

Winter School Study Groups: A Start-up to the Winter School

By Carmelicia Erasmus

As part of preparations for the 25th Annual Khanya College Winter School, the college implemented a study group method where the comrades would meet over WhatsApp to discuss and break down the main reading -- Mutual Aid by Dale Spade- that relates to the theme of the school: "Livelihoods and Mutual aid".

The programme participants were those confirmed to attend the school from 14 – 20 July 2024. They were separated into 4 different groups from different organisations. This helped to work as an introductory space not just for the topic at hand but also to familiarise participants with each other and each other's organisations.

The groups covered questions designed to help the group member engage the material but also use their own experience; and discussions around the importance of the three elements of mutual aid. These elements are, to work to meet survival needs and build shared understanding, to mobilise people and expand solidarity, and to build movements and solve problems through collective action and what they mean for movements and communities and how it could develop organising as a whole and break down barriers of individualism while promoting solidarity.

The groups had agreed to discuss in small groups, and as organisations, about what mutual aid and have communities understand its potential and importance and also help to build on what already exists in communities so that they can collectively plan for better.

Though comrades had some struggles participating at the beginning it became easier once they collectively decided to reflect on their communities and experiences.

The discussions were good and encouraged important questions that the participants needed to answer and understand.

Some participants suggested that mutual aid becomes a part of the education curriculum so that it is taught at a young age to help people understand it earlier but for communities to also use the spaces where they often organise or gather to help spread what mutual aid is and promote it's potential.

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