

# THE SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FORCED MIGRATION

A Multi-Media Educational Tool

Winter 2021

## Forgetting Humanitarian Aid: Mutual Aid for and by Refugees

**Target audience:** high school (grades 9-12), see note below\*

**Keywords:** activism, mutual aid, colonization, borders and borderlands, refugee, humanitarianism

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Humanitarian aid organizations can harm more than they help. [The small sums of finances that go towards refugees are spent on the consequences of forced migration](#) rather than on addressing the root causes. Humanitarian aid also has the outcome of [portraying those receiving aid as vulnerable and in need of assistance](#). Instead of philanthropy, we can look at supporting refugees through mutual aid, an organizational system that has grown in popularity over the past year. Dean Spade, author of [Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis \(and the Next\)](#), describes mutual aid as “collective coordination to meet each others needs” through meeting survival needs and building a “shared understanding about why people do not have what they need,” mobilizing people in solidarity, and solving problems through collective action. In a mutual aid system, resources flow back and forth between community members to everybody who needs them the most. This alleviates the problems created by humanitarian aid by addressing the material needs of everyone and empowering those who receive resources through solidarity. In this bibliography section, I provide four key questions that a teacher could use to frame a High School course on mutual aid for refugees, along with associated resources and subquestions.

*\*This section is intended for high school aged students (grades 9-12). It should be noted that certain sources do contain expletives or strong language. These sources are denoted with an asterisk.*

HOW DOES HUMANITARIAN AID SUPPORT AND JUSTIFY THE COLONIAL PROJECT?

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Janaka Jayawickrama discusses how the Christian and financial roots of humanitarian aid have kept it in line with the colonial project's mission to "save" populations it patronizingly deems vulnerable. Ana Swanson tackles the same problems from the perspective of finances, explaining how economist Angus Deaton showed that humanitarian aid can harm developing countries. Heba Aly, Jeremy Konyndyk, and Tammam Aloudat, sit down to speak about the different forms of aid and colonization, with the hopes of dismantling colonialism in the aid sector.

Janaka Jayawickrama, "[Humanitarian Aid System is a Continuation of the Colonial Project](#)," *Al Jazeera*, February 24, 2018

- Question: What is "Humanitarian Aid" and the "Colonial Project"?
- Question: What humanitarian aid organizations do you know? Do some research to see what ways they may or may not contribute to the colonial project.

Ana Swanson, "[Why Trying to Help Poor Countries Might Actually Hurt Them](#)," *Washington Post*, October 13, 2015

- Question: Why does Deaton believe that humanitarian and foreign aid can hurt "poor" countries, and do you agree with his argument?
- Question: Why do you think that humanitarian aid may be harmful or helpful to countries with fewer economic resources?

[Decolonising Aid](#) (2021), hosted by Heba Aly, Jeremy Konyndyk, with guest Tammam Aloudat.

- Question: What does "Decolonizing" mean?
- Question: What steps would you take to decolonize humanitarian aid?

WHAT IS MUTUAL AID AND HOW CAN IT BE UTILIZED FOR AND BY REFUGEES?

Dean Spade provides a succinct video of what mutual aid is in general, including many examples in the United States. Rebel Steps co-founder Liz and Chris from [Food Not Bombs](#) give examples of how and why mutual aid has been used by refugees in Greece and beyond. Tarig Hilal, Gerard Mc Hugh, Dacia Douhaibi, and Gordon Mangum research mutual aid networks in various refugee communities,

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Winter 2021

focusing specifically on the use of technology to support such efforts. Lastly, Bahati Ghislain, Robert Hakiza, Janemary Ruhundwa, Shaza Al Rihawi, Alexander Betts, and Andonis Marden have a discussion about the difficulties and promises of refugee-led aid in urban contexts.

Dean Spade, *Shit's Totally FUCKED! What Can We Do?: A Mutual Aid Explainer* (2019), (video)\*

- Question: What is “Mutual Aid” and what experience have you personally had with it?
- Question: Why do you think that mutual aid could be more beneficial than humanitarian aid for refugees?

*Support Your Community (Mutual aid)* (2018), *Rebel Steps* (podcast)

- Question: How is the movement of refugees squatting in Greece a form of mutual aid?
- Question: Why do you think that the right-wing is trying to evict refugees?

Tarig Hilal, Gerard McHugh, Dacia Douhaibi, and Gordon Mangum, “*The Promise of Mutual Aid: How Innovative Systems of Self-help and Emerging Digital Technologies Can Provide New Solutions for Refugees*,” *Aidx*, August 2018

- Question: How does technology support mutual aid networks for and by refugees?
- Question: How would you fix the challenges of mutual aid presented on pages 15-16?

*Without recognition, without assistance: Refugee-led responses in urban contexts*, (2020), co-moderated by Shaza Al Rihawi, Alexander Betts, and Andonis Marden, with guests, Bahati Ghislain, Robert Hakiza, and Janemary Ruhundwa

- Question: Why is it important for refugees to lead responses to the refugee crisis?
- Question: Are all of the presenters part of mutual aid organizations?

HOW HAS MUTUAL AID BEEN UTILIZED FOR AND BY REFUGEES?

Niko Georgiades from Unicorn Riot meets with the women from The House of Women for Empowerment and Emancipation, a group that is building a mutual aid

# THE SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FORCED MIGRATION

A Multi-Media Educational Tool

Winter 2021

network for refugees in Greece, to discuss problems facing women refugees in Greece as well as solutions that they have created. The author of “A Parallel Movement Rising: On Mutual Aid and the Borderlands,” considers the many mutual aid networks on the border between the United States and Mexico. The writer of “Border Rights for Refugees: A multilingual guide” presents and discusses a guide titled “Border Rights for Refugees” created by [No One is Illegal](#). Evan Easton-Calabria, Alexander Betts, and Kate Pincock compare refugee-led collective actions to large NGOs and government interventions.

Niko Georgiades, [“Greece: The House of Women for Empowerment and Emancipation,” Unicorn Riot, November 6, 2017](#)

- Question: What is the importance of relationships in mutual aid networks?
- Question: What is “Solidarity” and how is The House of Women for Empowerment and Emancipation standing in solidarity with refugees?

[“A Parallel Movement Rising: On Mutual Aid and the Borderlands,” Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, May 16, 2019](#)

- Question: What are some challenges that face refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers on the Mexico-United States border and how do mutual aid networks help?
- Question: What could humanitarian aid look like in addressing the problems faced in the borderlands?

[“Border Rights for Refugees: A multilingual guide,” No One Is Illegal, April 5, 2017](#)

- Question: Why was “Border Rights for Refugees” created and is it a form of mutual aid?
- Question: What do you know about the refugee crisis in Canada? Conduct some online research and write down 3 ways that mutual aid could support refugees in Canada.

Evan Easton-Calabria, Alexander Betts, and Kate Pincock, [“Refugee-led Organisations: Collective action for collective assistance,” Rethinking Refuge](#)

- Question: Why don’t we hear more about refugee-led organizations?

# THE SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FORCED MIGRATION

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- Question: What ways do coalitions of small, refugee-led organizations like the Refugee Led Organisations Network (RELON) help and harm local refugee-support efforts?

HOW CAN I DESIGN AND ADVANCE A MUTUAL AID NETWORK THAT SUPPORTS REFUGEES IN MY COMMUNITY?

Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez provides a toolkit that explains how to form a mutual aid network in your community. The authors of “Leveraging Mutual Aid Frameworks in Support of Refugees and Asylees,” discuss how to build mutual and support mutual aid for refugees and asylum seekers. Finally, “Mutual Aid Hub” is a hub of registered mutual aid networks, which one can use to find or register a mutual aid network near them.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, “[Mutual Aid 101, #WeGotOurBlock](#)”

- Question: What is an issue facing refugees in your community?
- Question: What refugee mutual aid networks already exist in your community?

“[Leveraging Mutual Aid Frameworks in Support of Refugees and Asylees](#),” *Refugee Council USA*, March 2020

- Question: What steps could you take to create and or support a mutual aid network for refugees in your community?
- Question: How can you stand in solidarity with refugees in your community?

[Mutual Aid Hub](#)

- Question: How can you inform refugees in your community about possible mutual aid networks that could support them?
- Have you looked at this website before? Find 3 mutual aid networks and write down a summary of who they are and who they support.