

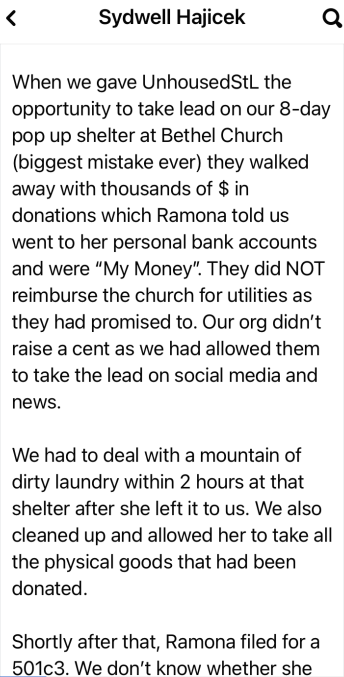
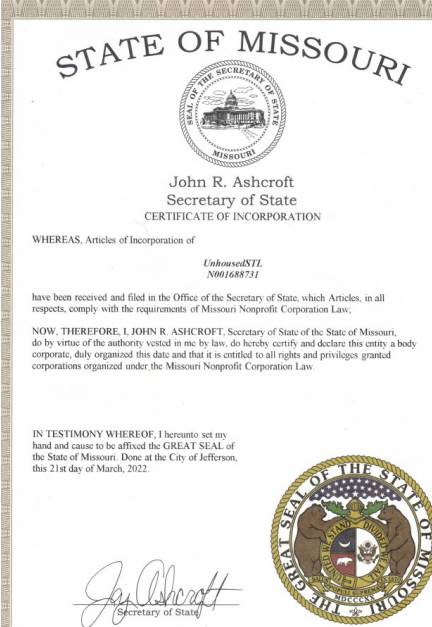
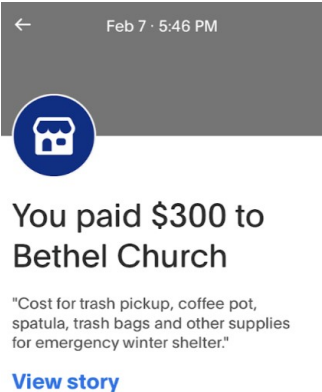

# Defeated and Depleted: How Colonizers Drove a Black Nonprofit Out

I'm Ramona Curtis, founder and director of UnhousedSTL, a nonprofit established to support and advocate for the unhoused community in St. Louis.

I am being personally and professionally targeted with lies and unfounded accusations by Sydwell Hajicek, a white man who lives in suburban St. Louis. Hajicek is the treasurer of Lifeline Aid Group. In his quest to damage my organization, he has launched serious public allegations of fraud and mismanagement that must be addressed. The following is my response to those allegations.

## Part 1 - The Receipts

Hajicek has implied online and privately that I have misused donations, encouraging commenters to use words like "fraud" and "grift." These allegations are completely false and untrue. Here's the truth.

Pubic Allegations	The Truth	The Receipts
 <p>When we gave UnhousedSTL the opportunity to take lead on our 8-day pop up shelter at Bethel Church (biggest mistake ever) they walked away with thousands of \$ in donations which Ramona told us went to her personal bank accounts and were "My Money". They did NOT reimburse the church for utilities as they had promised to. Our org didn't raise a cent as we had allowed them to take the lead on social media and news.</p> <p>We had to deal with a mountain of dirty laundry within 2 hours at that shelter after she left it to us. We also cleaned up and allowed her to take all the physical goods that had been donated.</p> <p>Shortly after that, Ramona filed for a <a href="#">501c3</a>. We don't know whether she</p>	<p>Lifeline Aid Group asked us to run the Bethel Church shelter from Feb. 1-8, 2022, because they did not have the resources or volunteer base to do so.</p> <p>UnhousedSTL did receive financial support from donors to support the shelter. In addition to reimbursing Hajicek and Bethel Church, we provided food, supplies, clothing and winter gear including boots to guests at the shelter.</p> <p>The donations did go to the personal bank account of Ramona Curtis because UnhousedSTL had not yet been legally incorporated. A business bank account cannot be created without legal paperwork. During this time, our legal status was pending. UnhousedSTL received its 501(c)3 nonprofit status in March, 2022 - after the Bethel shelter.</p>	 <p>STATE OF MISSOURI John R. Ashcroft Secretary of State CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION</p> <p>WHEREAS, Articles of Incorporation of <i>UnhousedSTL</i> N001688731 have been received and filed in the Office of the Secretary of State, which Articles, in all respects, comply with the requirements of Missouri Nonprofit Corporation Law;</p> <p>NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOHN R. ASHCROFT, Secretary of State of the State of Missouri, do by virtue of the authority vested in me by law, do hereby certify and declare this entity a body corporate, duly organized this date and that it is entitled to all rights and privileges granted corporations organized under the Missouri Nonprofit Corporation Law.</p> <p>IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand and cause to be affixed the GREAT SEAL of the State of Missouri. Done at the City of Jefferson, this 21st day of March, 2022.</p> <p><i>John R. Ashcroft</i> Secretary of State</p>
	<p>No arrangements - verbally or in writing - were ever made to reimburse Bethel Church for utilities or anything else. UnhousedSTL did reimburse Bethel Church \$300 for supplies and trash removal as a courtesy, not an obligation.</p>	 <p>Feb 7 · 5:46 PM</p> <p></p> <p><b>You paid \$300 to Bethel Church</b></p> <p>"Cost for trash pickup, coffee pot, spatula, trash bags and other supplies for emergency winter shelter."</p> <p><a href="#">View story</a></p>

< **Sydwell Hajicek** 🔍

the physical goods that had been donated.


Shortly after that, Ramona filed for a 501c3. We don't know whether she continued to channel funds to her personal bank account.

We certainly hope not. And we publicly accept responsibility for ever platforming her and her org. We're very sorry for doing that, and for not coming forward about her actions sooner.

**If I am in fact committing fraud for receiving funds into my personal account, how is Hajicek not also committing fraud?**

During the same time that Hajicek is accusing me of "channeling" funds to my personal bank account, he was receiving funds from UnhousedSTL to his personal bank account.

venmo


You paid **Sydwell Hajicek**


Supplies - Bethel shelter

Transfer Date and Amount:  
Feb 04, 2022 PST · 🔒 - \$70.00

Like
Comment

---

venmo


You paid **Sydwell Hajicek**

Shelter supplies

Transfer Date and Amount:  
Feb 03, 2022 PST · 🔒 - \$120.00

Like
Comment

Hajicek was also soliciting the public for funding to go directly into his personal bank account. Here are screenshots of a post that UnhousedSTL shared in Feb. 2021 (a whole year before Bethel) of Hajicek "channeling" donations to his personal account.

< **UNHOUSEDSTL Posts**



**unhousedstl**  
St. Louis, Missouri

⋮



View insights
Boost post

♥
💬
📌
🔖

👤 Liked by **urbanguerrilla314** and **72 others**

unhousedstl A message from unhoused activist Syd [@sydwelldavin](#) who is using donations to place people in hotels. You can see his work on a recent broadcast on [@fox2now](#).

👉 Hi, I've been putting folks who refuse to go to shelters (sometimes due to mental health needs or other

< **UNHOUSEDSTL Posts**

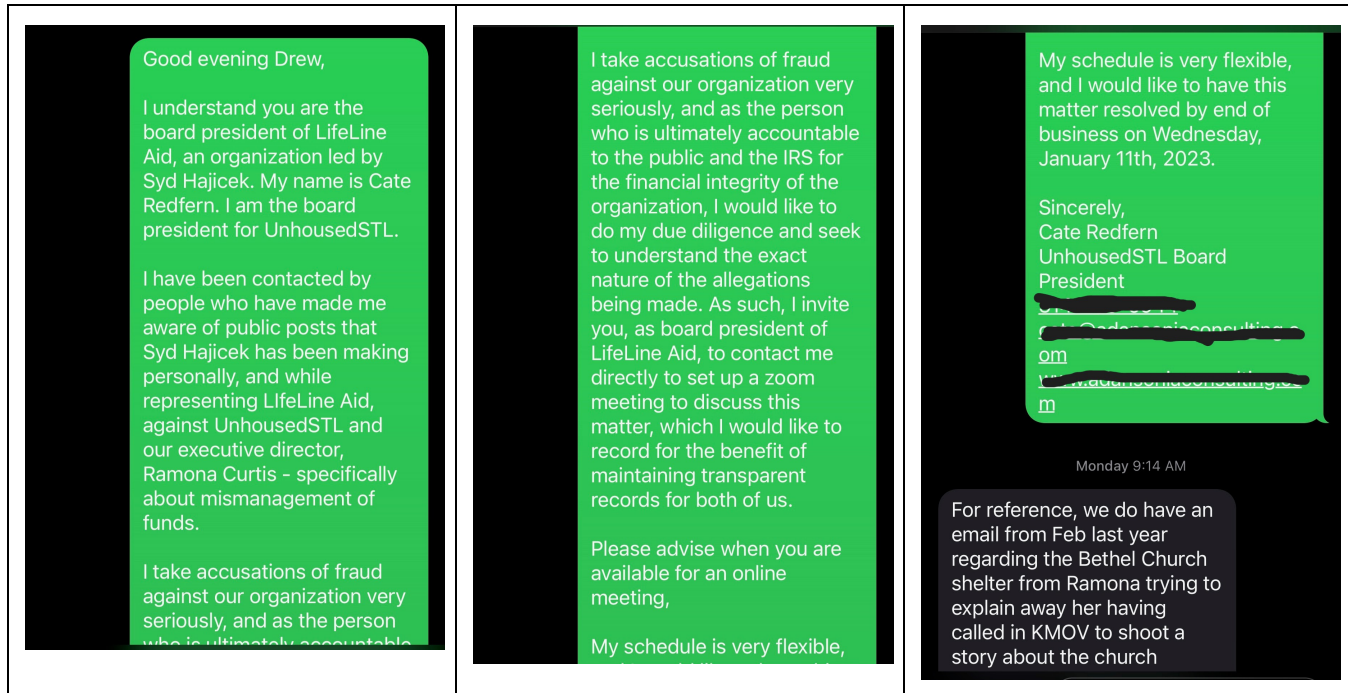
mental health needs or other concerns) in hotels for a week & getting them requested food items to get them past the cold snap. Tonight promises to be ugly - like last night, where one new person was added to the hotel roster. If you can support please do. Some of these folks are using this as an opportunity to advance their situations; one man will end this chapter in his life as a full time employee due to my and your help.

If you would like to support, my Venmo is [@Sydwell-Hajicek](#) (last 4 # are 6591) and my Cashapp is \$Jaskier.

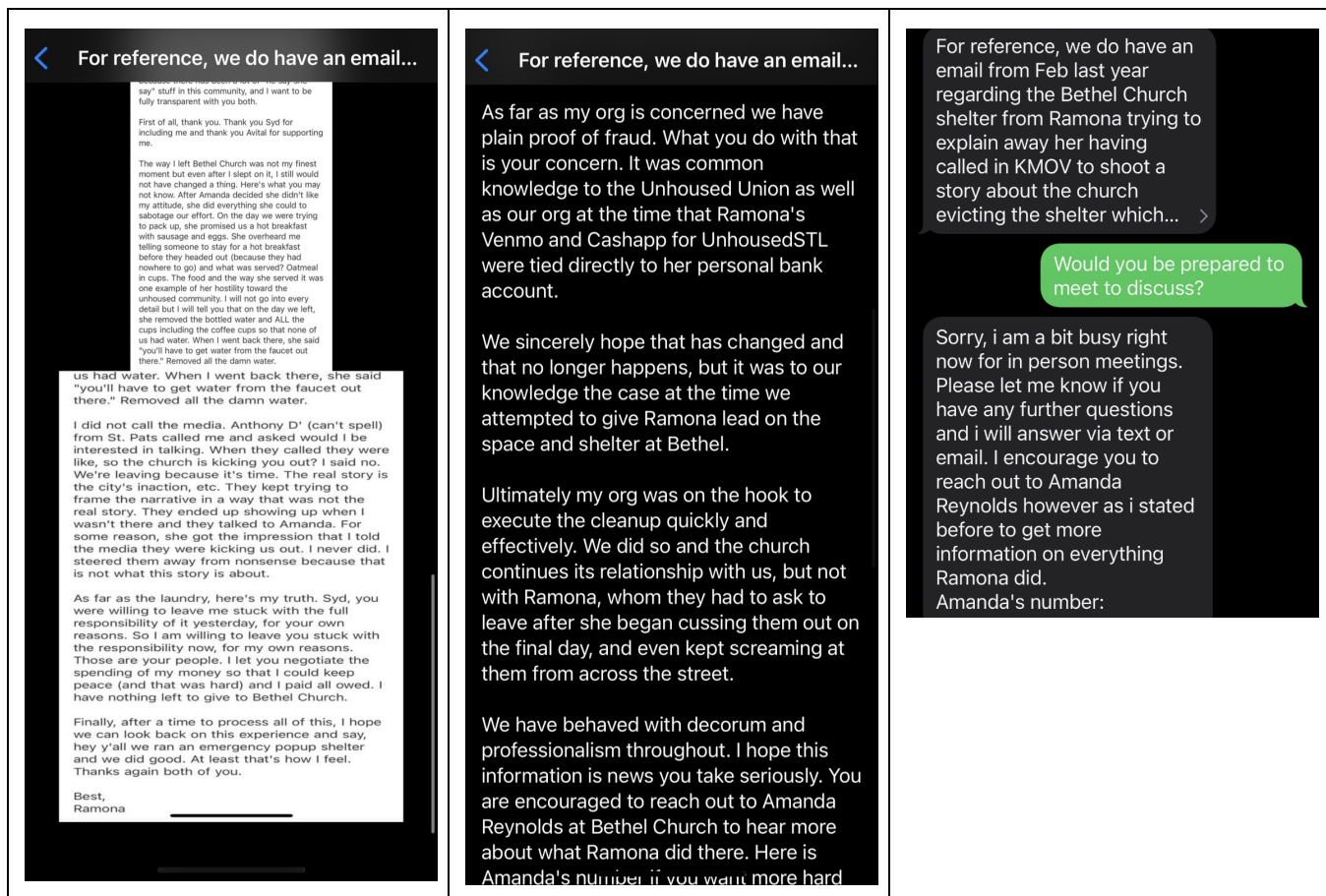
I publish itemized accounting of expenses and status updates on Facebook under my Sydwell Hajicek account.

Thank you.  
February 18, 2021

Following these serious public allegations of fraud and mismanagement, UnhousedSTL board president Cate Redfern reached out to Lifeline Aid Group board president Drew Falvey.



Here is their response. Not one receipt or document proving mismanagement. They provided one email that I sent and a phone number for a person at Bethel to talk about my behavior; yet they wouldn't talk to us themselves. Their "plain proof" as they call it is that I received money, I did, and put it into my personal account, I did.



Here is the entire email including Hajicek's replies. As you can see, I state that I never called the media nor wanted to talk to them about anyone being kicked out. As also stated, yes there was a conflict with Bethel and Amanda Reynolds who exhibited anti-homeless behavior. And lastly, yes Hajicek handled the laundry after our organization did all of the packing, moving and cleanup. At the time, it felt like a collaborative effort.

Syd and Avital,

I'm including both of you in this conversation because there has been a lot of "he say she say" stuff in this community, and I want to be fully transparent with you both.

First of all, thank you. Thank you Syd for including me and thank you Avital for supporting me.

The way I left Bethel Church was not my finest moment but even after I slept on it, I still would not have changed a thing. Here's what you may not know. After Amanda decided she didn't like my attitude, she did everything she could to sabotage our effort. On the day we were trying to pack up, she promised us a hot breakfast with sausage and eggs. She overheard me telling someone to stay for a hot breakfast before they headed out (because they had nowhere to go) and what was served? Oatmeal in cups. The food and the way she served it was one example of her hostility toward the unhoused community. I will not go into every detail but I will tell you that on the day we left, she removed the bottled water and ALL the cups including the coffee cups so that none of us had water. When I went back there, she said "you'll have to get water from the faucet out there." Removed all the damn water.

I did not call the media. Anthony D' (can't spell) from St. Pats called me and asked would I be interested in talking. When they called they were like, so the church is kicking you out? I said no. We're leaving because it's time. The real story is the city's inaction, etc. They kept trying to frame the narrative in a way that was not the real story. They ended up showing up when I wasn't there and they talked to Amanda. For some reason, she got the impression that I told the media they were kicking us out. I never did. I steered them away from nonsense because that is not what this story is about.

As far as the laundry, here's my truth. Syd, you were willing to leave me stuck with the full responsibility

As far as the laundry, here's my truth. Syd, you were willing to leave me stuck with the full responsibility of it yesterday, for your own reasons. So I am willing to leave you stuck with the responsibility now, for my own reasons. Those are your people. I let you negotiate the spending of my money so that I could keep peace (and that was hard) and I paid all owed. I have nothing left to give to Bethel Church.

Finally, after a time to process all of this, I hope we can look back on this experience and say, hey y'all we ran an emergency popup shelter and we did good. At least that's how I feel. Thanks again both of you.

Best,  
Ramona



**Lifeline Aid Group** <lifelineaidgroup@gmail.com>

Feb 9, 2022, 9:09 AM



to me, Avital ▾

Ramona & Avital,

Firstly I would like to apologize for not being more involved on figuring out how we would handle the laundry situation. I think I may have had the impression it would fit in the truck Avital was bringing so I was unaware it would be an issue right away yesterday, and after pulling the all night shift I was having trouble doing my work job yesterday.

I am happy to assume responsibility for that, no worries, did not realize till everything had occurred yesterday that it was going to be an issue. I will take care of laundry / any other final issues with Bethel.

Avital, perhaps you can advise St Pats leadership that the unexpected appearance of the media when we did not attempt to bring them in caused a lot of chaos. If they made that call, I hope they understand the consequences it had on our already-thin-ice relationship with Bethel.

Love all of you...

-Syd



**Ramona Curtis** <iamramonacurtis@gmail.com>

Feb 9, 2022, 2:20 PM



to Lifeline, Avital ▾

I think we all did the best we could under the circumstances. Thanks for taking care of things with Bethel, Syd.

Imo Avital doesn't need to contact St Pats. Anthony was in contact with me.

Best way to fix anything at this point is to keep it moving.

Love to you both. ❤️



**Avital Reznikov** <reznikovavital@gmail.com>

Feb 9, 2022, 2:37 PM



to me, Lifeline ▾

It's pretty amazing how quickly we threw that together and kept people from freezing!!! Also I heard many positive comments from guests about the welcoming environment we created.

I'm super grateful I was brought in to be a part of it.



**Lifeline Aid Group** <lifelineaidgroup@gmail.com>

Feb 9, 2022, 3:31 PM



to Avital, me ▾

Yes!! We all did what it takes... and succeeded... one for the books!

-Syd



**Lifeline Aid Group** <lifelineaidgroup@gmail.com>

Feb 9, 2022, 6:03 PM



to Avital, me ▾

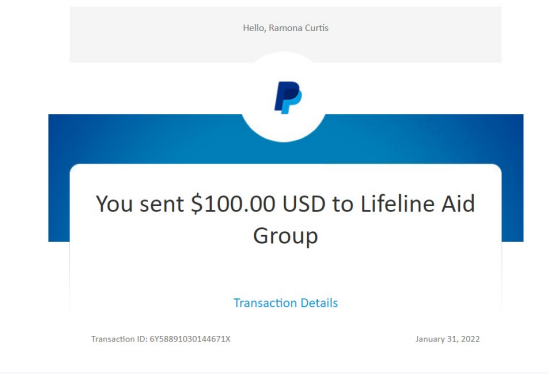
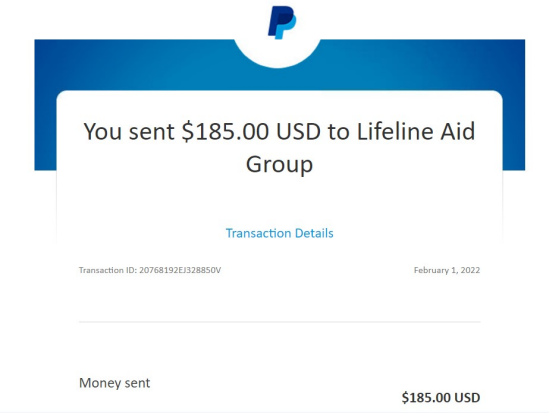
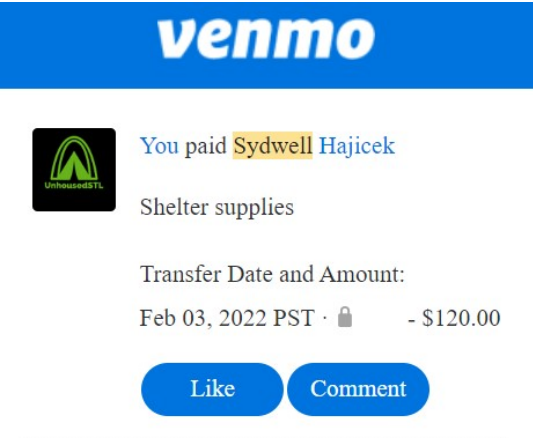
Also, wanted to pass on this message from Tim:

"We're still running around looking for money. I'll have a lot of expenses when the safe haven closes. So if you get a chance to share our fundraising link on social, much appreciated." <https://bit.ly/winterhavendonate>

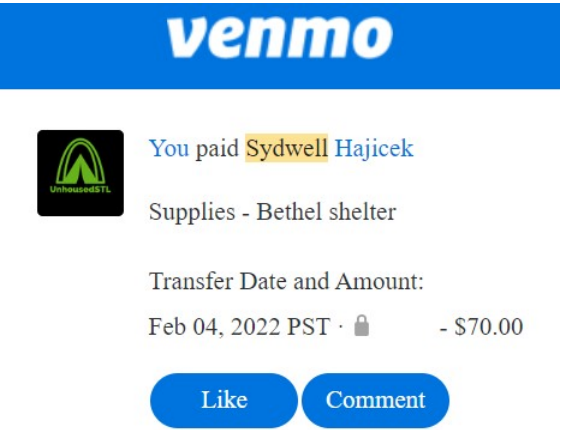
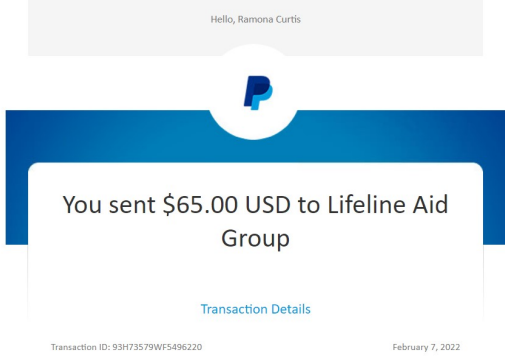
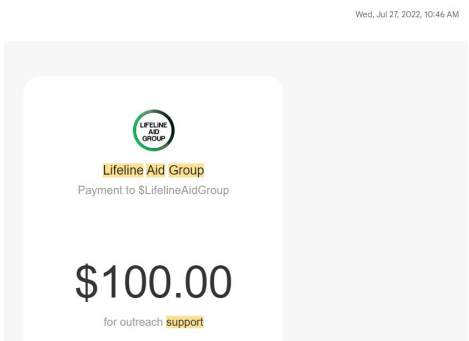
I am planning to do a post from Lifeline Aid Group about this, but I imagine Ramona it would likely have a bigger impact for them if you posted too, as my social presence isn't very large.

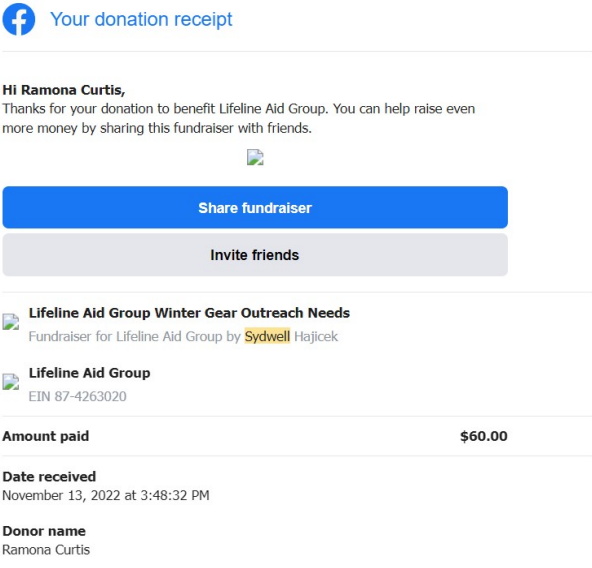
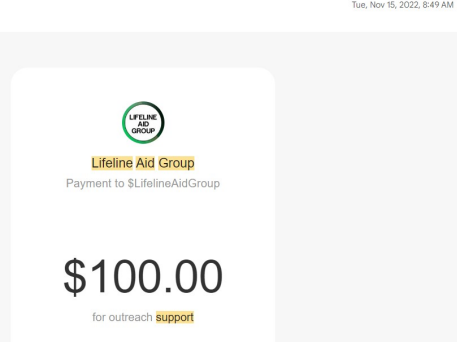


So since Hajicek wants to publicly talk about money, let's talk: UnhousedSTL has consistently supported Lifeline Aid Group financially, giving them a total of \$800 in the past year. We have never received one cent from Lifeline Aid. Below are receipts:

<p>Jan. 31, 2022</p>	<p>\$100</p>	 <p>Transaction ID: 6Y58891030144671X      January 31, 2022</p>
<p>Feb. 1, 2022</p>	<p>\$185</p>	 <p>Transaction ID: 20768192EJ328850V      February 1, 2022</p> <p>Money sent: \$185.00 USD</p>
<p>Feb. 3, 2022</p>	<p>\$120</p>	 <p>You paid Sydwell Hajicek Shelter supplies Transfer Date and Amount: Feb 03, 2022 PST · - \$120.00</p> <p>Like      Comment</p>





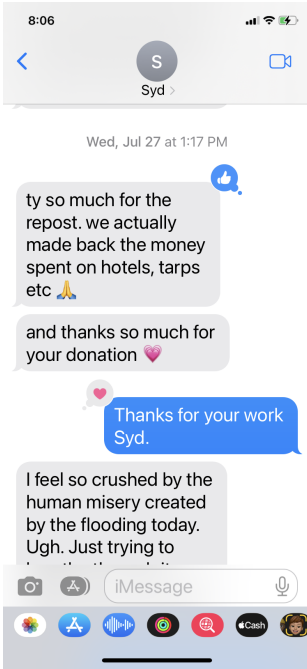
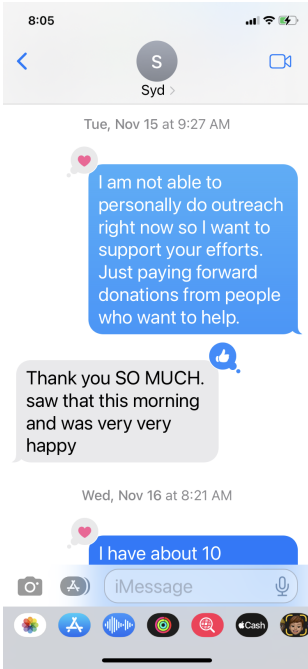


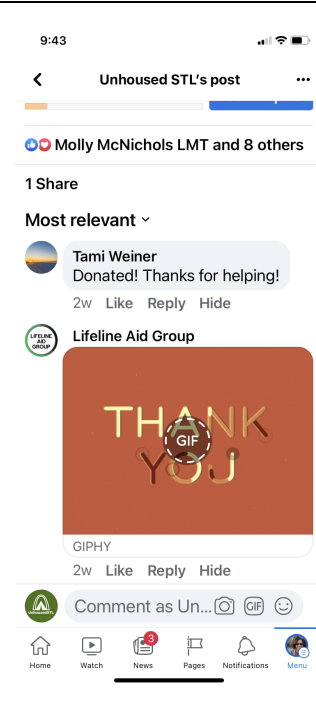
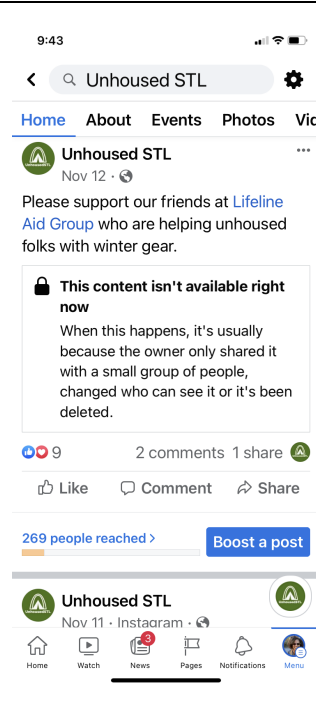
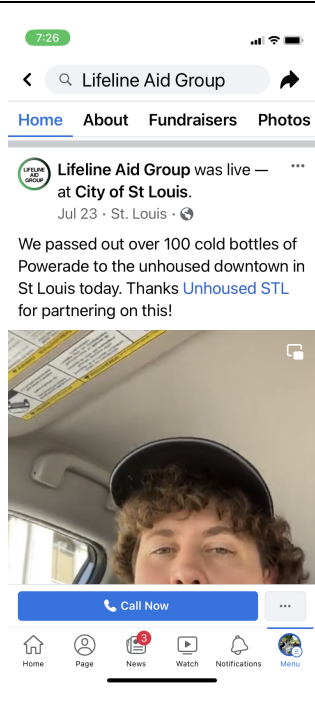
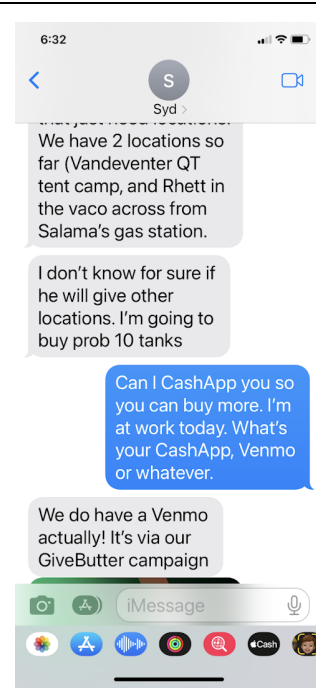
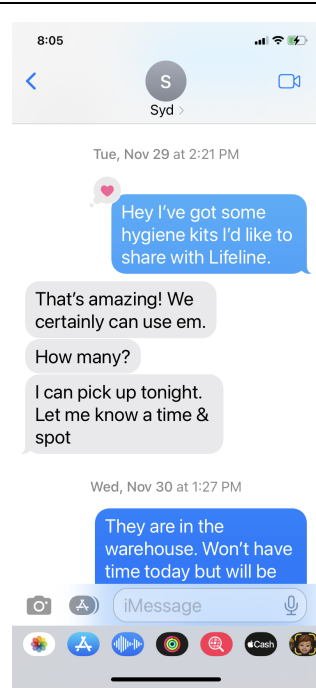
<p>Feb. 4, 2022</p>	<p>\$70</p>	 <p>A Venmo transaction confirmation for a payment of \$70.00 to Sydwell Hajicek. The recipient's profile picture shows a logo for 'Unhoused STL'. The transfer date is Feb 04, 2022 PST. There are 'Like' and 'Comment' buttons at the bottom.</p>
<p>Feb. 7, 2022</p>	<p>\$65</p>	 <p>A PayPal transaction confirmation for a payment of \$65.00 USD to Lifeline Aid Group. The transaction ID is 93H73579WFS496220 and it occurred in February 7, 2022. A 'Transaction Details' link is visible.</p>
<p>July 27, 2022</p>	<p>\$100</p>	 <p>A PayPal transaction confirmation for a payment of \$100.00 to Lifeline Aid Group. The payment is for outreach support. The transaction date is Wed, Jul 27, 2022, 10:46 AM.</p>

Nov. 13, 2022	\$60	 <p><b>Nov. 13, 2022</b></p> <p><b>Your donation receipt</b></p> <p><b>Hi Ramona Curtis,</b> Thanks for your donation to benefit Lifeline Aid Group. You can help raise even more money by sharing this fundraiser with friends.</p> <p><a href="#">Share fundraiser</a></p> <p><a href="#">Invite friends</a></p> <p><b>Lifeline Aid Group Winter Gear Outreach Needs</b> Fundraiser for Lifeline Aid Group by <a href="#">Sydwell Hajicek</a></p> <p><b>Lifeline Aid Group</b> EIN 87-4263020</p> <hr/> <p><b>Amount paid</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>\$60.00</b></span></p> <hr/> <p><b>Date received</b> November 13, 2022 at 3:48:32 PM</p> <p><b>Donor name</b> Ramona Curtis</p>
Nov. 15, 2022	\$100	 <p><b>Nov. 15, 2022</b></p> <p><b>Lifeline Aid Group</b> Payment to \$LifelineAidGroup</p> <p><b>\$100.00</b> for outreach <b>support</b></p>
<p><b>Total amount given to Lifeline Aid/Sydwell Hajicejk from UnhousedSTL/Ramona Curtis in 2022: \$800</b></p>		

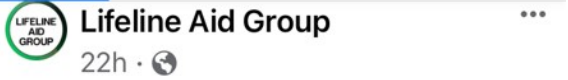

UnhousedSTL has been supporting Lifeline Aid Group - with money, supplies and social media platforming - as recently as November 29, 2022 – just days before the Dec. 3 start of the targeted online attacks.

More receipts:

<p>When we used to be "friends."</p>		<p>Hajicek collecting supplies from me at our storage site, November 16, 2022</p> 	<p>Hajicek stopping by Heatwave Haven to get supplies, July 23, 2022</p> 
<p>In addition to financial support, UnhousedSTL had been sharing supplies with Lifeline Aid Group and helping them gain a social media following.</p>			

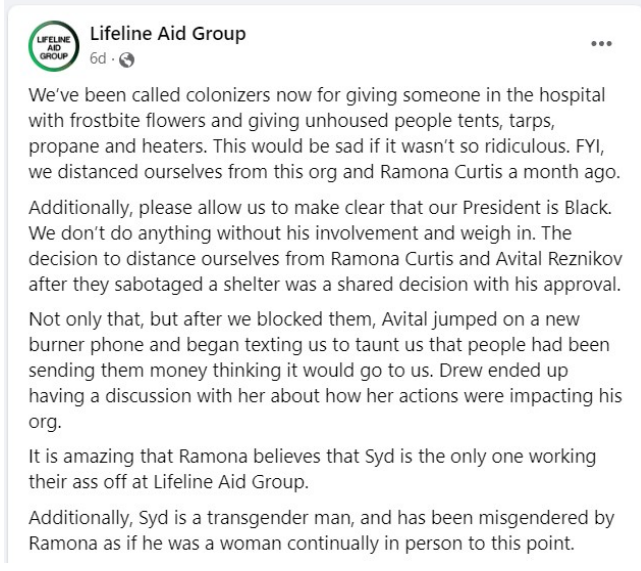
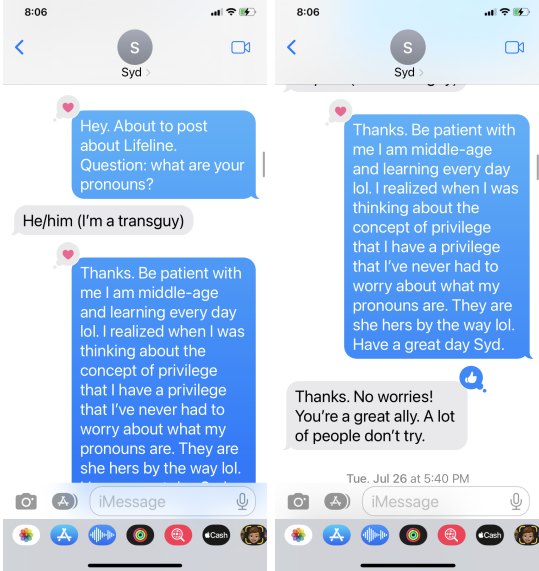


Then, following a November 30 disagreement over Kennerly Shelter, which was open for only ONE MONTH, Hajcik decided to “no longer support” UnhousedSTL (he never did) and began a mean-spirited campaign to spread lies against me and my org.

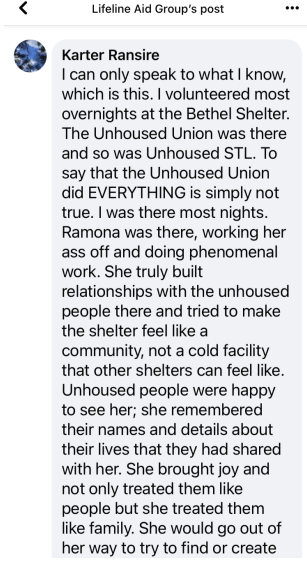
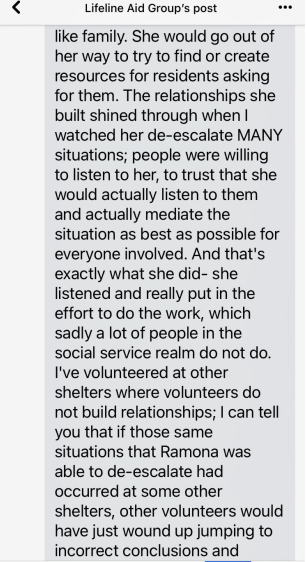
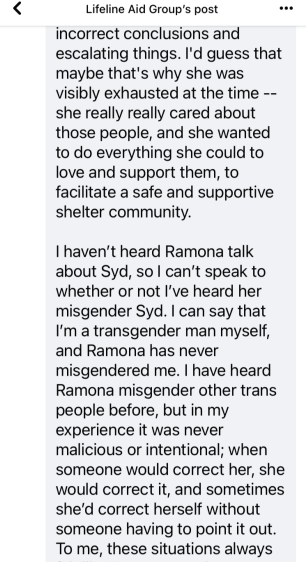
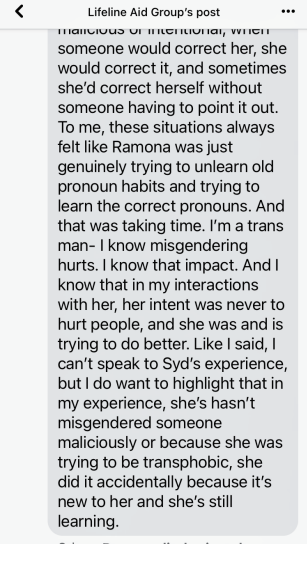
 <p><b>Lifeline Aid Group</b> 22h · 🌐</p> <p>We no longer support certain organizations who have shown themselves to not be advocates of the homeless getting into shelter and getting housed at 4145 Kennerly Ave. If you want to know more, ping us for details.</p>	 <p>10:55</p> <p>ST LOUIS: Serving All Who Need</p> <p><b>Lifeline Aid Group</b> @LifelineAidGrp</p> <p><b>@LifelineAidGrp blocked you</b></p> <p>You are blocked from following @LifelineAidGrp and viewing @LifelineAidGrp's Tweets.</p>
---	--

<p>In addition to the fraud allegations, Hajicek intentionally lied on Lifeline's public page about a media story. The post states I went to the media with a story when I clearly told him I did not.</p>	<p>My email to Hajicek dated Feb. 7, 2022 about what happened with the media and his response then.</p>
<p>Then she went to KMOV and tried to spin an absurd story that the church was the one shutting down the temp shelter.</p> <p>It was not a fun time, fortunately KMOV were able to assess the situation and speak with Amanda when they arrived and found out that the idea the church was forcing us to shut down was a lie.</p>	<p>I did not call the media. Anthony D' (can't spell) from St. Pats called me and asked would I be interested in talking. When they called they were like, so the church is kicking you out? I said no. We're leaving because it's time. The real story is the city's inaction, etc. They kept trying to frame the narrative in a way that was not the real story. They ended up showing up when I wasn't there and they talked to Amanda. For some reason, she got the impression that I told the media they were kicking us out. I never did. I steered them away from nonsense because that is not what this story is about.</p> <p>Avital, perhaps you can advise St Pats leadership that the unexpected appearance of the media when we did not attempt to bring them in caused a lot of chaos. If they made that call, I hope they understand the consequences it had on our already-thin-ice relationship with Bethel.</p> <p>Love all of you...</p> <p>-Syd</p> <p>...</p>

Further proof that Hajicek is intentionally smearing me and my character is his statement about intentionally misgendering him. Hajicek is a trans man. Yes I have misgendered him personally but never on purpose and I tried to always correct myself immediately. In this exchange, I share that personal challenge with Hajicek. He called me a “great ally” at the time.

<p>Here's what he says publicly online</p>  <p>Lifeline Aid Group 6d · 🌐</p> <p>We've been called colonizers now for giving someone in the hospital with frostbite flowers and giving unhoused people tents, tarps, propane and heaters. This would be sad if it wasn't so ridiculous. FYI, we distanced ourselves from this org and Ramona Curtis a month ago.</p> <p>Additionally, please allow us to make clear that our President is Black. We don't do anything without his involvement and weigh in. The decision to distance ourselves from Ramona Curtis and Avital Reznikov after they sabotaged a shelter was a shared decision with his approval.</p> <p>Not only that, but after we blocked them, Avital jumped on a new burner phone and began texting us to taunt us that people had been sending them money thinking it would go to us. Drew ended up having a discussion with her about how her actions were impacting his org.</p> <p>It is amazing that Ramona believes that Syd is the only one working their ass off at Lifeline Aid Group.</p> <p>Additionally, Syd is a transgender man, and has been misgendered by Ramona as if he was a woman continually in person to this point.</p>	<p>Here's what he says privately to me</p>  <p>8:06</p> <p>Syd</p> <p>Hey. About to post about Lifeline. Question: what are your pronouns?</p> <p>He/him (I'm a transguy)</p> <p>Thanks. Be patient with me I am middle-age and learning every day lol. I realized when I was thinking about the concept of privilege that I have a privilege that I've never had to worry about what my pronouns are. They are she hers by the way lol.</p> <p>Thanks. No worries! You're a great ally. A lot of people don't try.</p> <p>Tue, Jul 26 at 5:40 PM</p> <p>iMessage</p>
--	---

Here is a public comment in response to Lifeline Aid's post from an UnhousedSTL volunteer who is a trans man.

 <p>Lifeline Aid Group's post</p> <p>Karter Ransire</p> <p>I can only speak to what I know, which is this. I volunteered most overnights at the Bethel Shelter. The Unhoused Union was there and so was Unhoused STL. To say that the Unhoused Union did EVERYTHING is simply not true. I was there most nights. Ramona was there, working her ass off and doing phenomenal work. She truly built relationships with the unhoused people there and tried to make the shelter feel like a community, not a cold facility that other shelters can feel like. Unhoused people were happy to see her; she remembered their names and details about their lives that they had shared with her. She brought joy and not only treated them like people but she treated them like family. She would go out of her way to try to find or create</p>	 <p>Lifeline Aid Group's post</p> <p>like family. She would go out of her way to try to find or create resources for residents asking for them. The relationships she built shined through when I watched her de-escalate MANY situations; people were willing to listen to her, to trust that she would actually listen to them and actually mediate the situation as best as possible for everyone involved. And that's exactly what she did- she listened and really put in the effort to do the work, which sadly a lot of people in the social service realm do not do. I've volunteered at other shelters where volunteers do not build relationships; I can tell you that if those same situations that Ramona was able to de-escalate had occurred at some other shelters, other volunteers would have just wound up jumping to incorrect conclusions and</p>	 <p>Lifeline Aid Group's post</p> <p>incorrect conclusions and escalating things. I'd guess that maybe that's why she was visibly exhausted at the time -- she really really cared about those people, and she wanted to do everything she could to love and support them, to facilitate a safe and supportive shelter community.</p> <p>I haven't heard Ramona talk about Syd, so I can't speak to whether or not I've heard her misgender Syd. I can say that I'm a transgender man myself, and Ramona has never misgendered me. I have heard Ramona misgender other trans people before, but in my experience it was never malicious or intentional; when someone would correct her, she would correct it, and sometimes she'd correct herself without someone having to point it out. To me, these situations always</p>	 <p>Lifeline Aid Group's post</p> <p>malicious or intentional, when someone would correct her, she would correct it, and sometimes she'd correct herself without someone having to point it out. To me, these situations always felt like Ramona was just genuinely trying to unlearn old pronoun habits and trying to learn the correct pronouns. And that was taking time. I'm a trans man- I know misgendering hurts. I know that impact. And I know that in my interactions with her, her intent was never to hurt people, and she was and is trying to do better. Like I said, I can't speak to Syd's experience, but I do want to highlight that in my experience, she's hasn't misgendered someone maliciously or because she was trying to be transphobic, she did it accidentally because it's new to her and she's still learning.</p>
---	--	--	---

***So why did this harmonious relationship change so drastically? What was it about my one action that caused Sydwell Hajicek to begin a targeted online attack against me? Especially after I intentionally poured so much into him and his nonprofit. And why am I calling him and his team colonizers? Stay tuned for Part 2 of Depleted and Defeated: How Colonizers Drove a Black Nonprofit Out.***