

## Free Breakfast for Children School Program

The Free Breakfast for Children Program was a community service program started in 1969 in Oakland, California. Within a couple of years it provided free breakfast to over 10,000 school children in 36 impoverished communities across the US. The program run by the Black Panther Party was based on research that showed children need proper nutrition to succeed in school and life. The program was not just about feeding hungry children; it aimed to empower the Black community, encourage voting, and promote civil rights. Local volunteers, including parents and teachers, actively participated in running the centers. By offering a nutritious meal and showing care for the children's well-being, the program promoted the values of mutual aid, community involvement, and philanthropy. The Free Breakfast Program became one of the most iconic and successful efforts of the Black Panther Party, leaving a lasting impact on the communities it served.

Mutual aid differs from charity while both seek to address society's needs through philanthropy.

- Mutual aid: giving and sharing where there is mutual need and benefit, recognizing we are all in this together
- Charity: giving or helping someone who is less fortunate with funds or volunteering; it implies a hierarchy
- Philanthropy: giving time, talent, or treasure and taking action for the good of all.

The Black Panther Party fought racial injustice and initiated social programs to uplift the Black community in the 1960s and 70s. They are known for activism and resistance in the Civil Rights Movement. In addition to the Free Breakfast Program, they started health clinics and educational initiatives. Their programs were run by volunteers within the communities they served. Unlike charity, which comes from outside the community, mutual aid is collaboration and problem-solving from within the community. This model is more respectful and aligned to the needs of the community.

Because of the success and outcomes of the Free Breakfast for Children Program, the government extended its breakfast program and made it permanent. This is a good example of the role of philanthropy to test out ideas and solutions before the government chooses to make them available to all.

