



# Des Moines Mutual Aid Monthly

JANUARY 2026 — ISSUE #35

## Bring the Heat Benefit Show

On January 10th, Des Moines Mutual Aid will be presenting the “Bring the Heat” Benefit hosted at Xbk Live in Des Moines. Four great acts have been generous enough to lend us their time and talent in support to raise funds for our yearly propane and heater distribution program for our houseless neighbors. The lineup is nothing but heavy hitters. The pit beckons you, be ready to dance.

Local Hardcore favorites Skinned Alive have the riffs that will get anyone swinging. Their 2025 EP “Injustice 4 All” is nothing but gas. Five ass-beating bangers that give you no choice but to move your body. Maybe if we are lucky we will get one of their sick covers of Merauder too. You do not want to miss this band.

Hailing from the Twin Cities, Wanderer plays self-described ‘brutal hardcore/medieval mathcore/extreme noise rock’. With blistering riff after riff, Wanderer will have you in a trance. This band has been at it for over a decade and is putting out their best year after year. Your eardrums will thank you.

Traffic Death, Des Moines legends, got that shred for your head. This band is crazy and if you have not seen them yet, now is your chance. Fast, loud, ripping madness, you will be trapped in the riff with no hope for escape (you will not want to.) Bang your fucking head off for Traffic Death.

Hardcore punks from Iowa City, Bootcamp will be coming off recent tours in Japan and Canada. Bootcamp have taken their tunes and their cause internationally, and will now here again in Des Moines. Here is your chance to see them for yourself. You won’t be able to stand still when Bootcamp takes the stage.

We are eternally thankful for all the bands who are playing, and could not be more stoked for such a stacked line-up. Thank you to Xbk for hosting this show and being generous with their space. Thank you to every comrade involved in making this happen. Thank you to all who attend and help us raise money to keep our houseless neighbors warm throughout the winter. ■



## They'll Blame Anyone But The System (It's How They Make Their Money.)

BY COMRADE JAY

When I heard the news that yet another person had frozen to death because of the greed of our city's leadership, because of this city's disregard for human life, I did an unproductive, reactionary thing, not grounded in any kind of praxis:

**I fired off an email to the seven “leaders” on our city council, demanding answers, a plan, a response, anything.**

I didn't expect a response. For years, many have demanded that city leadership be accountable to the people of Des Moines, that they provide safe, warm places for our neighbors who camp in the cold, that they do anything that puts people before the profits of their donors. They've heard these demands, whether shouted, emailed, or put in a nonprofit-friendly Letter of Demands. City leaders have seen the suffering of the people. They've brushed it off every time, and invited corporate ghouls to their meetings to support fines and increased policing of camps instead.

Somehow, I did get a response from one city council member: Chris “Leave Em In the Cold” Coleman, who has dedicated his life and his political career to making this city's homeless policy more cruel than it already was. After several excuses (paraphrased: they could have gotten in a car with the cops who abuse them! They could go to the shelters that have proven to be unsafe and uncompassionate!, on and on...) he got to the real meat of his argument:

*“We don't want [houseless people] to be enticed to stay in below zero temps because they have been lulled into think others can take care of them...all the time. Because we can't. Even as we distribute tents and LP tanks and burritos and more, we give them false hopes we can protect them from all.”*

(See the full email response in the screenshots to the left).

Beyond Chris “Fine Em Til they Freeze” Coleman's bullshit use of “we” (that man is not delivering tents, tanks, or burritos to anyone, unless it's for a photo op with CISS), this email also revealed who he wants to blame for the death of a neighbor, and who he wants to blame for the blood on his hands: mutual aid efforts attempting to plug the gaps that this city's cruelty blows wide open.

He wants to blame a handful of comrades, a loving network of punks and anarchists and friends and neighbors, who are delivering food and warmth, for the city's structural failures. He wants to blame working people for the failures of the powerful. He is claiming that mutual aid efforts, not skyrocketing prices, ungodly rent, and monstrously low pay, push people out into the cold. He doesn't want to admit: it was his hands that did the pushing.

**I want to be clear: my email didn't actually do anything.** It didn't change the system. It didn't bring anyone back to life after the city let them die in the cold. It didn't move hearts and minds (I am not convinced the neofascists and neoliberals on city council have either). No matter what Chris “Asshole” Coleman says, the actions of comrades who lug propane tanks and pack bags of batteries do more than anything I did with either of those “actions.” Mutual aid, political education, and building power among the people are a far more just response than the sign-making and email-writing I've been conditioned into by liberal “advocacy” types.

But these actions did teach me something about Chris “Still an Asshole” Coleman. He, like all of his buddies, will always blame the people before they blame the powerful. Their power depends on it. And they fear anyone, in any place, who builds power that threatens theirs. All power to the people. ■

Hello

I am saddened and shook by the death of the man. At every level our community can and must do better.

Let me clarify: We have a plan for 24 hour warming centers. The night the man died, the shelter had capacity of 275 - because the city has established a new relationship with them to provide funding, more security, and more personnel so the guests and staff are safe. At no time over the past week did the number of guests exceed 209. Our outreach workers were on the street, DART provided rides, our police would coordinate rides to the shelter. If the shelter reached a certain number, the community has a plan to open a second warming overnight/24/7 warming shelter for additional capacity.

We agree on so much regarding the compassion and help we must provide. I think we also have disagreed as to whether or not the city should have a point of view on whether living on the streets/woods is good for any human, good for their future, or good for the community. I strongly feel our community should embrace a full commitment to getting folks off the dangerous and unhealthy streets and into shelter and services. We are prepared. We are eager for them to come. We don't want them to be enticed to stay in below zero temps because they have been lulled into think others can take care of them.... all the time. Because we can't. Even as we distribute tents and LP tanks and burritos and more, we give them false hopes we can protect them from all. We can not protect them well enough from mother nature if they stay outside. I stand by my commitment to take all means necessary to encourage our unhoused to use the safety net our community has so generously created. We - this community and this Council - have prioritized with our time and our money services and shelter to keep people off the streets.

I hate that this man died. I am disappointed that we collectively could not save him. I am frustrated that many have advocated that living on the streets is a reasonable decision. His sad death proves that is not a reasonable decision. We need to do better.

Thanks for the note.

Chris

# ASK DES MOINES MUTUAL ★ AID ★

Dear DMMA,

Sometimes your articles are more aggressive than they are convincing. What are you hoping this flyer will accomplish?

-PM

Dear PM,

No person was ever convinced of anything interesting by a sheet of paper (even a two-sided one). We refer you to the physicist Georg Lichtenberg: "I ceased in the year 1764 to believe that one can convince one's opponents with arguments printed in books. It is not to do that, therefore, that I have taken up my pen, but merely so as to annoy them, and to bestow strength and courage on those on our own side, and to make it known to the others that they have not convinced us."

★★★

Dear DMMA,

Revolution is dope and all but isn't a better use of our time to fight for legislation that will reflect what we want to see in this world?

-SN

Dear SN,

Two obvious problems with this strategy; first, attempts at infiltrating the system, "changing from within", have never been successful in anything other than depleting massive amounts of resources from the revolutionary struggle and creating a narrative of failure.

Second, this is a capitalist system, determined by capitalist demands, and as Comrade George Jackson said 65 years ago, "We don't want to capitalize on people anyway. Capitalism is the enemy. It must be destroyed. There is no other recourse"

★★★

Dear DMMA,

What is to be done with the pigs and politicians?

-IT

Dear IT,

This edition of Ask DMMA's Answer Committee was comprised of Jenots, Subcomadante Amenaza, Subcomadante Ronnie, and Immortal Technique

Keep sending questions to desmoinesmutualaid@protonmail.com, and Happy Zapatista New Year! ■



## If You Can't See The Propaganda, It's Working On You

BY COMRADE SCARY LARRY

A recent two-part Vanity Fair article, featuring members of the fascist Trump administration, was, sadly, hailed as a "slam piece" by many liberals. The "Portfolio of Trump's Inner Circle" came out just days before the release of the Epstein Files, and is the culmination of 11 months of interviews between the writer and Susie Wiles, Trump's current Chief of Staff and one of the most destructive political operatives in modern American history. The writing portrays Susie as a renegade who is willing to spread hot gossip, the rest of the administration as simply "office coworkers," and attempts to distance them from Trump.

The liberals came out in droves encouraging people to subscribe to Vanity Fair since the piece was so damning in their eyes. Vanity Fair is published by Conde Nast, a billionaire backed media corporation, who also backed Trump's book, The Art of the Deal, which was foundational for today's MAGA movement.

But they were also laughing at the photos. The "blue no matter who" crowd has mainly asserted that the article is a form of resistance rather than fascist propaganda... because of the photos.

These photos were taken by photographer Christopher Anderson, a documentary photographer turned tool for fascism. Chris is known for his raw photos of Hollywood elites. His photos show normally polished and smiling faces with sometimes intense or tired expressions. His camera settings

highlight blemishes, scars, and wrinkles. His photo of Carolyn Levitt, for example, shows the marks from her obviously botched lip filler and JD Vance is photographed with a face like he just found a pubic hair in his toothbrush. These shocking views caused people on both the left and the right to claim that the photos are bad because they are unflattering. It's an honest photography style and these people are hideously ugly inside and out, so the photos don't look great. What people fail to realize is that the point of documentary style photos is not to flatter, but rather to humanize.

And the text does the same. It highlights quotes from the cabinet members talking poorly of Trump and each other. Early in the article, the interviewer asks Susie about Musk reposting a tweet stating that public sector workers, not their leaders, were responsible for killing millions under brutal autocrats. She casually chalks it up to his use of ketamine and brushes it off. This does a couple of things: it makes her seem edgy and trustworthy, like she's willing to give away secrets and throw people under the bus, but it also minimizes the real harm of authoritarians like her.

She goes on to describe Trump as having an "alcoholic's personality," further distancing herself from him. The article (or at least the half I could read without paying), continues to address the admins atrocities with minimization and humanization of the cabinet members.

While I understand the desire to see things from the perspective that a major publication is trying to resist the administration, that is not what this article does. In order to form real resistance, we cannot be so easily fooled by propaganda. ■

## Des Moines Mutual Aid Points of Unity:

0. We believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.

1. We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people's needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.

2. We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don't rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.

3. We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people's lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.

4. We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.

5. We are a revolutionary organization. We are united in a basic agreement that the ultimate goal of revolution is the abolition of the state and of social classes, and that the state's institutions are not a means to achieving that end. We are against participation in electoral politics, because we are for the development of mutual aid as an alternative and widespread institution. ■

*In Loving Memory of Comrades KT and Gary*