STRATEGIES FOR MUTUAL AID NETWORKS

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WHAT IS MUTUAL AID?

An analysis of Dean Spade's *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity Through This Crisis (And the Next)*

**Main Takeaways**

- Mutual aid projects aim to fulfill people’s survival needs and build an understanding of why people don’t have everything that they need.
- The problems that mutual aid organizers target are often social or systemic problems that require a group or a coalition to address.
WHAT IS MUTUAL AID? (CONT.)

- Mutual aid projects mobilize people, build solidarity, and build larger movements. People join social movements because they need something or have a specific issue that they want to be addressed.
- Mutual aid projects take charge and work to solve problems instead of waiting for an outside actor to help.
- The power is in the people.
Mutual aid has one fundamental tenet: helping one another.

It's a simple, straightforward practice where neighbors help neighbors. Researchers have found that when resources are limited, people may be inclined to form cooperative, egalitarian groups — positive interaction that contrasts Darwinism and the "survival of the fittest" theory. When these groups form, they can strive for equity, both in terms of resource distribution and beyond.

Organizers have viewed mutual aid as a way to meet people's needs, especially marginalized people. They've stepped in where institutional failures exist with a straightforward method of organizing.
Mutual aid has always existed as a practice. Indigenous peoples across the world have lived with the principles of mutual aid.

In the 1960s, mutual aid was used by the Black Panther Party, which had over 60 programs to help Black Americans, especially children and the elderly.

In the 2000s, mutual aid was practiced by communities impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Organizers helped create medical clinics and distributed supplies.

Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred a new wave of mutual aid organizations across the country.
Mutual aid networks have been emerging in response to the COVID-19 pandemic faster than they ever have before.

These networks are continuously expanding to not only support financial needs, but also wellness, housing, and familial needs. In many cities, especially those consisting of people who have been marginalized, mutual aid is essential for surviving the COVID-19 pandemic.