earth defense, community defense, autonomous cooperatives, communes, grassroots collectives & intentional communities. We fight for local, regional, national, and international dual power as we work together for the ultimate goal of the self-determination and liberation of all oppressed peoples and lands from white supremacist-patriarchal-capitalist-imperialist and neocolonialist rule. Food, Clothing & Resistance Collective was launched in 2015 by Afro-Indigenous Anarchist organizer and artist Sima Lee to connect other organizers and community together for volunteer

shareable, explain the need and what you're doing to address it. List the ways people can support your efforts, whether it be sending funds through Venmo, joining the group organizing the project, or contributing supplies to the cause. Shareables will be most easily and widely spread if they are put into a simple but appealing digital meme that can be shared over and over by those in your network.

6) Take Action: There are thousands of ways to practice mutual aid, just check out the examples we've included.

7) Reflect and Learn: How did the action go? What went well? What can be improved next time you act? What skills or knowledge do you need to gain to improve your mutual aid efforts? Educate yourself and those around you on how the system is continuing to contribute to the community being cut off from the resources that are needed. Organize with your crew to create the type of world you want to live in!

## Examples of Mutual Aid in Practice

During the Pandemic, most of the mutual aid projects that have emerged include:

- Financial solidarity projects for those who can help with financial assistance to reach folks who need cash directly.
- Food distribution projects collect donations from grocery stores, restaurants, or individuals and then distribute them to those who are in need, at high risk, or sick.
- Disability ally projects to match volunteers up with folks who need extra support during the pandemic.
- Neighborhood pods are self-organized groups of folks who can count on each other for support.

These are mutual aid projects that inspire us (listed in alphabetical order):

• Black Panther Party for Self-Defense: Fifty years ago, the Black Panthers were faced with the reality of widespread poverty and lack of service provision in their communities. Rather than appealing to the government, or the conscience of White America, the Panthers set to work organizing their own health clinics and breakfast programs for hungry school children. These programs were part of a broader strategy of building community power and were identified by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as a primary threat to national security, by which he meant a threat to the legitimacy of the state and the white supremacist power structure that upholds it. (Submedia's Video "What is Mutual Aid?")

• Books To Prisoners: "These projects accept donations of books from bookstores and individuals. Each project solicits letters from prisoners requesting books, usually by genre or by naming a preferred author.

13 Project volunteers read the letters and reply with a few books taken from

• Individuals seeking survival gear receive a number on a first-come first-serve basis. One of our volunteers carries a notebook filled with the previous week's requests. When it's somebody's turn, we check to see if any of the items they requested the previous week were gathered and offer them the items.

• There are volunteer "Sorters" that rummage through the donations to find the particular item the person is requesting. Then, folks have an opportunity to make new requests for items that they need.

The gear we distribute is oftentimes ruined by exposure to the weather, stolen by others, or confiscated by the police. We don't ask questions, we just give, we believe all humans are valuable and should be able to retain items for survival.

• Once everyone's number has been called and has requested items for the next week, there are always items left over. At this point, everything is up for grabs and anyone who needs more gear is given a letter of the alphabet. When it's their turn, they can grab three or four of the items remaining. If there's more people than usual, we may limit it to two items of choice so that everyone has a chance to get stuff they need. We end distro once everything that people want is gone.

• We also have a designated area where volunteer bike mechanics can tune-up or make minor repairs, like fixing flats, gear adjustments, brake adjustments, chain swaps, minor hub or bearing adjustments, and so on.

• We make sure the space is cleaned up and photograph the area in case we receive targeted complaints from the city.

• We create an updated list of requested items that includes things we weren't able to acquire for the current week and new items people requested that day. We repeat the process by starting another week of outreach and gathering.

### A list of commonly requested items:

- Tents
- Large tarps
- Pillows and blankets
- Sleeping pads
- Camp stove & Propane
- Backpacks
- Batteries (D, AA, AAA)
- Warm coats
- Flashlights & lanterns
- Propane heaters
- Tupperware & cookware
- Bandages/medical supplies
- Socks
- Boots
- Thermals



# The Big Ideas that Guide Us

Guiding principles that ground our mutual aid project. Each complement and informs what it means to practice mutual aid.

## Everything for Everyone

We want to live in a world where everyone can meet their most basic needs and also reach their fullest potential. We believe in taking collective responsibility for helping our community through times of crisis. No matter who you are, you deserve to get what you need to live.

This includes:

- Folks without documentation who can't provide a social security number
- People who are seeking safety and refuge who haven't had the privilege of being able to receive assistance with official documents.
- Individuals labeled as "felons" who federal law prevents from receiving SNAP benefits and discrimination prevents them from gaining housing.
- People with mental health and addiction struggles
- Individuals experiencing houselessness who cannot be in crowded, enclosed spaces like shelters due to chronic mental health issues, religious differences with the shelter, or prior negative experiences with them

## Capitalism Doesn't Care About Us

Capitalism is defined as an economic system in which a country's trade, industry, and profits are controlled by private companies, instead of by the people whose time and labor powers those companies. Most of us were taught that the best way to secure our individual survival is to consistently grind, work, and save up money to care for ourselves and our immediate family members. This bootstrap myth says that all people, even if they face poor and meager circumstances at birth, can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" to attain great wealth and prosperity if they work hard enough. Capitalism has created a profoundly unequal society without safety nets. As a result, our communities are in crisis

- The minimum wage is still \$7.25 in Idaho, certainly not enough to live on. With inflation, minimum wage should be \$27 per hour currently.
- There are more empty living spaces than there are individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Food is thrown away that can be enjoyed by and sustain those without access to food.

in need of those resources for survival. While mutual aid is pretty simple to understand, here are some tips and questions to ask yourself that can get you started and ensure it can be sustained long term. This is written abstractly because mutual aid can be practiced in many ways depending on the particular situation and need. Mutual aid isn't just about starting community projects but can also be a way of life that you practice with those closest to you.

1) The Problem: What need is not being met? To start a mutual aid project, first identify either something you need or something somebody in your life needs, whether it be a family member, friend, neighbor, coworker, or classmate. If you or somebody you care about is struggling to meet this need, there are others in our community grappling with the same problem. What need are you observing in your community? Who in our communities are cut off from resources and need them immediately to survive?

2) Take Stock of Your Resources: What resources can you draw upon to meet your or other people's needs? Are there any community resources available that can help? What resources do you need to address this need? Who has access to this resource and currently has excess that would like to contribute to making that resource available to the community?

3) Ask Your Social Network to Join: What people in your immediate social circles would want to collaborate to address this need? Based on what the need is, you may need folks to fulfill specific roles. Have multiple people that can fill each role, as sometimes people get busy/sick and others have to step in to take over that role. The more folks that can collaborate on the project the better, that way no one person gets burned out from having to do more than what they have the capacity for.

4) Make A Plan Together: As a group figure out the best way to address the unmet need. Decide on the best way to act. Use the available resources at hand. Folks in the group can offer up any necessary skills needed to make the plan succeed. Ask yourself, "what roles would help make our action successful?". Depending on what your action is, you may need different types of roles to be filled. List everything that will need to be done to make the plan work and everyone can decide which role to fill.

5) Outreach to the Broader Community: Are there resources that your immediate social circles are unable to provide? If so, outreaching to your broader community is strategic. You can create a social media account for your specific mutual aid effort (IG, FB, etc.). This gives a main point of contact for all the people who are going to want to be a part of the project, as well as giving publicity and access to those who may not have otherwise heard of it. Find someone in your mutual aid crew that can create what we have been calling "shareables". In the



state control. In our current age of increasing division, uncertainty, and insecurity, direct action offers a way for our movements to build and assert our collective power, both to defend our communities and to fight for the world we want to live in. This definition was adapted from Submedia's video titled "What is Direct Action?"

### We Want a Strong Community Built on Mutual Aid

We are intentionally building towards a world where our efforts and investments don't go towards profit-building for those that exploit our labor but instead go towards taking care of ourselves and those in our communities. We seek to share available resources equitably with one another, rather than have those who claim to own the fruit of our labor and control access to the fruits we create.

Our vision is to be a part of a mass movement that creates a new economy based on solidarity and prioritizes meeting our collective needs, rather than making a profit for the wealthy. Mutual aid projects lessen our dependence on the system, effectively making a new world in the shell of the old.

We want everyone in our community to flourish and enjoy their lives knowing that their community takes care of everyone. Mutual aid not only benefits those who are shut out from any government assistance but benefits us all.

Many of us struggle to access resources and keep up with the many demands in this individualistic, capitalistic system in which we live. If we only take care of ourselves, we only have ourselves to lean on in times of need. It is then that we fall with no back up to catch us. When we take care of each other, we share our bounty with those in need; if we find ourselves unable to keep up and need assistance we have many hands to catch us when we're collectively engaged in mutual aid. Mutual aid can be manifested anywhere.

If you have an idea of how mutual aid can improve our community, we want to offer our support to you to create more opportunities for mutual aid. Look over the examples – if you'd like to see similar projects in our community, reach out!

## How You Can Start Your Own Mutual Aid Project

Since starting the Boise Mutual Aid Collective, many folks have asked us how we got started and how they can begin similar efforts. We've grown a bit overwhelmed with answering that question, which is why we found it important to create this zine so that everyone can see how simple it is to build networks of care and share resources. The more networks that are created for resource sharing, the easier it is to connect the overflow of resources that exists to those who are currently

- Many of us cannot afford our monthly bills, our medical debt, our school loans, and the rising rent prices + utilities
- Competition that creates haves and have-nots is rewarded instead of forms of cooperation that lift all people up

### Solidarity, Not Charity

Let's come together as a community in mutual aid because no one, aside from ourselves, is coming to save us from the disaster of capitalism.

The following table shows the differences between solidarity and charity. These differences were articulated by Dean Spade (radical activist, prison abolitionist, and writer) in his University of Chicago course "Queer and Trans Mutual Aid for Survival and Mobilization". We adapted his writing for the purposes of this zine.

Solidarity	Charity
Works against the system by creating equal access to resources and community alternatives to the current structures of power.	Divides our world between "needers" and "givers". Promotes the idea that poverty exists as a result of poor decision-making, blaming the individual rather than the system.
Exposes the failures of the current system of wealth hoarding and offers an alternative.	Makes rich people look generous and upholds the systems that cause wealth inequality.
Builds new social relationships that are a legitimate threat to authority.	Those with wealth are granted the moral authority and the legal power to deem recipients "worthy" or "unworthy."
Beg, borrow, and liberate supplies.	Money is given by corporations/the government, with strings attached, to keep "givers" in line and preserve the current system.
Relies upon people power to resist any efforts by the government to regulate or shut down activities.	Follow government rules about how the work needs to happen (usually requiring more money, causing reliance on grants, paid staff with professional degrees).
Survival projects rooted in values of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, racial justice, gender justice, and disability justice.	A single-interest group, operating with funds restricted for certain purposes.
Open meetings, as many people making decisions and doing the work as possible.	Board meetings may be closed, responsibilities may be separated between volunteers and staff.

Solidarity	Charity
People participate voluntarily because of passion about injustice and building stronger communities.	People participate voluntarily because of passion about injustice and building stronger communities.
Those most impacted by injustice decide for themselves what they need from the community and we show up to support each other.	Offers "help" to the "underprivileged" absent of a context of injustice or strategy for transforming the conditions and puts supposed "saviors" on a pedestal.
Consensus decision-making to find answers that serve everyone to make sure people impacted by decisions are the ones making them and to build the skill of caring about each other's concerns rather than caring about being right or winning.	Hierarchical organization lets people on top control what happens and forces the rest to obey regardless of their own desires.
Projects are connected to other tactics, including disruptive tactics aimed at addressing the root causes of the problem.	Offers false and temporary solutions to the problems that are caused by the system itself. Any disruption of the status quo will not be tolerated.
Tendency to view the project from the perspective of those who are experiencing the crisis.	Tendency to view the work based on opinions of elites: political officials, bureaucrats, funders, elite media.

### Collective Liberation: (or "It Will Take All of Us to Get Free")

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."  
-Lilla Watson

Collective liberation means that all of our struggles are interconnected and that we must work together to create the kind of world we know is possible. It isn't possible to change our community alone -- we need each other.

The fight against houselessness and poverty cannot be separated from the fight against ableism, antisemitism, homophobia, islamophobia, transphobia, racism, settler-colonialism, and sexism (definitions at end of document). Everyone is worthy of dignity and respect. Everyone suffers when systems of oppression exist.

Collective liberation is more than a value, it's a decision to act and cooperate with others that may be different than you. When we work together across the barriers kept in place to divide us, we strengthen our community. When we come together in solidarity, our diverse identities and experiences give us the tools to dismantle systems of economic, political, and social oppression, and to create a world in which all people are seen as fully human and worthy of care.

We will continually explore and are open to new ways of understanding how existing institutions and social norms limit our capacity to be truly free. This definition of collective liberation was adapted from "Introduction to Collective Liberation," written by the organization People and Planet: Student Action on World Poverty and the Environment.

Bridging the divisions in our community can be challenging, but we remain committed to learning from mistakes and being empathetic when seeking to understand and collaborate with each other. While it's important to meet each other's physical needs and connect people with resources, it's equally important to share resources and build relationships with the communities we engage in mutual aid with. Our collective liberation leaves no one behind. Our emphasis on relationships allows for opportunities to resolve conflicts through transformative justice. Current retributive and punitive forms of so-called justice systems leave out these marginalized people that mutual aid lifts up. The police, courts, and mass incarceration all intentionally and unfairly target oppressed communities. Transformative justice allows us to care for each other and to be cared for -- we learn how to unify so that we are literally unstoppable against anyone who wishes to hold us back or hold us down.

### Direct Action

Direct action is a political action aimed at achieving a specific goal, and which is carried out directly by an individual or a group, without appealing to a higher authority for legitimacy. Direct actions are tactics, meaning that they are a specific type of action that can be used to implement a wide variety of strategies. Direct actions can be anything from non-violent conflict resolution to blocking pipeline construction. These actions don't aim to persuade those in power but seeks to foster and assert the power of those carrying out the action themselves. The "Mutual Aid Monday" Distro is an example of direct action in the form of material redistribution and community outreach.

When people carry out direct action, they are asserting their own autonomy to make decisions and act on them, while providing an example for others to follow. The term itself dates back to the early workers' movement, where it was used to describe direct practices such as industrial sabotage and wildcat strikes. By physically blocking production and collectively defending themselves from the police and strikebreakers, workers were able to force concessions from their bosses. The widespread use of these tactics eventually led to the legalization of trade unions and a whole host of concessions aimed at bringing the more serious sections of the workers' movement back under