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Anti-Capitalism, Mutual Aid, and Asset-Based Community Development

Afrofuturist Abolitionists of the Americas

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The ABCD model discourages development brought in from an outside source, but rather energizes change and development from within.

For truly sustainable development, it's important to focus on a community's strengths versus solely its needs. The important factor is finding the area where local assets meet local needs.

Creating Communities that are able to self-govern, and that can provide their own social safety net, will greatly reduce the need for the State.

Community assets include our parks, our churches, community centers, food banks and free legal services to name just a few; but especially our community members who are doctors, artists, teachers, speakers, athletes, engineers, care givers, food growers, musicians, organizers, etc. The people are our greatest asset because every member of the community has something to give.

“It is our duty to fight for our freedom.

It is our duty to win.

We must love each other and support each other.

We have nothing to lose but our chains”.

-Assata Shakur

“We say we're not going to fight capitalism with black capitalism, but we're going to fight it with socialism”.

-Fred Hampton

LIFE UNDER CAPITALISM

Life under Capitalism is not just the “normal” state of affairs or the result of “human nature”.

Capitalism is a fundamentally Racist, anti-Black, sexist, ecological and exploitative economic system based on private ownership of the means of production (land, factories, equipment, etc) and their operation for profit by the few at the expense of the many.

Characteristics central to capitalism include the ownership of private property (not to be confused with public property or personal property), capital accumulation, wage labor, violent land and resource theft, and the exploitation, oppression and murder of Black and Brown people all over the world.

Under capitalism, corporations and employers attempt to squeeze the most work and time out of workers that they can, (especially those that are Black and Brown) while paying as little as possible and providing as few benefits as possible. Those who are incapable of or unwilling to make profits for capitalists, are considered disposable, and are criminalized.

The State uses the police and the courts as tools of oppression to enforce the laws laid down by the capitalist property-owning class.

In order to sustain themselves, capitalist states steal the labor and natural resources of Africa, South America, the Middle East, and of poor Black and Brown people in so-called developed countries, bombing us, burning us, displacing us, gentrifying us, destroying our homes and our cultures, and locking us up at a profit just for trying to survive.

Capitalism won't save Black and Brown people; it requires the continued brutal exploitation of Black and Brown people in the United States and around the world in order to survive. Neither will voting for the lesser of two evils, or more "representation" in the media. A few high profile success stories or a couple more rich Black actors, athletes or politicians do not speak to the every day experiences of the majority of Black and Brown people struggling under this white supremacist economic system.

Socialism (or Communism) is a political and economic theory of social organization that advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole, not a select and privileged few.

Instead of capitalism and reliance on the State, we believe that the only way forward for Black and Brown people in the U.S. and around the world is to build strength within our own communities, by engaging in the principle of mutual aid, (sharing with and helping each other), and beginning to engage in the hard work of building our own community institutions and services outside of those inadequately provided by the State.

These include our own free schools, free quality accessible healthcare for every member of our community, worker co-ops, the infrastructures for growing and distributing our own food, and a culture of community defense.

White supremacy and capitalism would like us to believe that we are alone in this struggle and that we are powerless. We are not alone and we are not powerless. We believe that when everyday people come together and do the work of community, we have the power and the capacity to organize, struggle with, feed, educate, and defend our neighborhoods better than the state, the police, or people from outside of our communities could ever do.

WHAT IS MUTUAL AID?

Poverty and want are the direct result of this disgusting capitalist system, strengthened by systems of Racism, Sexism, Ableism, Cis-Heterosexual patriarchy, land theft and labor theft that combine to maintain the inequality and injustice in our homes, in our neighborhoods and in society. Capitalism tells us that it's everyone for themselves and that we should have to "grind" just to eat and live. We believe that quality food, safe and comfortable housing, medical care, and education, are things that every person should have unrestricted access to and that the resources are already present in our communities to provide these services.

Mutual Aid is a voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for the mutual benefit of everyone. Mutual aid, as opposed to charity, does not imply moral superiority of the giver over the receiver. Examples include organizing and benefiting from food drives, donating clothing or money directly to those in need, financial advice, tutoring, child-care, help navigating social services, and community defense networks, to name a few. Mutual Aid is based on the principle of investing in our communities now, for a return later. Under capitalism, the person who offers aid today may be the person who needs Aid tomorrow. Strong communities practice mutual aid.

HOW DO I CONNECT WITH MUTUAL AID NETWORKS IN MY COMMUNITY? WHAT IS ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach that sparks change and development based on using the existing gifts and capacities of people and their communities.