

Mutual Aid

for Climate Justice 101



November 2025

What is mutual aid?

“Mutual aid is the radical act of caring for each other while working to change the world. As governments fail to respond to—or actively engineer—each crisis, ordinary people are finding bold and innovative ways to share resources and support the vulnerable.”

-Dean Spade

Mutual Aid & Climate Justice

Mutual aid matters for climate justice because *the climate crisis is already impacting people's needs* (think: fires, hurricanes, floods, migration, power outages, utility bills, unhealthy air, unhealthy water, food insecurity, etc) **and the Government does not address those needs sufficiently, so it's up to communities to take care of each other!**

Examples of Mutual Aid in Climate Crises:

- **Occupy Sandy** - After Hurricane Sandy hit NYC in 2012, volunteers organized for rapid response to the disaster. Operating from churches, mutual aid organizers cooked free hot meals, sorted donations, and transported people to shelters.
 - **Information sharing** via social media was a crucial service, on weather reports, and communicating what resources were needed.
- **Power Hubs after Hurricane Ida** - In New Orleans, after Hurricane Ida caused power outages in 2021, neighbors created “community power stations” by putting extension cords on their porches for community use.
 - Organizers created an **open resource map** showing where the power stations were located.



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<https://www.climateadvocacylab.org/>



Examples of Mutual Aid in Climate Crises:

- **Los Angeles Wildfires** - In response to the wildfires in Los Angeles in 2025, mutual aid organizers with groups like Water Drop LA distributed food, water, inhalers, and masks to the community, especially to unhoused people affected by the air quality.
 - Mutual Aid LA Network **organized fire resources** into an accessible spreadsheet.
- **Direct actions for climate** - Masks, snacks, and water are often shared at protests.
 - If a direct action includes people planning to get arrested, **jail support** is organized to make sure people have their emergency contacts notified, any medication needed, and a plan for how to get fed and transported home afterwards, and somatic healing afterwards.
 - Summer of Heat on Wall Street or Public Power NY are examples of climate protests where arrests were planned.



Mutual Aid vs. Charity

- Mutual aid means **everyone deserves everything they need**.
 - Some charity only gives to “deserving” populations, like only women & children, only sober people, or only religious people.
- Mutual aid is horizontal - people giving to each other, with as little power dynamics as possible.
 - Some view charity as the wealthy giving crumbs to the poor.

Mutual Aid in History

Mutual aid is a common practice in Indigenous communities pre-colonization, and has been used by marginalized communities to meet their own needs throughout history.

The Black Panther Party's Free Breakfast for Children Program fed 20,000 people during the 1960s, pushing the US Federal Government to provide a free breakfast program.



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Assess Your Skills + Resources for Mutual Aid

Likely, you have more skills and resources already in your life than you realize! Think widely on what could help someone else. For example:

Skills - Cooking, speaking Spanish, singing loudly, being a good listener, taking meeting notes.
Resources - Free on Saturdays, my parent's money, my couch bed, a friend with a car.

Imagine how it could support a need in your community.

Find Existing Local Mutual Aid Networks

Rather than re-create, connect with mutual aid organizers already working to help your community! Use these tools to search in your location.

- [Mutual Aid Hub](#)
- [Find A Protest](#)
- [It's Going Down](#)
- [Falling Fruit](#)*

*Foraging website with community fridges listed.

General Resources

- [Become a Member of Climate Advocacy Lab!](#)
- [Recording of our webinar](#)
- Dean Spade's video - [What is Mutual Aid?](#)
- Dean Spade's book - [Mutual Aid](#)
- [History of Mutual Aid](#) - Solidarity Economy Association

