

*"We called them survival programs pending revolution. They were designed to help the poeple survive until their consciousness is raised, which is only the first step in the revolution to produce a new America... During a flood the raft is a life-saving device, but it is only a means of getting to higher ground. So, too, with survival programs, which are emergency services. In themselves they do not change the social conditions, but they are life-saving vehicles until conditions change."*

*– Huey Newton, Co-Founder and Chairman of the Black Panther Party*

Survival programs, mutual aid, community defense and networks of care – there are many strategies and programs that work toward the singular, people-powered aim of ensuring all people have access to safety, dignity, and an autonomous life.

The Black Panther Party defended themselves against racist policing with more than just guns: they started many other survival programs such as, Free Breakfast for Children, Free Clothing Program, Free Busing to Prisons Program, Sickel Cell Anemia Research Foundation, Free Housing Cooperative Program, People's Free Medical Research Health Clinic, and many more. Once labeled by then-director of the FBI J. Edgar Hoover as "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country", the BPP knew that codifying community care was a structural necessity in posing a meaningful militant challenge to the control of the state.

Its harder to fight cops if you're hungry, ill, or struggling to find a safe place to sleep.

In Lane County and all over the region, the tension is continuing to build between people getting their basic needs met, and engaging in efforts to resist an increasingly oppressive state regime. As the housing crisis, wealth disparity, federal cuts to social services, and generally worsening economic and social conditions intensify, the barriers to achieving stability are intensifying. Individualism, despite being a mythological ideal within our culture, is not a viable survival strategy. One of the main things that keeps people safe is being able to get their material needs met, and when people turn their back on those who are disenfranchised, they make the world less safe for all of us.

Inversely, programs that provide low or no barrier access to food, health care, and shelter create opportunities for people to stabilize and take the competitive edge off of survival. When built and powered by the people, such programs strengthen interdependence and power within community, and lessens dependence on a state that leverages access to resources to keep people compliant. Police have long targeted and harassed groups such as Food not Bombs that provide free resources to the community. Its almost as though addressing people's disregarded needs challenges the social order, which state agents are charged to protect.

We need collective networks of care. Taking care of each other is not only a moral imperative, it is in our own best interest, and its a winning strategy.

As we organize in this way, we teach ourselves and each other that we are all inherently deserving of safety and care. There's enough food, enough housing, enough care, enough love, for everyone. In rejecting the capitalist lie that we must compete for our survival needs, we tend to the garden of neighborly love. In working together to build survival programs that become networks of care, we till the ground to become fertile for resistance.

*"At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality."*

– Ernesto "Che" Guevara