



## A Season of Survival Revival

*Anchored in community, guided by history, sustained by culture, powered by faith*

In 2025, the Kairos Center released a report, [\*“A Matter of Survival: Organizing to Meet Unmet Needs and Build Power in Times of Crisis,”\*](#) capturing insights and lessons from mutual aid efforts during the height of the COVID-19 crisis, and situating them alongside a long tradition of projects of survival playing a central role in poor people’s movements.

The Kairos Center comes out of a tradition of very grassroots organizing in the U.S., in particular among the unhoused and welfare recipients. This organizing, by necessity, always included practices of meeting the material needs of those who were being organized. These projects of survival are not charity or even mutual aid. They are oriented around providing for the needs of the community, so as to enable collective struggle and long-term movement building. The goal is not just to help each other get by. The goal is to help each other get by *as* we build the power needed to fundamentally change the conditions we are living under.

Even before the onslaught of regressive and dangerous political maneuvers from the current administration, it has been clear that we are heading toward deepening crises. While there is incredible work underway to respond to growing hardship, these efforts will never be able to meet people’s needs at the scale necessary. For that, we will need a social movement powerful enough to redistribute political and economic power. Our collective experience and study of history teach us that community efforts to meet people’s material needs can and must play a significant role in building the powerful social movement that these times demand.

Meeting people’s spiritual needs must also be an integral part of this movement-building work. As we’ve seen in history, periods of significant social change are often accompanied by times of spiritual and religious awakening, as crisis and uncertainty drive people to seek community, ritual, and ways of making meaning together. These moments of spiritual and cultural revival can be generative of liberatory movements, but they aren’t always. They can also be regressive, oppressive, and destructive, as we are seeing with the rise of White Christian Nationalism. Therefore we have an increased responsibility in these times to draw on our own deep spiritual resources and practices - across different religious traditions - to nurture the kind of revival that will fuel and sustain the movement we need.

This is why the Kairos Center is working with partners in 5 different geographies across the country to organize a **Season of Survival Revivals** this summer. Each “Survival Revival” will convene a diverse set of people and organizations around their common needs. While the specifics will vary by geography, each will include three elements:

- 1) Meeting people’s material needs through a mass distribution or survival project;
- 2) A revival event, including cultural and spiritual expression that helps build community, make meaning, and offer grounding and inspiration; and
- 3) An action that connects the “survival” and “revival” pieces to our vision and demands for political/economic transformation.

The Survival Revivals themselves - and the process of organizing toward them - are an opportunity for leaders and groups in a region to envision and take steps towards building mutual support and survival organizing networks that can serve as supply lines for a mass organizing drive of the poor. This season of activity will link up similar networks across the country into an incipient infrastructure of a national network that can continue to promote, support, and build this model of organizing that we believe will become all the more necessary in the days to come.

## Selected Quotes from [\*A Matter of Survival\*](#)

“When we felt abandoned and not sure what to do, the most important thing we needed to do was show up.”

Christine Lewis, Domestic Workers United, New York City

“Even though we are working against a system, against the Empire, against Pharaoh and Caesar and the powers that be, when gathered and asked, ‘what can we bring,’ we will bring what we have. There is enough for all of us...the question is how to make [it] accessible to all of us.”

Rev. Ingrid McIntyre, Open Table Nashville

“The direct aid we did, it’s possible — and it’s a lot of work. In our biggest moments, we reached very limited numbers of people. If we had to do this for a city as a whole, what kind of infrastructure would it require? Our government is not structured that way. It’s very much, ‘survive or die. Good luck to you. You figure it out.’ And while it’s the responsibility of movements to develop these systems, we need them on a much bigger scale... We need to build collective power to oppose the ever-increasing power of systems rooted in our exploitation and death. The relationships built by mutual aid networks represent an untapped potential to organize for the world we deserve.”

Fahd Ahmed, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), New York City

“All of these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community, but they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning, survival pending revolution....[they] are not answers or solutions, but they will help us organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of the situation. When consciousness and understanding is raised to a high level, then the community will seize the time and deliver themselves from the boots of their oppressors.”

Huey P. Newton, on the Black Panther Party’s survival programs

“A movement that hinges on healing for the sick will catch fire among the sick. A movement that hinges on food for the hungry will catch fire among the hungry. A movement that hinges on oppression being cast out will catch fire among the oppressed.”

Rev. Pat DuPont, Outreach Center at Asbury United Methodist Church, Rochester, NY