



MUTUAL AID

solidarity not charity

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Charity

- A PR-move and tax write-off for the organisation
- Organised specifically by members of the organisation, creating a barrier or entry for volunteering.
- Often has barriers of entry for getting aid, whether it's proof of lack of finances or homeless shelters requiring sobriety
- Only a bandaid-solution – does not consider or attempt to change the root causes of issues.

Mutual aid

- For the community, by the community
- Self-sufficiency – not relying on charity or government programs
- Collectively built systems primarily for safety and survival
- Not just material – giving and receiving aid helps build trust, community and give people hope.
- Aims to address structural root causes by asking questions and informing

Three key elements of mutual aid according to Dean Spade

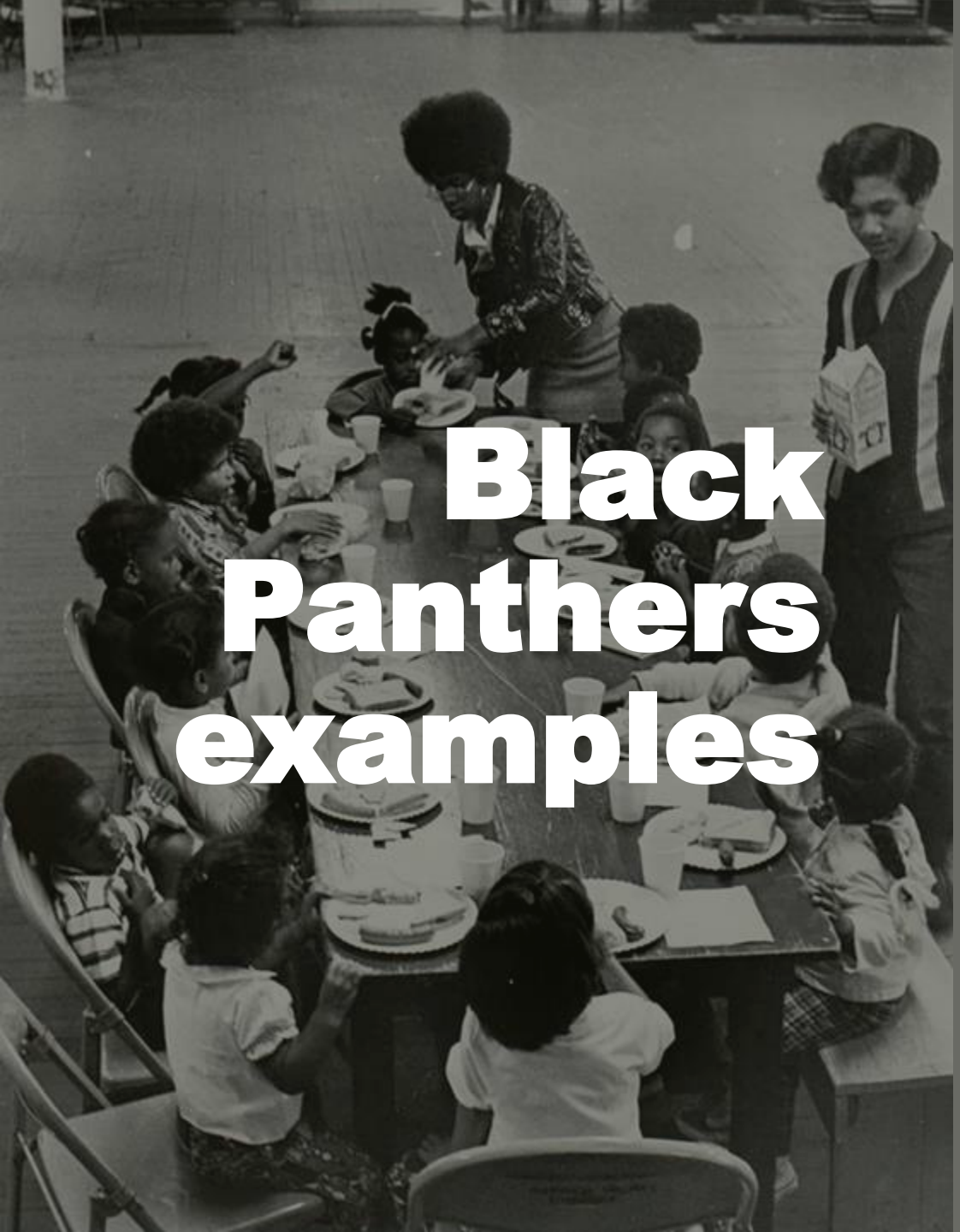
1. *Mutual aid projects work to meet survival needs and build shared understanding about why people do not have what they need.*
2. *Mutual aid projects mobilize people, expand solidarity, and build movements.*
3. *Mutual aid projects are participatory, solving problems through collective action rather than waiting for saviors.*

Various past examples

“There is nothing new about mutual aid—people have worked together to survive for all of human history. But capitalism and colonialism created structures that have disrupted how people have historically connected with each other and shared everything they needed to survive.”

Occupy Sandy(2012), Common Ground Collective(2005), various groups across countries during the height of Covid-19

The Young Lords Party(1968), countless indigenous groups, large communes and autonomous zones.



Black Panthers examples

Originally the Black Panther Party for Self Defence started in 1966 in Oakland, California.

■ The Free Breakfast Program

Introduced in January 1969, the Free Breakfast Program, also known as Breakfast for Children Program (BCP) started with help from St. Augustine's Church in Oakland and donations from local businesses, churches and community based organisations.

The BCP fed more than 20 000 children in 23 cities in it's first year and by 1971 the program had been introduced to at least 36 cities.

While the BCP was the first and most popular of the Party, it was only one of 65 survival programs of the Black Panter Party.



Black Panthers examples

- **SAFE – Seniors Against a Fearful Environment**

In the 1970s after Black elders in Oakland were denied help by the local police department, the BPP saw that a third of crime victims at the time were elderly and started SAFE to provide 24/7 transportation and escort services, prescription delivery, self-defense lessons and more. Alongside volunteers, local unemployed youth were hired and paid for providing these services, creating jobs in the community.

- **Free Healthcare**

Aside from having their own ambulance service and providing community health education, they started Peoples' Free Medical Clinics (PFMCs) which provided first aid, childhood vaccinations, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, screenings for lead poisoning, tuberculosis, diabetes, high blood pressure and sickle cell anemia. The Party's community education and screenings eventually pushed Congress to pass the National Sickle Cell Anemia Control Act in 1972.

Political education was provided alongside health education since the Panthers saw health and other community struggles as clearly political.

How it's done

1. Identify a need in the community

Who/what is your community, what survival needs are they lacking in (and why)?

Most typically: food, water, shelter, education, sanitation and safety.

Note: a new project can also be built from an existing one

e.g. Part of food aid can be a community garden

2. Form a group

Don't be afraid to start small, make sure to act collectively, with trust and have a good way to communicate.

3. Make a plan

What equipment/resources will you need?

e.g. Soup cannon, ingredients, plates, utensils, cooking and cleaning equipment

When and where?

A consistent time and place is often helpful but some forms of mutual aid may be more difficult to do on a strict schedule and/or may help more by changing locations or going directly to individual people.

Reminders

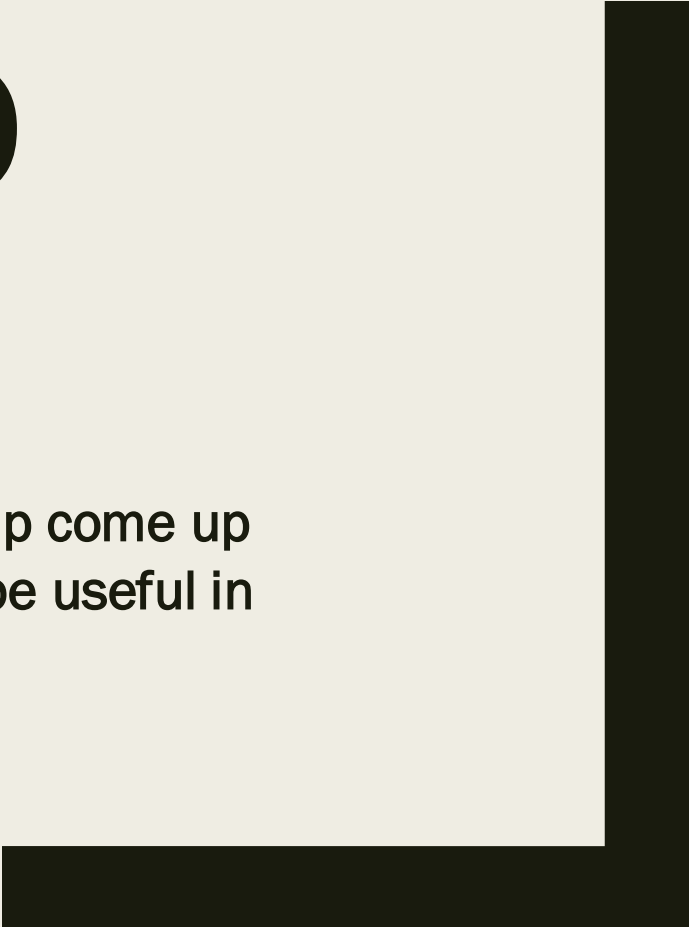
- Be resourceful and imaginative – ask around for materials, space, volunteers etc. Don't be afraid to be annoying
- Don't be afraid of setbacks and problems - it's part of the process
- Communication is key: use Tekmil or another form of consistent critique and feedback to identify and fix problems as they come up
- Growth: keep an eye out for expanding the project – whether that's doing it more often or bigger events. Don't be afraid to collaborate and combine with similar projects

e.g. Sharing notes and experiences with same types of mutual aid in different cities or combining different forms of mutual aid like health and nutrition education + community garden + food aid.



CALL TO ACTION

As practice, either by yourself or in a small group come up with a mutual aid project that you think would be useful in your community



Further resources

- *mutualaid.coop*
- *Blackpast.org*
- *Threadings: Revolutionary Love Costs You Something* and *The role of the artist is to load the gun* (on worldbuilding)
- *The Mutual Aid Podcast*
- *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the next)* by Dean Spade