

Peter:

Well, welcome everyone to the virtual East Side Freedom Library. I'm Peter, the co-executive director, and we're delighted to be collaborating with Andrea and Acoma and their project to bring together people with firsthand experience about Mutual Aid here in the Twin Cities during, and since the uprising. We're very happy to be able to provide a platform. I want to encourage all of you if you're not already hooked into the East Side Freedom Library. Visit our webpage, go to get involved, and click on, join our mailing list so that you can find out what else is going on. We're really honored to have these folks with us today, and I look forward to learning from them. I'm going to turn things over to Andrea and Acoma. Thank you.

Andrea:

Yeah. Thank you so much, Peter. I can give a quick introduction to myself and to our project and let a coma take it from there. And then, we'll also be asking each of our panelists to introduce themselves before we get started. So my name is Andrea. I use she/her pronouns and I am a public historian, an aspiring public historian in training at the U. My classmate, Acoma and I are working on a joint public history initiative called History for the Future. Our goal is to look at the history of Mutual Aid in the twin cities, and to ask how learning from history can help us do work for building radical futures of community care.

Andrea:

And so, we are organizing this panel in order to speak with our local Twin Cities Mutual Aid organizers who have been very personally and deeply involved in this work and putting a lot of thought and energy into it. And we're here to ask them questions and learn from them. The last half hour of this panel will be a Q and A where Peter will kindly be taking any questions typed into chat, or raised on Facebook that we'll be filtering and asking our panelists to consider. And so, Acoma.

Acoma:

Yeah. Thank you so much, Andrea. My name is Acoma. I use she/her pronouns. I am also a public historian in training and I'm really interested in learning how Mutual Aid projects work together to meet people's immediate needs. And basically, just to learn a little bit more on why people don't have what they need. So I'm interested in getting into this conversation. I do want to acknowledge that the University of Minnesota, which is a sponsor to this panel, and just all of us, we're all on Dakota homeland. So thank you everyone for joining in. We're going to do a quick introduction of all of the panelists. Sheff, would you like to introduce yourself?

Sheff:

Sure. Thanks, Acoma and Andrea for having me and thank you, Peter for hosting this via the East Side Freedom Library. My name is Sheff, I use they/them pronouns and I work as a donor organizer or fundraiser at CTUL, but we were all doing different things last year. And in connection to Mutual Aid, I was working on the Minnesota immigrant family fund, as well as distributing supplies out of the CTUL building. And those are my two main ways of plugging into Mutual Aid and I'll kick it to Carmen because Carmen is in the same building with us.

Carmen:

Indeed, my name is Carmen Means, I'm the executive director of Central Neighborhood as well as [inaudible 00:03:53] Neighborhood and a personal plaque. I'm also running for city council Ward nine. And so, rewind. Pronouns, black, anything said with love. We did have the amazing responsibility and the pleasure really to serve our community through Mutual Aid. We popped up an emergency food shelf that I believe, Sheff, you said about two months, we were bought too much strong?

Sheff:

Yeah.

Carmen:

Yeah. So about two months strong. And so, I've seen the power of Mutual Aid and what happens when the community engages. So I anticipate, I'm very excited for this conversation. I will pass the mic to... Has Jae spoken yet?

Jae:

Hi, my name is Jae. I'm involved in a lot of different things, but I currently just got a job at the Du Nord Foundation running their community market. And I also have organized over the past, almost year, couple of eight months or so with CANMN, which is a group of basically 20 somethings who randomly got involved in Mutual Aid. And we're still going strong at [inaudible 00:05:12] out of CTC's space. So I will pass to Rachel.

Rachel:

Hello. Thank you for having me. I'm honored to be here. Sure. My name is Rachel Nelson. I go by she/her and I'm one of the organizers for Twin Cities Relief. We were born out of the George Floyd murder. We spent 32 scary, beautiful, wonderful, crazy days in the Speedway parking lot down at the George Floyd Square, feeding everybody all day and all night and giving out essentials. And we all accidentally started Twin Cities Relief, and we've continued now into the summer. We've had all the marches and we've been doing events all through the winter, and we were just stepped on into a family who was devoted to providing our community with the nourishment and essentials that we all need to stay well and continue our fight for racial equality and civil justice. So I will pass it on to Roxxanne.

Roxxanne:

Oh my God, I'm sorry. I couldn't find my arrow with my mouse, but hey everybody, this is Roxxanne and well, I guess I've been around doing organizing. I learned about organizing about 10 years ago. So I've always been an activist in my life as a child and as an adult, but kind of got a little more intentional about 10 years ago. And when I think about all the Mutual Aid, our different Mutual Aid, things that I've been a part of, I never really called it that. But I guess I was in the Mutual Aid business of giving people whatever they needed. So whether that was training, whether that was rides, food, emotional support, finding other people to hook up with them if they just needed somebody with a specific expertise. So I think, I mean, I can't even describe to you the many things that I do. Sometimes I don't even remember because it's too much, but I just pretty much answered the phone and whatever somebody needs, we figure it out. So that's how it's been for me for the past 10 years. I will pass it to... Who hasn't gone yet?

Acoma:

Oh, that's it, Roxxanne.

Roxxanne:

Okay.

Acoma:

Thank you. Thank you all so much for that great introduction. So let's jump into the conversation. Why does everybody believe that Mutual Aid is important? And what is the relationship between sustainability and Mutual Aid for you all?

Rachel:

Mutual Aid, I mean, for us, for Twin Cities Relief, when we started out at the Speedway, it was a necessity. As it's been around for forever, for us, it was not ever something that you could go home with it. Families were not able to get formula for their babies. Kids hadn't eaten in days, everything was cut off and we needed to provide for our own community. So there was no going home, it was helping each other or they didn't have anything. So the sustainability really is us, we got to take care of each other.

Jae:

Yeah. I think that there's a lot of, kind of wondering about like, "How did people get started?" When the uprising first happened, and I always think that's such a weird question. Because honestly, I think for most people that I know that are either still doing Mutual Aid or did Mutual Aid or kind of got re involved in Mutual Aid as a result of the uprising, it was like, "Okay, damn, people don't have [inaudible 00:09:46]. There's literally nothing open in the city at all, people have to eat." And so, kind of what Rachel was saying, people can't just not eat. So I think that's really, to me kind of the spirit of Mutual Aid of, it's not about sort of a nonprofit model or a charity model of, "Okay, we meet out these resources to people that can prove that they really need it." It's just Mutual Aid is seeing the need and then taking direct action to meet the need to me. So I think that's the importance of it. The no strings attached approach is really important to me, personally.

Rachel:

Absolutely. Without no qualifications, it can't be inclusive when their qualifications on the need that there is for us. That was something for me, just kind of unlearning or just not even trying to. It was bad before George Floyd. So when that came around, everybody needed a meal. Everybody needed diapers, everybody needed some toilet paper, everybody was in a hard place. And then you got COVID on top of it. So Mutual Aid, it's essential because we can't rely on... We didn't have anything else to rely on, we only had each other. [inaudible 00:11:10] says, "Really, if there was 100 of us now that just take it upon ourselves, just like all the rest of you to help when we could and to any, give all of our free time to the cause and to the fight."

Andrea:

I'm seeing there's the question in the chat to repeat the question. And so, we were just thinking about the relationship between Mutual Aid and sustainability and kind of the question that also Acoma and I had in mind at the start of planning this panel was the relationship between Mutual Aid and long-term political organizing. Sheff and Carmen and Roxxanne, do you all have anything? Would you all agree with what Jae and Rachel have been saying?

Sheff:

I'll hop in quickly, first. I totally agree mutually. It is about necessity and getting people what they need enjoy and care for each other. In terms of the long haul, our movements are about dismantling the systems that are creating the material, conditions where people don't have enough. And if there's not any relief for material relief or care built into our movements, what makes them compelling? So I think mutually, it is a very necessary part of our movements. And it's also about practicing and remembering different ways of being in relationship with each other and knowing that we can care for each other outside of the systems, the non-profits institutions that are in our world right now. So I think it's also a really necessary visionary piece of, we can do this, we got each other. [crosstalk 00:12:45]

Rachel:

That's all right because it's understanding that it is the system, not the people suffering under it that creates poverty, crisis and vulnerability.

Roxxanne:

Yeah. I would say that everybody is on point in different ways and I mean, honestly, I'm still learning. There's not a specific point, I think in this work where you get to be really understanding the solutions or understanding what really things are. But I think, even as I'm learning and as I'm feeling burnt out, I'm saying, 10 years in, and then last year was, I don't know. It was the cherry or the straw, you know what I'm saying? Sustainability is trying to keep it going. And I think for me, what's missing, for me, at least is who takes care of the caretakers? Right?

Roxxanne:

I think that's the question that's coming to me when I hear the word Mutual Aid and sustainability is how do we keep this going without burning ourselves out and being prepared next time? Because, I mean, I didn't get resources when the shit hit the fan, you know what I mean? I watched a bunch of people get them now. And so, I pretty much gave and shifted around information where the resources were. And a lot of us were training to basically, I mean, go to war. So we were out here doing all that and trying to get our permits to carry, trying to protect our communities. So it was kind of beyond just shifting resources and giving resources. It was everything.

Rachel:

I feel that way with our group too, is that there's a lot of money being funneled in. And I didn't see any of that money as well, but there's the route of pressuring representatives to change. And we see it, see all these families that can't get food standing before me, and you cannot get vegetables. You can't, they're not in the store. They're not in any [inaudible 00:15:27] for you to be able to get them. So how can I change that? And being able to make this sustainable is something that we at TCR, I think about all the time. Because it's about not just pressuring those representatives, but by actually building new social relations that are more sustainable. So for us, we're building with directly with the farmers. We go straight to the farmers and we go straight to the neighborhood, to your doorstep.

Rachel:

There is a no in between in this. It is getting it straight to the people who sit up straight in the neighborhood so we can be sustainable. So we're not having to split off. I know that our local group is broke. After the summer, we all gave everything that we had, and it's the sustainability. And it's there now because we've built these relations that are going to keep going and that they give it all too. And we don't have to rely on trying to get the representatives, they haven't done anything for us in the past,

ain't going to do anything now. So we got to set up those to be sustainable. We have to set up those new relations, the new hierarchy of the new system.

Carmen:

I think everything that I heard, I definitely agree with. One thing I want to bring pause to is the point that Roxxanne, she didn't term it like this, but basically who tows the tow truck. Right? So everyone on here has the tow truck, we are tow trucks in many spaces, not the only ones, but definitely some of them. And so, with that, the sustainability really comes and being able to answer that piece, we're not talking about something that's outside of that. We wouldn't want to be honest. It became regardless why people gave, but Mutual Aid is not the sexy word of giving. You know what I mean? It's like a fad word right now. And I'm really leery of fads because fads come and go. We know that it was a lot of organization, a lot of individuals that levied up and they made a whole lot of money off of this whole thing called Mutual Aid.

Carmen:

Evangelical churches stepped in. They was their opportunity to be the Messiahs that they always come, and I can speak that because I come from the church world. It's kind of family business type of deal, but it was your time to kind of shine to do the work without doing the work. So from the work without doing the work. So there was a lot of different things that we have to be realistic with because guilty heart only lasts so long, a transformational heart that really understands the weight of how we carry this thing early, that's the best longevity of the work. And so, how do we realign ourselves and really come with the realization that what we received during the uprise, really was probably guilty work and a guilty conscience. But yet the step for necessary people because needs are still here. Needs are still form, and corona did not go anywhere and the uprise has just shifted.

Carmen:

It has not changed. It has not disappeared. And so, with that, sustainability looks like the building of relationships. It looks like what we kind of see was the shared power. I believe that shared power during that time was done two fold. It was the giver and the receiver. It takes a lot, I'm a mother of two for one. And I've had to go ask to go and say, "I need, that is necessary in this exchange." So we've seen a shared power or humility that we had not seen before. So sustainability is not just, I would say a question. It is a longevity of really about undoing because the needs again has not changed, but how did you do that? That's an exploring space that we're going to have to be able to fight through and get through. And for the purpose of not deeming this falseness, that meeting your needs was an act of a fad versus meeting your needs was an act of us restoring and healing our own community. So we owed that to ourselves and to our community.

Rachel:

I think that George Floyd murder, like you said, really brought in so many people from all over the world. I know that people from all over the world all over the state were coming in just wanting to help, just wanting to give anything. And it very much feels like, "Okay, you have two hours, but how can we make this for the cause instead of just for you or how can we put these white fists with these black fists and make this right?" And that's definitely a struggle that I'm learning and trying to be conscious of... We're trying to change that stigma of what we're doing, the stigma of we like to do the barbecue. It's not a handout. You're not waiting in line for something, it's our people, it's our community and it's a mutually beneficial or mutually helping each other out of this.

Roxanne:

I wasn't too impressed with corporations and people and especially white people who started to give all of a sudden. For years, there was no money for anything. And it was like, "No, we don't have the money." And then as soon as a black man died, money came from everywhere. It was like, "Where's the money come from if we didn't have the money?" And then, you see a lot of corporations, like Excel and different places within the system, different commissions that are now like, "What do we do? How do we help?" And it's like, "Why are you all helping?" Sometimes I just question a lot of where the money came from a lot and wondering, I don't want to have the answers for these things. I want to ask these questions, where did the money come from you all?

Rachel:

I feel the same way, Roxanne. And it was something that personally, I wanted no hands on it. I want nothing to do with it. I want to be far away from the money, I still do. We don't even take in donations, don't let jars out. [crosstalk 00:21:17]

Roxanne:

Well, no. I mean, we needed the money. It is what it is, but I'm saying, what? Where did it come from? And what were their intentions with it? Did they send it to dismantle us? Did this come from different corporations? Or different... I don't know. I just want to put that out there that I think that when we talk about sustainability, that we think of where the origins of this stolen wealth came from and how are we going to be in the near future? How are we going to hold people accountable? Because the money, they got to have the money, it's stolen. It only shows up when one of us dies. We need to figure out why that is. Why do we only get valued when we're dying? Why aren't we valued when we're living?

Rachel:

The transparency of money, I think was something that's going to be continued to be talking about too, throughout all of this, especially all this money that was brought into the Twin Cities.

Jae:

Yeah. I think that money is always hard because A, we need money to do stuff. It's unrealistic to be, well, we just won't ever use money for anything. How is that supposed to work? We all still live under capitalism. We all still have to find some way of getting the actual supplies to people, and it's not always practical to get that for free. I mean, I think that there was a lot of really cool stepping up by smaller local businesses. That was nice, but ultimately, money is still how we pay for things.

Jae:

We still have to live in the society that we live in. And so, I think that money was really tough for us, it can because we're not a nonprofit, we're just a group of people. And so, we didn't get any of that, CARES Act money, for example, we weren't eligible for it. And so, we also had to rely on going to the store to physically buy stuff from Target. And we were like, "Of course, we don't like doing that." We would rather not give money to this corporation, but people still need food. And so, it's this really hard place, I think that a lot of people-

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Jae:

It's a hard place, I think that a lot of people are in and it's not like being tied to the nonprofit, industrial complex is better. I think that money will always be like an issue, but I think we do have to think about how we can at least use those funds in a way that isn't lining the pockets of nonprofits. Like people have been saying. It's hard for me having just started working at a nonprofit, but I also have to eat. It really sucks. We have to like make these decisions.

Rachel:

Same boat too!

Carmen:

I agree with you a hundred percent. I'm sorry, Rachel.

Rachel:

No, go for it. I was just going to agree a hundred percent too.

Carmen:

I definitely, I hear you, Jae, and I agree with you. Roxanne, I hear you too. I just want to make sure I honor that and speak to that. I get so tired of being in a place that we have to choose between the lesser of the two evils and that is a perpetual place that we are in. That's very complex, especially when you're fighting and showing up on behalf of your people. The other part of that though, is what I've noticed working in the nonprofit world for so long; as we have this thing that we have to sometimes choose between being right or winning, right? It may not be fair, but nevertheless, that's what it is.

Carmen:

A lot of times when we are so focused on being right, we miss the win and vice versa at this time, doing mutual aid. Now, don't get me wrong, all money is not good money. You hear what I'm saying? Let me say that again. Just to be clear, but it was kind of like, in many cases, F word this money is coming from baby girl needs her rent paid. It was about really winning. How do we keep the roof over their head? You know what I mean? I go back and swing on you later, but right now I need to make sure that folks aren't hungry. I need to make sure that after this, that people are secure, as far as housing is concerned to the best of my ability and all the logistics. It wasn't even about putting like once ethics or morals on hold, but it was about really trying to secure the win for people.

Carmen:

Unfortunately, when you are in the nonprofit world, you have to, you often are in this battle within self and again, all money ain't good money. Some things should be told a hell no, too, right? We're just not going to rock and roll that way. But I wanted to be very careful and just conscious about this whole notion of majoring on the minors and their minoring on the majors. You tell a person that you had an opportunity to feed them, but then the money came from XYZ, you told them, no, that's a problem for me.

Carmen:

I could've got your rent paid, but since it came from them, I told them no. I have to figure out something else, baby girl. But that's a problem for me when you're looking at that and unfortunately, whether we

like it or not in this capitalist world, we are often put into those places. When you operate on behalf of the community, it's like a heartbreak. It's like a constant fight, it is a choice between the lesser of the two evils. That's just the place that you constantly arrived in until we form a system that we don't have to choose either because evil to is still evil.

Roxanne:

I want to make sure people understand that. I said, go ahead and get the money. Nobody is saying, don't take the money. I'm saying where did it come from and is it sustainable? As in the question of mutual aid and sustainability, is this sustainable when we don't know where it's coming from and it only comes in these types of ways. In my opinion, I think we just have to ask more questions.

Jae:

I agree, sorry! I was just going to add too, I think it the whole question of celebrity money too, really came up over the summer and like who was getting that visibility and who wasn't. It was very interesting and I think that a lot of that there, were people definitely who capitalized on it for personal gain. I think that's maybe unavoidable in a situation as far reaching and as big as this uprising that originated here. But I do think that we have to recognize that yes, people need money. We still have to recognize a certain amount of disingenuity or just continue to hold especially, these really visible groups accountable for how they use their money and who they deem worthy of like receiving money from them and like how they redistribute it.

Jae:

I guess this is just me loudly agreeing with Roxanne about that. Money is such a hard thing in the space that we inhabit and we do have to keep questioning and not get complacent because I think we can all start really replicating some very problematic behaviors and replicating things that don't end up helping us in the long run.

Rachel:

Then to speak on the money issue. I totally agree, there is, for me, it was ensuring that we were providing aid from the same group as people that were giving the aid and I wanted to make sure that we were the people who were controlling it and getting it to who is most effected.

Rachel:

In the beginning when George [inaudible 00:29:51] all that. Money was the root of all the evil, it was the fight with, for us sown the speedway with churches, with gangs, with the organizers, whatever is the root of all evil. We didn't want any of it. We spent our own money inside of our own pocket and our events throughout the summer were a thousand dollars an event, we spent that. But I got three kids and we wanted to make this real, none of us thought we were going to be doing this after day 30.

Rachel:

It was something that we could not bend, we could not stop, and that battle of going for grants now and needing too. disingenuity we need to feed our kids and we need to be able to eat ourselves, and we're out here spending all day long and all night long on farms, driving three hours across the state to give this to people. We have to figure out a way that we can do both because the guilt of having to apply for

grants and get that money as compared to trying to ensure that those providing the aid are from the same group as those giving it, because we want to take care of our own.

Acoma:

Thank you all. After this discussion, I'm curious to know how you all see the difference between charity and philanthropy and mutual aid. I would say a lot of people this summer were really engaged in a lot of mutual aid work and people might not be aware that they were. You were saying with corporate organizations coming in and giving money and putting this performative act of Black Lives Matter, but it just matters when somebody lost their life. How it's disingenuous, I guess my question for you all is how do you see the difference between charity and mutual aid work?

Acoma:

Andrea, did you have something else?

Andrea:

Well just to add a quick, a secondary question to that, charity and philanthropy and mutual aid work, but then also the difference between mutual aid and activism. I feel like, there's almost kind of three different levels or like three different tiers of, maybe actions that people are taking and maybe not even actions that people are taking, but ways that people are thinking about what's been happening and about how they have been or could be involved. A lot of this speaks to me what Jae, you mentioned earlier, "the no strings attached notion" and how this is so key to mutual aid. I feel like, thinking about charity and philanthropy there's of course, the big difference with whatever expectations like churches have, but then there's like activism too, and I feel like there is a difference between mutual aid and activism. I'm wondering if you all can speak to that too.

Jae:

I can start us off, I guess. I think that's a really huge question. First of all, that's the answer, but I think that, to me, the difference between mutual aid is like I was saying before. That sort of need based and "no strings attached" kind of work that you do have. You don't need to prove that, you're bad enough off to receive help. You just show up and get help. I think that's really central to the difference. I think that a lot of times in the nonprofit industrial complex, there is a lot of hoops that people have to jump through, proving that they're bad enough off to get something as simple as some groceries. I think that's morally reprehensible and even working in the nonprofit, industrial complex now, I've, it's only the two of us that are paid in the organization that I work with and we talked a lot about we are not here for the nonprofit industrial complex.

Jae:

We have to work in mat and that's where we are. We've got to eat but also like there are things that we just simply aren't going to do and we're not going to require people to bring proof of income and all of this stuff just to get a box of food, like for what?

Jae:

I think that's really the difference between that and mutual aid. Also, charity, I think makes a lot of assumptions about the people who are doing the work. I think that a charity assumes that, I will never need this service. I'm giving this as a gift to other people and it's mutual aid looks like, I work at this food

pantry or this community market or whatever. I might need to use this or I have used this or people who volunteer here are also people, that like receive from here.

Jae:

I guess what I'm trying to say that it's a very cyclical relationship and a very mutual relationship. Then as far as like activism and the difference between that and mutual aid, I think that they are definitely related. I think that both are very political. I think that there are people that would say that maybe mutual aid isn't a political thing. But I think it absolutely is. I think that when people have their needs met, they are freed up to organize politically and more effectively.

Jae:

I actually think that mutual aid is a critical part of any political movement because you have to give people the space for them to have organizing capacity and ability and mutual aid is the best way to accomplish that in my opinion. I guess I didn't really answer Andrea's question, but that's my answer.

Sheff:

I agree with all that Jae already laid out. I think for me, it comes back to what we were talking about at the beginning of the panel about mutual aid understands that it's systems, it's a white supremacy, and racial capitalism. Systems that are creating the conditions that our communities are in and charity has a history of both being tied to colonization.

Sheff:

Exactly what Jae was saying, leaving out some people and creating boundaries of who is deserving or undeserving. That's incredibly harmful and mutual aid has that "no strings attached" politic. One other piece that Roxanne puts this in the chat where you have to organize to do mutual aid. But this summer, when we were giving out bundles of PPE to our members at Sea Tool, we were also including know your rights information and know what different laws have changed because of the pandemic. We want to make sure that there's the popular education, which means learning from our own experiences and sharing those. Figuring out how to organize in our workplaces tied to PPE and what we're given out to folks. We tried to blend them together.

Rachel:

I agree with all of that, definitely. I think the only things I didn't hear were that I feel like there's a little of, some of the differences between non-profits and charity work. Like you had said J about the hierarchy and the stigma that comes along with that, the giving and feel like you're giving down or you're that kind of helping, instead of it being a mutually beneficial.

Rachel:

Also, using the people power to resist any efforts instead of following government regulations, they're saying like your mutual aid should be really educating your volunteers of everything. In the social and in the fight beyond what you're just minimally doing. Giving things away without expectations. That's just the hugest thing. Instead of conditions, it's to support people facing the most dire conditions with no questions asked. But, it's definitely that educating these are volunteers who have given up all their extra time and they're under extra and not share money to participate in the injustice and looking to further

that the progress of your movement. Also, that members are making the decisions and instead of your members being your donors.

Acoma:

I just wanted to highlight something that Roxanne mentioned in the chat, which I think is to the point, straight to the point. Roxanne mentioned that you need to do activism to do mutual aid and charity though is giving and walking away and not really being active in the changes of the issue or the problem. I think that speaks wholeheartedly to the very core of what mutual aid is and [crosstalk 00:39:28] not charity is as well.

Roxanne:

Maybe not even just being inactive, but also maybe even being a part of the problem. When you think about where the money comes from, you got people giving the money while simultaneously still creating the issues. I just wanted to say that.

Carmen:

You speak about that, whoever just said that I would love to hear. I know where you're going, but I would love you to speak if you would, please.

Roxanne:

Are you talking about me, Roxanne?

Carmen:

Can you speak more to that please?

Carmen:

Yeah. Since I am, I'll explain it in an environmental justice life and what I've been able to tell, which I'm probably going to put myself here at risk because the same people give money to this work. Honestly, are the same people who ruined the river. I won't just say it's just one group of people or one family, but the Mississippi River was, they stole it and they banned people who were here first away from what was most precious to their environments. I mean, that's what they needed was this river to create their farming, their rituals and everything that was important to them. And in ways that would sustain. Not just sustain, but being regenerative, the land is what's most important or the water is what's most important, but Minneapolis became very rich from exploiting that river.

Carmen:

From stealing it, from taking the most important thing, and they turn it into these pieces of papers that they took down trees to make. What I'm saying is, everything that they're doing to make this money is from exploiting the things that we actually need to survive. I've been telling people a lot of this lately, bringing up the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, how our people are at the bottom of the triangle. We don't even have the bottom base of what we need, the psychological.

Carmen:

The air, the water, the food, even when we're doing this mutual aid notice, we're just getting people's basic needs met. Right? And it's like, if people weren't stealing the basic necessities of this land in the

first place and hoarding the resources, we wouldn't need their money. That's the thing is we are bamboozled to think that that is what we need when in reality, they are stealing the resources that, while we're getting the money. They're stealing the resources that actually really means something. That's what I was thinking about, the same people who ruin the river are the same people who are now paying to clean it up. That's kind of the best example I can give right now is I think that the same people who are perpetuating racist systems are the same people who are feeling guilty.

Carmen:

The non-profit industrial complex, I mean I'm a part of it too. I work at these spaces and I know that we take this money and a lot of us do great things with it. We flip it and we turn it into magic, but I'm still kind frustrated with the fact that these are, even the history of how it started was really based on the churches and who was going to kind of do the charity work. Even in the nonprofit industrial complex, it's only still mostly white people working in, and it's like 90 something percent white folks working. Making this money and that's what's creating their jobs. If we didn't have these issues of people being exploited and lacking there, the resources that they needed to survive, we wouldn't need all these people. They would be worked out of a job, that was a long way that says, I hope that was...

Rachel:

I'm so glad that you said that because I'm trying to learn how to resist all of that, how to resist the control dynamics, hierarchies, the system of furring, oppressive arrangements of charity and social services that are set up and resisting that so we're not a part of the problem.

Roxxanne:

Yeah, I don't want to stress out nobody about it or put any pressure on you. Look, this it is what it is. I'm saying we can't stop asking questions.

Andrea:

I'm seeing in the chat, both should Jae and Sheffield spoke to state and capitalist and corporations of radical movements. And I'm wondering if y'all could speak how maybe, you've been feeling like this has been happening with mutual aid movements in the Twin Cities.

Jae:

I guess just to briefly touch on the pride piece, because I do think it's related. I helped organize with TCC for Jae and a couple of other groups. I'm probably in too many groups, but I helped organize the taking back pride protest this year and I thought it was really interesting how a lot of white gay people and LGBTQ people were really upset about sort of the messaging of this protest, because it was a protest.

Jae:

We were like listen! This is how they started and you all actually co-opted it. Let's not. You don't have the room to get up in arms about something that never belonged to you in the first place. I think that it's similar to how a lot of white people are really upset by the language of mutual aid and like really upset by people telling them that they are not engaging in it appropriately and that they are replicating systems of oppression. When they do things like, just throw money at a couple. Couple of bucks at black people and then act like they've done something. We're asking you to do more than that. You should be giving black people your money at every opportunity as a white person.

Jae:

You absolutely should be doing that, but we're also asking you to actually engage with what part you play in this system and like start making steps to resist that. It's not enough to just sort of participate in mutual aid and volunteer once a week and say that you are part of dismantling anything. I think that the education right now is also, I think, a part of mutual aid, a part of, of explaining to people how these systems operate and why we're using certain tactics and why we're forced to use other tactics. I think, it's a really important part of building sustainable movements because I really don't think that a lot of people are necessarily engaging with this in a way that is sustainable. It's a very feel-good type model, which is inherent to the practice of charity and it's not what we're going for at all. That's also my long-winded response.

Carmen:

Jae, thank you so much, I just want to like hug you on the nose, real talk, on the nose, seriously!

Carmen:

I think, we have again this wrestle of white folks get your folks. We don't want to educate, go and educate yourself. The danger of that, anytime, that which is the oppressor educates itself. It's like the power of connection is missed and it's like an indictment of the power of the word.

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Carmen:

... and so, it's like a ignition of the power of the worship word, which we know, white supremacy... Written word, rather. That's how the thriving happens, right? So I will never forget... And Sheff has been around me for a little bit, so Sheff knows this. Especially doing George Floyd, I just didn't have time to be nice and be all fluffy, I just didn't. So I was giving white folks the business from a very organic place, it's either ride with us or don't. And I remember we called a ally meeting, and white folks showed up. And we literally built these pamphlets. Shenae Herbert, a good friend of mine, on how do I show up in this George Floyd Square? We literally had to do a tutorial on, this is what you do. This is what you don't do. Right?

Carmen:

And so, of course when we're doing it... No, take that off! But when I tell you the response we got from our white allies, thank you. Because of that, I'm still engaged. And so, it took me from this space of, yo, part of the educating... And I love the way that you just framed it, that education is part of Mutual Aid. Part of the educating has to come from black leadership that is able to say very unapologetically, this is how you show up. It's the retraining, or the power of the critical thought. And also being able to identify toxic and harmful ways of showing up, because a person only knows how to show up how he or she knows how to show up, right? And so, how do we balance that responsibility of not exasperating, or extracting ourselves with this need to train the exhaustion of white folks. But yet still the ownership of, yo, this is the time that we're going to have to do that, right?

Carmen:

So that when... Because I've had white people that show up that, when I say genuine, genuine, but genuinely wrong. And so, how am I able to give this space some grace of learning and undoing with

hands wide open? In a space that understands that with the reeducation of the mind, comes the responsibility of giving that education. And so, I love the way that you have just did that. But yeah, education is part of that. It is. It really, really is. I love that. So for that, COVID hug.

Rachel:

I feel you so much on the race side, because down at George Floyd Square, those first 32 days when I was down there all day and night, and I'm sure I was talking to a lot with people that you were sending down their with pamphlets, because it was a struggle for me too, on how to teach them how to do it right. I just happened to become the person that they would send people to, I would put people to work. Where they could go, and how they could help, and where that we needed it. And I'd have to speak on one of my favorite evenings down there, and there were many. But on the stage, I think it was John Lewis on the stage, and a woman had asked the crowd to put up your hand. If you're white person, put up your hand if you have never talked to another black person in your life. And I had seen almost every white person... Many of the crowd put their hand up.

Rachel:

And then they asked the black people. How many of you black people have had never had a conversation with a white person in your life? And a lot of them put up their hands. And it was one of the most moving moments that I did not understand was at that level, and I realized that in my power, I can help this. We had people coming from Canada, they were coming to come down and serve food with us for three days. They were coming from all over, these white people. But they really did come there with open minds, and how can I do this right? Because I know that I'm part of the problem. How could I not be part of the problem? And that difficulty with, how do we keep this our people? Feeding our people? And us getting through this, and this healing. But also it's going to take every finger, and every toe, and every white fist and black fist out here, getting the job done.

Jae:

Yeah. And something else, since we've touched on it a little bit. I think that there's been a lot of educating of black folks in this moment, too. Especially from queer black people. I think that for me, as a queer black person, sometimes movements do feel hostile to me specifically, because you have people who see that as, oh, that's a white people thing. Oh, only white people can be gay. Which literally, what? But I think that... I had a lot of interesting conversations with older movement folks, just about LGBTQ history. And that is also a part of Mutual Aid, I think. Of helping us see each other and see who your allies actually are, as opposed to... I don't know.

Jae:

I think that there's a way to educate that doesn't coddle people, or compromise on the actual message. But I do think that we have to understand that colonialism has stolen so much of our own identities from us, and has stolen so much of our shared history, and shared struggle between black and indigenous folks, for example. Or the fact that there are black and indigenous folks, or queer history. There's just so much that has been lost because of coloniality, and part of this work is, I think, undoing some of that. And showing people that, okay, you have more in common with this trans person than you do with the police. I don't know. I think that it's been very tough to have to do things like, hey, maybe don't say transphobic things in this activist space.

Jae:

We're not doing that. Or like, hey, we're not going to try and drive a wedge between black communities and Asian communities. We have common struggle, that kind of stuff, and educating people on intersectionality. But I think that it's also been really rewarding, because I think that people have made connections that they wouldn't have made otherwise. So the education piece of it is both a blessing and a curse of, it's really wonderful, but it's also just hard work.

Rachel:

I definitely feel from being from the country, and having a lot of white friends, especially during the George Floyd murder, not knowing how to receive it, and trying to be a median between the races. And I love talking to different people, and bringing people together. And I think that that's something that's different with this time around, is that down at George Floyd Square, it's every race, it's every... It's just everybody in every kind of way with the shared love and drive to equality. And it's different this time around.

Sheff:

Yeah. I'm humbled to be part of this conversation. Thanks for all of your wisdom that you all are sharing. Yeah, I had one other thought around the co-option of Mutual Aid, and I think what Roxanne has been bringing up around ongoing... Asking ourselves the questions, and for one, I think non-profits should always be asking ourselves, how do we vision ourself out of existence?

Sheff:

How do we have systemic change so this material need is met? And I also... Yeah, being part of a large fund this summer, the Minnesota Immigrant Families Fund that ran through nonprofits, just began to ask myself, is this really Mutual Aid? Because we did distribute \$1,000,000 to families across the state, which I'm proud of, but it was slow, and GoFundMe sucks, and it took a while to transfer money, and it was so painful in a lot of ways, and it was not rapidly getting money to folks in the way that we had initially intended. And none of us had ever run a fund like that either, so there's a lot of learning. But that was something... I was like, is mutual aid the right word to describe this? I don't know.

Andrea:

Thank you all so much for your thoughts so far. We did want to build in a five-minute break before we jump into Q and A, in case folks want to run to the bathroom, or get water, or food. And so, I have a slide ready to go that will just say five-minute break, and we'll be back at 1:05. But before I do that, if anyone wanted to offer final thoughts before we head into break.

Roxanne:

Can we get the next question before break? Or is that cheat-

Andrea:

I think Peter is going to be scouring through any comments and questions in the chat. I don't know. Peter, is there anything ready to go that they could think about during break?

Peter:

There's a question about George Floyd Square, and how does that space connect? And I think that the questions that you've all been raising about multi-racial relationships, and... So, given that there is now

seemingly quite a threat to George Floyd Square, that there are people watching today, listening, who have questions about how you see that space relating to the dynamics that you're talking about. So maybe that's a good thing to take into the break, and come back and talk about.

Acoma:

All right. Thank you.

Andrea:

Yes. Thank you so much. So, back in five.

Acoma:

Five minutes. 1:05, everyone.

Andrea:

All right. So the question we're considering starting with was the relationship between George Floyd Square today, and the things that you all have been talking about with mutual aid, and the risks of co-option, corporate and state co-option, and the educational aspects, and why that is important to mutual aid.

Andrea:

And so, yeah, we could... I'm not sure if Carmen and Roxanne are back yet. If y'all don't mind typing into chat quickly, or turning video on quickly, that would be great. Otherwise, we could let the panelists begin sharing their thoughts.

Acoma:

I'll put the actual question in the chat.

Andrea:

Cool, cool.

Acoma:

So, you can refer back to it. Okay. So the question is, what is your vision of the George Floyd Memorial site, and the community going forward, and their organization's role in that vision?

Roxanne:

I'm sorry. I did hear my name in the background. I'll still trying to find my brush. I ain't calm my hair down. I'm like, "Wait, where's my brush?" Where is it?

Acoma:

You're out.

Roxanne:

Taking things slow. You know what I mean? It's like one of my first days where I didn't have to do anything, didn't have to go anywhere. So I'm like, I don't even want to be seen, y'all. I just want to be in the car right now. But did y'all ask... I heard my name. I'm sorry.

Acoma:

Oh yeah, no problem. I put a audience member's question into the chat, and I'll just read it off again. It said, what is the panelists' vision of the George Floyd Memorial site? And the community going forward? And their organization's role in that vision? I know this question is in response to the city councils' meeting that they had yesterday, where they mentioned that after the trial that begins on March 8th, they plan to reopen 38th and Chicago. Do any of you all have thoughts on that? Or how your organizations might be a part of that effort? Yeah.

Roxxanne:

Well, for me, I have felt like, as someone who lives on the North Side, I almost feel like I haven't been over there enough to even say what should happen right there. I think I play in a certain position. As a organizer, I've built relationships with people. I'm willing to get in a room and have these conversations, or these hard conversations, with whoever they need to be with. But I also have been trying to stick to what I'm doing already consistently, and trying not to react so much.

Roxxanne:

So, I'm trying to finish the things that I've got already on my plate, and that I've had before everybody started to do organizing. I see sometimes we react a lot, and I want to make sure that if somebody asked me to support, or to try to help organize that situation, of course I would be honored, but I haven't been. And I've lived over South, actually. It's not like I didn't have family over there, and it's not like I don't feel like I belong to that area. It's just that there's so much going on right there. There's so much energy there right now, and... I don't know. I just feel like I would rather be asked for someone who has been leading over there, to ask me that question. But just to answer it really quick, I'm down to support whatever the community wants to do at the end of the day.

Roxxanne:

So yeah, I'm with the community, and I'm willing to be there at the table, or wherever we need to be to make that happen. But I don't think it's for me to say what happens there.

Acoma:

And I know... Rachel, not to put you on the spot, I know you've been doing a lot of direct action in that site. Do you plan on continuing doing work over there? Yeah, what's your-

Rachel:

Yeah, I'm also a part of the George Floyd Square committee, and our meetings. We are absolutely not for the Square opening, and we are not intending on letting that happen at all. There's a lot of organizations that attend these meetings, and that are involved down there at the Square. And I definitely feel privileged to be asked to be in them. Janelle being one of them. But definitely, the plan is to rally the people.

Rachel:

And nobody really wants to hear what the Mayor's games have to say about any of it. That is sacred ground for us. And the role that George Floyd Square plays in the world and this movement is much bigger than anything that any of us have to do. It's much bigger than all of us. And our group, Twin Cities Relief, is so committed to the Square. One, all the sustainable planting that's down there on the roads and stuff, that's our group. Andrew Jones is a scientist at the University of Minnesota, and he's one who's been grilling with us from day one down there. And he says we've got the University's backing behind it, and we plan on making that whole area as green as possible, all sustainable planting and living. And this summer, we'll hopefully get up some greenhouses too, and be able to move north, but really just make that all green, and make it all sustainable planting that the whole community can just grab food in the Square. It'd all be free.

Rachel:

We are going to come down for the trial. This trial is, it's a big deal for us, and we're planning the one-year anniversary as well. So, there's a lot going on with the Square, and there's a lot that we use as part of this movement. If you look up hashtag, no justice, no streets, or hashtag all Minneapolis, you're going to find all of these groups that are pushing for all of this. And our group is certainly committed to that. We know that George Floyd Square, what it gave to us, and we were just a bunch of strangers that went down there, and then couldn't leave, and the knowledge that it gave to white people, to black people, to turn all of the pain and all of the hurt, and turn that into healing.

Rachel:

To have an area there where no egos are. That it's just sacred ground, and to have these people really be able to go to a spot, and really be able to get on your knees and pray with one another. And it's a beautiful place. There's so much there that you can't imagine that are going on daily. And they do so much with that square. I know when I was just living there in that speedway for 32 days straight, every single day, there was something so beautiful, and people who, like I'm saying, John Lewis being down there, and people just... It's too important, and it's too important to all of us. But yeah, I have to say that the Mayor is going to be met with a lot of hostility, and it's not going to be something that's going to go over well, or going to go over at all. And Twin Cities Relief is certainly going to have a big part in that, or at least we're going to try our best.

Andrea:

There's another question in the chat that came in, which-

Carmen:

Can I weigh in on that real quick?

Andrea:

Oh, sorry. Yes.

Carmen:

That's okay. Yep. And so, George Floyd is a part of Central Neighborhood, and so that's my world. And I live in Phillips. I live like five, six blocks down. And so with that, it is a very diverse community, so I have to make sure that I speak to that. It is a very diverse community. So the community is split, and we don't hear a lot about that. The community literally is split upon opening versus closed. And the stance that

Central Neighborhood would take on that is, the work has to be able to surpass whether the street opens to close as we fight for justice. And I think that is where some of the tear... Some of the community does support-

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Carmen:

... is where some of the tier, some of the community does support the closing of it, some of it does support the opening of it. But the bigger picture is going to have to lie in the work. As Rachel mentioned, there has been amazing work. Literally we cannot even list everything that has been done that has been the fruit of what the street represent, and even the beautiful art that's over there. All these connections that are made. The challenge is when we are connected to... It's not just a street and this is something I've been screaming from the mountaintops. If there is not a connection to the work, you will be heartbroken on fighting for the streets. And I'm not saying there's an either or, but I'm saying that how do we continue to fight for justice, right?

Carmen:

How do we continue to fight for dismantling racism without forsaking what that sacred space is? But sacred space and sacred people. And so there has to be a balance of the both and to be able to speak more directly with the way that central neighborhood will continue to show up, because May 25th for us was not the beginning of the work, will be to continuously be an organization that fights towards to do work through the lens of anti-racism, that will continue to be and willing to be even propel. Even do it in a more deeper way because of May 25th. That's what it did, it made our roots. It demands us to go deeper into that work so that the street would not limit us, that we will hold that, we hold the community that supports that. And we hold the community that has a counter thought as well. But how do we do the work, that will surpass all of that?

Acoma:

Thank you Carmen.

Andrea:

Thank you so much. The other question that I wanted to point to which came up in the chat, I feel like it's really relevant to everything else we're speaking to as well about George Floyd Square and how it's being used, and the questions that are coming up now about the future of the space. And so this question is... I'll read it out loud. Someone is interested in space production as a means of enlarging freedom movements. And in particular, they are wondering about black geographies produced materially and imaginatively. And so, the question was how can mutual aid workers better utilize physical space? And I feel like anyone who has been involved in creating mutual aid sites like literal sites can speak to their experiences about this.

Roxanne:

So I work in tactical urbanism at Juxtaposition Arts. And it really started out as just a community engagement. We did interviews with community years ago. And then we started doing some more work downtown on 7th & Nicollet. The way we started was they were going to build a police station on 7th & Nicollet downtown. And they reached out to Jackson, like, "What else could we do here?" Instead of, "I think the downtown council, they reached out to us. So what else can we do besides bringing in another

police station? We want to know something creative." So I'm interested in doing that type of work Juxta does... Or tactical urbanism was about changing physical spaces so that it meets the needs of the community in a valuable, relevant manner. So I'm interested in working with Juxta to see what we can do in the future.

Roxanne:

If there is a possibility to create a space there, politically and physically change it, I'm down for that type of stuff. I felt like I'm maybe all over the place. I'm like, "It's exciting to know that that space could be even more. And we can still have things, all things that the community wants." Maybe not, everybody's going to be happy, but I felt like it could be a space that's still a shrine and a healing space. It doesn't have to change. I don't... Our communities are pretty traumatized. And so as an organizer, I'm traumatized and got PTSD around us here. I know the young people are ready to go into battle. I've seen on both sides how it affected our cities, our communities.

Roxanne:

And I just hope that we can focus on the creative part of it, and we can focus on visualizing and how we can get what we need right there in that space and everything doesn't... I get it, the government has always been violent towards us, right? It's violence every fucking where we turn, but our communities are already traumatized. We've got to be a little more strategic on how we fight for things. And so, I don't know how we do that. I don't have all the answers, but I am saying that I'm willing. I'm willing to be there at the table, but I'm also trying to step back as an organizer who's been out here for a minute and just be like, "You know what, whatever people do, it's everybody's turn to try to figure it out." I don't think a lot of us are tired and a lot of us are tired of fighting.

Roxanne:

So, so I think it's the younger generation's turn always in history, unfortunately to figure out how to get through this shit, but I think that we all did it as young people. And now I'm getting to the point where I'm just excited to see what y'all are going to do with it. I already see how I'm just taking out that space and occupying it and taking ownership of it and accountability of it. That is a beautiful thing.

Roxanne:

So just hoping that we can figure out how to... Also just with the pandemic and what happened last year and what our communities already were struggling, right? We've got to figure out a way how to not keep re-traumatizing each other, because it's not going to help sustain us. I see people get burnt on this work. And I've said that we don't need five or six [inaudible 01:18:44] rallies on the same day. We don't. And could we be doing something better with that energy? Do we need hundreds of thousands of people to be out in the middle of the street, or do we need them marching into this office? For real, do we need 100,000 people to send emails, or do we need them out there throwing fucking milk at the police? I'm just telling y'all I've seen a lot of us really sometimes re-traumatize our own selves.

Roxanne:

And so that's what I see as someone who's been in this a little bit... At least a little... A nice decade, which is not long. There're some elder people who have been seeing that shit for a while, right? But man, I'm tired already and it's just been 10 years. I'm like, "Damn!"

Jae:

I want to talk a little bit about what Roxanne was saying about, I think that that strategy is definitely a part of sustainability and should be a larger discussion about, sustainability, I don't. And I don't think that everyone who is involved in this movement is always thinking strategically. I think that sometimes people do. And I don't want to downplay the importance of being in touch with your emotions in this kind of work and letting that guide some of your decision-making. But I think that there is a little bit of like, "Okay, we have to like do something about this right now. And there are some things that I think happened over the summer that it was like, "I wish that people would have just taken a minute and thought about really what is the best way to move forward here. But the other thing that I wanted to say is that...

Roxanne:

That part in fight or flight, right?

Jae:

Yeah, [crosstalk 01:20:49].

Roxanne:

Fight or flight, fight or flight, you know what I'm saying? [crosstalk 01:20:52].

Jae:

Yeah. [crosstalk 01:20:52] Which is obviously useful in certain situations, but isn't the best way to respond all the time. And then the other thing is that I really want to build something intergenerational, because I feel like there has been this weird split between the old people and the young people. I'm in a weird middle ground, I guess. I'm still in my 20s, but I don't feel like a young person. I feel like we really need to be more intentional about intergenerational space, because the thing about the whole passing of the torch narrative is that it really ignores how movement building is foundational and how you don't have a young people movement without whatever came before. And I really feel... I don't know.

Jae:

I just really feel like that's something... That's a narrative that is maybe getting lost. And I think that there's a lot of this, "Gen Z, it's their turn to do..." Listen, Gen Z is doing great. We're all doing our best here. Wonderful! But let's not pretend that these are simply issues of generation. Being racist or being bigoted is not an issue of generational politics. It's not a substitution for class analysis. It's not a substitution for critical race examination. It's not enough to just be young. You need to still be engaging with all parts of your community. And I think that that's something that we as organizers need to be really intentional about. And obviously I know Roxanne wasn't saying that at all, but just it made me think of [crosstalk 01:22:46].

Roxanne:

... that'd be a lot of young people. That's why I be like, "Y'all could have a say."

Jae:

For real.

Roxanne:

Though all I'm saying is don't expect me to come in after y'all and tired yourselves out at 10 fucking rallies in one day, there's a competition to who can do the best rally. And I'm like, "Y'all can have it." If we [inaudible 01:23:08], I'm not out there trying to get shot by rubber bullets and shit. I just be feeling like we'd be doing too much to ourselves. And North side already got bullets flying around here all the fucking time. I don't want to show up at this. It's supposed to be healing too. And that's why I get it, but I'm also like, "Man, I'm not [crosstalk 01:23:27]."

Jae:

We need a diversity of tactics. And I think that that's something that is also not necessarily being held by everyone who is prominent in activist space.

Carmen:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jae:

And that's something that we have to get back to, I think.

Carmen:

Absolutely. Jae, I definitely agree with you 100%. Yeah. The need of us being... I'm assuming that... We'll obviously I, because I don't know that myself being an ADOS, African Descendant of a Slave, that's really how we were able to transition. I will never forget. I had a meeting with an elder and I asked him about passing the torch. He said, "there is no torch." That broke my heart. Like, "What the hell do you mean there was no torch." Right? And so I don't know whether it was this misplaced trust, because he had the knowledge. I knew his active use of history that I wouldn't even ask him to come to the table. But I do believe that there has to be, once again, this decolonization of our mindset in which we really had a village approach to things. And Jae, I feel a little bit offended when you say, "People so defined, people." Are we talking about on the other side of what?

Carmen:

Right. But real talk, my oldest is 20. And so there're different ways that he moves that I just can't move. I'm 43. And there're different ways that I moved that he can't. I just believe that the power force and the inclusiveness of it all makes us just this powerful force that inter-generationally and the wisdom and the swiftness and the strength that we can do together, man, it's second to none. It's needed. And our ancestors are reaching for that. They set us up for that. Roxxanne, you [inaudible 01:25:05].

Roxxanne:

No, I'm sorry. Since I wasn't saying to you, I was answering that question.

Carmen:

I just said it.

Roxxanne:

I'm like, "What shall we do?[Crosstalk 01:25:14] I don't know if people want to talk to the mayor or not." Do you feel like y'all have access to the mayor? So I'm confused a little bit. Do y'all want to talk to the mayor? Do y'all not want to talk to the mayor? I heard though. I heard people don't give a fuck about

what the mayor has to say. So I'm not really sure who the leaders are out of Square. I'm going to keep it real, but whoever is leading it, I just hope we keep each other safe. That's my thing right now.

Carmen:

There was just a meeting last week and I know that a followup is coming. I know that there is a team that is working on that.

Rachel:

Yeah. It's March 6th.

Acoma:

Yeah. Just a quick thing for all of our viewers. We are getting into the question of what would we need to do in order to have a face-to-face with the mayor/governor, in order to express concerns about the Square? They also said, "I think many of the folks opposed, never set foot there hearing from those that may have some weight."

Roxanne:

Well, first of all, the mayor doesn't talk to me since he was city council person. He'll talk to me, but he's not really feeling me like that. But I know I could get a meeting with the mayor. I just feel like a bunch of us could. So I don't know, is that really what's wanted or... I don't know who's asking these questions.

Andrea:

It was just the question that came up in the chat which was exactly, who would have [inaudible 01:26:54] spoke to?

Rachel:

I think like Carmen was saying that it's about the work and not as much as the George Floyd Square. It's about our boots on the ground and us collectively getting together and doing the work, and we need to apply that social pressure to the mayor. We need to apply it in every angle and in every way that we can. And one thing is never going to be enough. We got to hit them on all angles.

Roxanne:

Is there a plan with that? A plan to further grow that square? Is there...

Rachel:

Well, I've been to the meetings, there are several different organizers, and like Carmen was saying, and different community leaders that have ideas and they have things that they could be placed that they're doing. There're different signatures they're all getting, there're different hashtags and stuff that they're mobilizing and different events. And now they are doing one on the 27th down there at the square. But I know from my group where we just try to help and support us with that manpower and doing the workout here, and however we can support. And right now, we're trying to help [crosstalk 01:28:07].

Roxanne:

... show up or... Because I haven't seen it, but I haven't been on Facebook like that. And I don't mind getting the emails. I know I'm on one of them south side, you know what I'm saying? Call things that when things are popping off, you know what I'm saying? That type of thing. But where is this information?

Carmen:

So that's how come there hasn't been a lot of publicity around it.

Acoma:

Yeah. Do you want to speak to that? It's a little bit past time. We're at 1:31, and I don't want to hold y'all any longer than you committed to. But if there are any thoughts that folks want to end the panel on or any messages that y'all want to give each other or to the audience?

Rachel:

I would just want to say, thank you for having me here. I appreciate all the information that I've learned and that I've gathered from all of you. It's certainly I'm going to be a continuing learning the process as we get through this year. And I know since he's relief, we're babies and we're just learning how to jump in and we love to learn from the Roxanne and Carmens and the Jays and the Sheffs [crosstalk 01:29:22].

Roxanne:

You all are doing just fine. I'm thankful to even be on the call to meet y'all and to finally see a lot of y'all doing this stuff. I was a baby raised out there too. I used to go to central. I worked off at 38. I used to be over there all the time, but I just... It's been a lot happening and I moved over north and I'm from both. I love both areas. What happened over there affected us over here. So I would love to see some sort of north side, south side intentional come together, twin cities in general. So let me know. I just might need to cut out because I'm tired. And I'm going to say that and I just want to be real about human shit. So thank y'all. And would love to hear more about what y'all are doing.

Rachel:

[crosstalk 01:30:12] I'll take you up on that, Roxanne.

Carmen:

We thank you, Roxanne. We've been seeing North side and South side like we are Chicago. We're five minutes away.

Roxanne:

Where do you think [crosstalk 01:30:24].

Carmen:

... black people here for us to be disjointed. Come on, let's get the work done y'all regardless [inaudible 01:30:34].

Roxanne:

But y'all should see what's going on over here on the north side. It's a lot. So I want to tap in, but I also don't want to burn out.

Carmen:

Absolutely.

Acoma:

Sheff or Jay, do you have any final thoughts?

Sheff:

Yeah. I'm also really grateful to have been here and learned from y'all. I think [inaudible 01:30:55] jumped into Mutual Aid in a new way this year. And we have a question to ask ourselves of how we incorporate Mutual Aid going forward strategically alongside with long-term movement building. And I've been grateful to learn from what y'all are doing to bring that back.

Acoma:

Thank you.

Jae:

Yeah. This has been really great. It's been really cool to get to meet a lot of other activists in the area. To me it's so important for us to all be talking to each other and to really be, I don't know, just dialoguing about stuff and the different problems in the different areas that we all inhabit. And so I think this was a really great opportunity. And I hope to see many of you again, I'm sure I will. I'm surprised that I actually haven't seen Roxanne. Because I also live in north end. I work with TC for Jay a lot and they all know you. I just had never actually met you. So it was good to meet you.

Acoma:

Great. Thank you all again. I know all the work that you're doing is really mobilizing people, expanding solidarity and building movements. So thank you so much. I know Peter just mentioned that keep East Side Freedom Library in mind as a space, as a collection of resources and as a bridge among generations, communities and as a platform. Thank you all again, thank you East Side for allowing to host us. This has been great.

Andrea:

Thank you so much again. And our captioner and ASL interpreters, you all have been great too. And thank you for dealing with my last minute emails about this.

Peter:

I want to thank Carla for her work on the tech. And thank you all for coming and all the folks who tuned in and added their energy and their thoughts. Andrea and Acoma, Why don't you just say something about what you're working on that's coming up at Moon Palace?

Acoma:

Yeah. So Andrea and I have been working on a series of free public programs. This one is one of them. We're doing six altogether. But basically what we're hoping to do out of everything that we've discussed here is really build an outdoor exhibition. And it's actually going to be opening up in May 2021. And it's going to be in the open lot right outside of Moon Palace Books, where the farmer's market is located. We're going to have a mural there, where South High School students can come together and create a mural. We're going to be having lots of 2D art. And we're going to be having an exploration of the history of Mutual Aid efforts within the twin cities. And we're going to use some quotes that were said today. Because I think the knowledge that was shared today is so valuable to this movement building. But our project is called History For the Future, and we would love to see you all there and continue to participate with us. Did I miss anything, Andrea? I think that was it.

Andrea:

That's a great explanation. The idea is that all of the stuff coming from the programming and especially this discussion will really inform how we think about Mutual Aid and how we want to think about the space, so that the lot next to Moon Palace will be used for the exhibition. And so I would just leave it there and thank you all again so much.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:35:11]