
2022

Dignity & Power **NOW**

**MUTUAL AID
IMPACT
REPORT**

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Dignity & Power Now's Mutual Aid Program is an abolitionist practice that offers solidarity, not charity to those impacted by the prison system.

The Dignity and Power Now (DPN) Mutual Aid program was established in April of 2020 (formerly COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund) to help address the social, economic, and environmental hardships faced by community members who have experienced loss, hardship, and health concerns from the impact of COVID-19. The program provided access to PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), COVID testing kits, emergency food, household supplies, clothing assistance, financial assistance, and rental assistance.

Over the years, the program has evolved from an emergency response program that supported everyone to a Mutual Aid program focused on system-impacted community members that centers solidarity over charity. System-impacted people are often disenfranchised from support programs due to their records, however, DPN's Mutual Aid program works to remove that barrier, instead, we ensure that our community's needs are being met with dignity. In line with DPN's mission, the Mutual Aid program uses abolitionist practices to put financial resources and supplies directly into the hands of those at the center of the movement – formerly-incarcerated individuals and their families.

INTRODUCTION



OUR PURPOSE



**For formerly
incarcerated people
and families
supporting their
incarcerated
loved ones.**

The purpose of the Mutual Aid program is to:

- Alleviate economic crisis situations of system-impacted households by preventing disconnections of utility services or eviction.
- Facilitate the maintenance of household sufficiency through the provision of supply-based resources, including food, clothing, and infant and household supplies.
- Identify partners or sources of support, referral and connection focused on the direct support of system-impacted individuals' families and communities.
- Connect system-impacted households to coalition and advocacy opportunities against the prison industrial complex.
- Provide greater shares of resource equity for all individuals, families, and communities impacted by carceral systems of oppression.



MASS INCARCERATION

Mass incarceration and its violent effects hit Black and Brown communities much harder than other communities due to systemic racism, discrimination, concentrated urban poverty, and other factors. DPN's Mutual Aid Program is a response to the mass inequalities produced by the justice system. Let's look at some facts:



African-American adults are 5.9 times as likely to be incarcerated than white people. (1)



Due to their records, Black men and women are disproportionately affected by unemployment compared with their white counterparts. The unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated Black women is 44% and 35% for Black men. Versus white women at 23% and white men at 18%. (2)



A study found that even where formerly incarcerated white respondents were more disadvantaged than other populations – meaning they had higher rates of physical disability and drug addiction, were less ready for employment, and were more socially isolated immediately after prison release – they still showed their employment rates were higher and their earnings were nearly double those of formerly incarcerated Black and Hispanic individuals. (5)



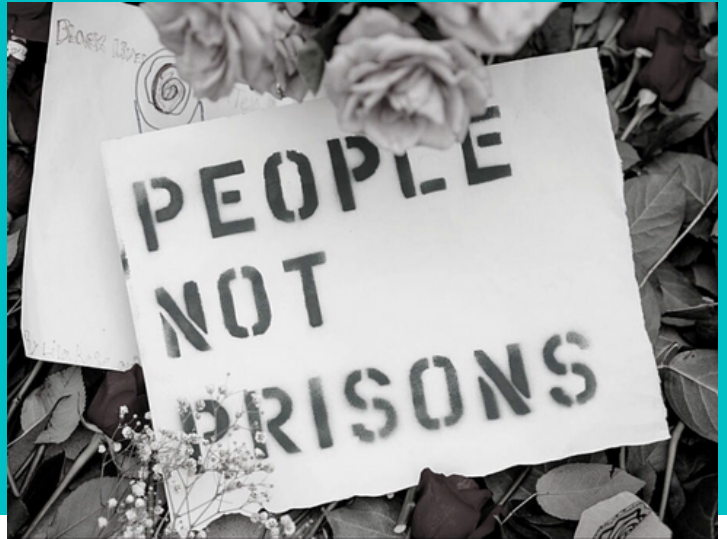
Although poverty-level wages are common among formerly incarcerated populations, Black and Hispanic individuals faced the most severe economic hardship. (3)



Formerly incarcerated Black and Hispanic individuals have lower total earnings than whites even after accounting for health, human capital, social background, crime and criminal justice involvement, and job readiness. (4)



OUR COMMUNITY DOES NOT NEED POLICE AND CAGES.



Los Angeles County has the largest jail system in the United States (US) and the US has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world. The effects of mass incarceration in Los Angeles are severe and widespread. (6)

WE NEED COMMUNITY CARE AND TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE.

On any given day, over 14,000 people are incarcerated in LA County jails. (7) Los Angeles' Men's Central Jail (MCJ) is the largest jail in the nation and is consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous facilities in the country. Many of our Mutual Aid applicants served time in LA county jails and prisons, and so many voice how difficult it is to transition back into society without support or resources.

While California lifted the ban that denies incarcerated people welfare benefits, it is still incredibly difficult for system-impacted individuals to access support and fair-wage employment. (8) Many members of our Mutual Aid community have noted experiencing discrimination due to their criminal record by employers and landlords, alienation from family members, harassment from parole officers, as well as significant employment disadvantages from being incarcerated, such as the lack of technological know-how.

Our community does not need police and cages. **We need resources, healing, and political education. We need community care and transformative justice.** Mutual aid is just one way of bringing the community together to create sustainable systems of care – one that does not rely on violence and oppression.



OVERVIEW AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Mutual Aid program has experienced some programmatic changes since 2020 based on community feedback, operational capability, mutual aid coverage areas, and organizational strategy. We use an application-based process that allows the Mutual Aid team to assess the needs of the applicant and ensures that resources are provided to families and individuals impacted by incarceration.

Key Indicator	Activity / Project	Outcome
Mutual Aid serves about 10-15 system-impacted individuals per week. Since 2020, the program has expensed over \$1.4 million dollars.	We've provided 1,858 Mutual Aid deliveries to community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 557 Financial Assistance delivered • 1,210 Rental Assistance delivered • 1,795 supplies delivered
Population Served		
90% of all Mutual Aid recipients are formerly incarcerated individuals.	The majority of Mutual Aid applicants are Black and Brown system-impacted folks.	More than 81% identify as Black or Brown. More than 50% identify as Black or African American.
		Top 5 Zip Codes Served
Mutual Aid services are prioritized for prison-impacted folks currently residing in California (CA) and were incarcerated in CA.	Mutual Aid applicants are from predominantly Black and Brown areas in California.	91331 - Pacoima, Hansen Hills, Arleta 90011 - South Central, South Park, Central Alameda 90044 - South LA, Vermont Vista, Westmont, West Athens, Harbor Gateway North 91411 - Van Nuys 912113 - San Diego, Logan Heights, Barrio Logan, Lincoln Park



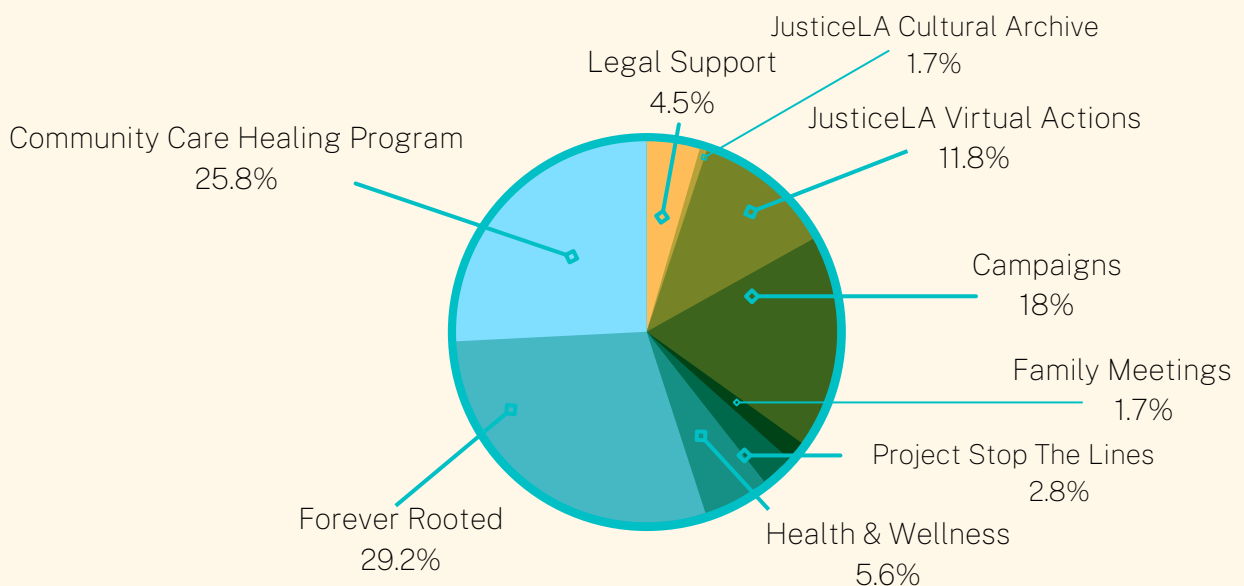
MUTUAL AID 2022 HIGHLIGHT

We work all year to adapt our support to meet the needs of formerly incarcerated and system-impacted communities. In 2022 alone, the Mutual Aid program completed:

- **583 deliveries which consisted of financial, rental assistance, and supplies**
- Each support ranges from **\$500-\$1,000** depending on the impacted status.
- Supply bags include but were not limited to the following:
 - Shampoo, conditioner, hand soap, body soap, body lotion, face masks, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, diapers, baby wipes, socks, menstrual products, toothbrush and toothpaste, school supplies, infant and children’s clothes and toys, newborn supplies, and more.
 - We work all year long to adapt our supply list to meet the community’s current needs.

MUTUAL AID PROGRAM REFERRALS

76 mutual aid recipients have been referred to other DPN programs. A total of **178 connections** have been made in these referrals. All applicants are provided relevant DPN and/or external resources for system-impacted individuals.



TESTIMONIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY

In a seemingly never-ending cycle of inequality caused by mass incarceration, the Mutual Aid program makes efforts to build a community of collective care. DPN stands in **solidarity** with all people neglected by the prison system. Love and support are the foundations of prison abolition.

We are grateful for every person we connect with through our program. We meet many community members, learn about their stories and experiences. We are even more thankful for the opportunity to offer them support.

We appreciate our Mutual Aid community for sending us testimonies voluntarily and for letting us share with others how helpful this program has been for them. Here are a few testimonies out of the many we received reminding us of the importance of this work.

Thank you for being a part of the Mutual Aid movement!



Thank you so much to all the donors. Special shoutout to Dignity and Power for helping us in our time of need and for going way out to make us feel special I truly appreciate it.

- Alicia Cole

Just wanted to let you know that I just now received the \$1,000 that you sent me from Dignity and Power Now I really do appreciate it more its really going to help me thank you Dignity and Power Now. I also received the cleaning supplies that you sent me. Thank you again for everything.

- Michael Sevilla





I was paroled on May 21, 2019 after 26 and a half years incarcerated. I accept my sentence which is lenient compared to the immense agony and trauma I inflicted on so many lives. I will have dedicated my life to making amends. It has been difficult emotionally, spiritually, and financially since I have been released. The assistance that I received from the Mutual Aid Fund has been enormous. I will be able to purchase my weekly groceries, pay my utility bills, put gas in my car, and pay some of the rent for the next few months. I am truly grateful and humbled by the generous assistance I have received from the Mutual Aid Fund. I also returned to school so this will help me dedicate more time to my studies rather than have to work excessive hours to make ends meet. I wish to thank you all for your kindness and generosity as I reintegrate back into society. Thanks to you all, it is making the transition much easier for me. May God bless you all. Thank you once again.

- Silvestre Serrano

MUTUAL AID FUND

Mutual Aid is one of the beginning steps of imagining a world without police, and a way for prison impacted folks to join the frontlines of abolition work. Dignity and Power Now's Mutual Aid program is rooted in caring and providing relief for formerly incarcerated individuals and their immediate loved ones.

Relief services include: Face masks, hygiene items, cleaning supplies, infant supplies, clothing, and funding.

Contact:
mutualaid@dignityandpowernow.com

Dignity & Power NOW

DEDICATED TO SECURING DIGNITY AND POWER FOR ALL INCARCERATED PEOPLE, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES



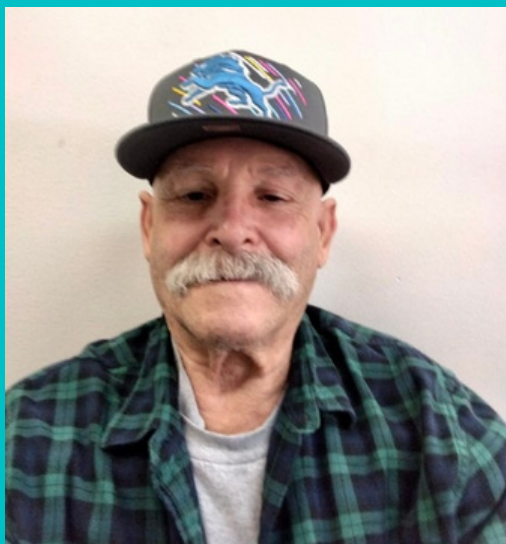
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Building an abolitionist future requires us to build stronger, healthier, and safer communities. We asked recipients of Mutual Aid for feedback to help improve our program. Open, honest feedback helps us remain committed to long-term solidarity and adapt to our community's needs. Successful transitions from prison require support from not just one organization but the entire community.

Would you like for the program to continue? Why?

"Yes, the community that we have to remind us during our check ins help us not lose sight of where we once were and that we are now free. The community also has gone through different transitions and when we discuss our journey, we learn from each other's experiences. Also, all the monetary aid is very helpful as well as all the PPE, clothing and hygiene. The therapy is very helpful, and I am looking forward to more therapy, I just haven't been able to continue due to my work hours."

David Nguyen
Organizer, Mentor, Change Agent



Gerald Heidinger
Brother, Mentor, and Facilitator

What would you like to tell the funders who have made this program possible?

"I truly don't have the words to express the depth of my gratitude to the funders of this program. The difference their funding has made in my life is truly immeasurable...the peace, joy, knowing that people do care and provide only grows the desire within me to one day become a funder, myself. This program is doing more than the funders could even hope that it does."



Dignity and Power
Now

MUTUAL AID IMPACT REPORT 2022

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

How has the Mutual Aid program helped or not helped you?

"Well I'm about to cry thinking about it. Y'all have been so open and honest with me. You've done everything you can to help me. What we need most of all is to know someone is there for us even when we can't figure things out. It means a lot to know someone is there to do everything they can to help us. Especially us folks who may not trust easily it's so important to have folks we can trust and to know they are watching out for us. Also knowing you all are located in the hood and you are always available is huge. You all always answer my calls and text, you are there. You are folks we can trust. It's so important, you guys follow through with what you say, and it's not this political act. You all aren't just wanting to take pictures with us and get that photo op and then we never hear from you again. Some folks are really like that. But y'all follow through and keep up with us. You all make yourselves available. You are there and you are honest like you let us know if you can't do something you'll say it. That's big, we can trust you."

Dwayne Newman
Father, Husband, Alcohol & Drug Counselor, and Speaker



Regina Merceron
Mentor for Youth Girls, Grandmother

What are some of your concerns or hopes for the program?

"Many people from the outside looking in don't realize a big factor of recidivism is lack of employment and lack of belonging. People need a community, and supporters to keep going. When you don't have any support or funds, you resort to those survival mechanisms that you know and you end up going back inside. So that is why what you're doing is so important."

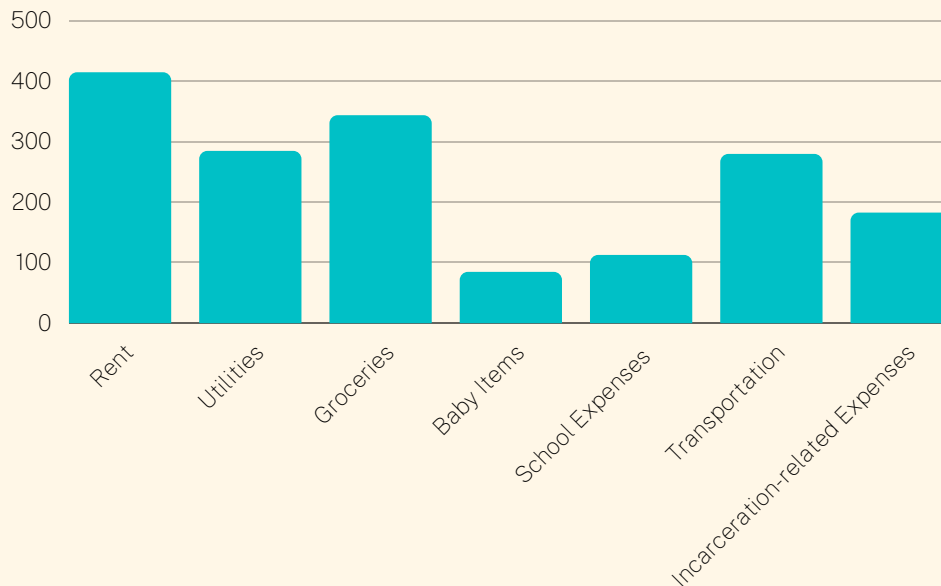


NEXT STEPS

While we are grateful that we are able to support and provide some relief for individuals, families, and communities impacted by carceral systems of oppression, we understand that there is work ahead, and there is more to be done. In 2022 alone, our communities have reported areas where help is most needed and we are hopeful that we can continue to address these needs, and build community power together to dismantle oppressive systems.

CHALLENGES REPORTED BY FORMERLY INCARCERATED FOLKS

This chart shows the types of expenses that are weighing most heavily on formerly incarcerated individuals and families impacted by the carceral system. This data is collected from DPN's online Mutual Aid Application Form.



Our focus going into 2023, will be **Los Angeles County**, the epicenter of mass incarceration. We have an obligation to abolish all systems of oppression, and while at it, we have to take care of our impacted individuals, families, and communities.



We want to sincerely thank our funders and donors whose support has kept the Mutual Aid Program alive!

It is a crucial time to support transformative justice in Los Angeles. While the political momentum is finally shifting toward a Care First and Jails Last approach, a prison, and police-free future is becoming necessary.

We are building a future that centers community power and healing, free from cages and police. It motivates us every day to know that you are partnering with us and fighting alongside us for that future. Thank you!

We'd like to give a special thank you to the Good+ Foundation and Catalyst Cares for providing the Mutual Aid program with some supplies to serve our communities.

We are grateful!



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