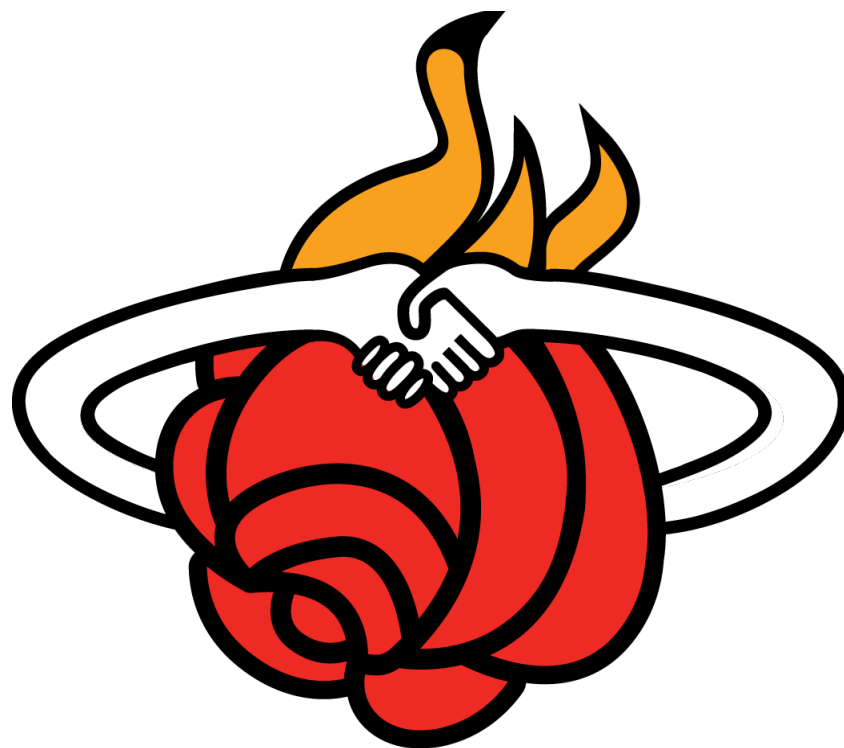


DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

MIAMI



MIAMI
DSA

MEMBER HANDBOOK

2018

CONTACT

WEBSITE: www.miamidsa.org

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/miamidsa

TWITTER: twitter.com/miamidsa

INSTAGRAM: instagram.com/miamidsa

YOUTUBE: bit.ly/miamidsa

NEWSLETTER: eepurl.com/cWvZvb

EMAIL: info@miamidsa.org

PHONE: 786-765-0877



CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE DSA	2
NATIONAL STRUCTURE	3
CHAPTER HISTORY	6
MIAMI DSA BY-LAWS	8
MEMBER'S GUIDE	18
RULES FOR RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT	20
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES	22



WELCOME TO THE DSA

Welcome to the fastest growing socialist organization in the United States. As the injustices of capitalism become apparent to more and more people, there is an urgent need to fight for an alternative. Eight capitalists have as much wealth as half the world's population. To keep that wealth disparity, capitalists pit workers against one another, and perpetuate divisions based on gender, race and sexual orientation. A system built on profit enriches the few at the expense of the many, while entrenching institutional discrimination and oppression of marginalized groups. Our goal is to replace this capitalist system with economic democracy, and to fight institutional oppression wherever it occurs.

That means the DSA belongs to the best traditions of the socialist left. We embrace socialism from below as an alternative to capitalism, and reject top-down, traditions that empower bureaucrats to rule in the name of the people. Solidarity in DSA means creating an organization that operates democratically and gives voice to the most marginalized and oppressed in our communities. Our practices should reflect the kind of society that we want to help build.

DSA is a multi-tendency organization that aims to build socialism through a variety of grassroots practices and alliances. We reject a one-size-fits-all model of how to build socialism, and we encourage a variety of perspectives from our membership about how to reach our goals. Our socialist organizing model is participatory, inclusive, and focused on building alliances with groups and organizations that are fighting for radical reforms within and outside the system. We champion those reforms that strengthen the position of workers exploited by the capitalist system, and minorities oppressed by hierarchies of discrimination and oppression within this system.

The fight to build socialism will involve voluntary contributions from our own members who devote their energies to the daily task of building organizational structure, political alliances, and capacity to fight for change within and outside the capitalist system. The strength and integrity of the DSA is measured by the ability of its members to hold each other accountable in our activist work. Political education, outreach, recruiting, solidarity campaigns, and community engagement are crucial for long-term success. That means being committed to our own education, listening to the perspectives of others, and working in solidarity with other groups to achieve common goals.

NATIONAL STRUCTURE

National Political Committee

DSA's primary political leadership is the National Political Committee (NPC), a sixteen-person body which functions as the board of directors of DSA and are elected every two years by the delegates to DSA's National Convention. Every DSA chapter is entitled to send a certain number of delegates to the National Convention, based on the chapter's size. There are also "at-large" delegates to represent areas where there are no active chapters.

The DSA Constitution requires that eight slots of the NPC be reserved for women and that at least four of the NPC slots be reserved for people of color.

The NPC guides and leads the implementation of DSA's major political and organizational goals, which are broadly defined every two years by the delegates to the National Convention. The NPC gives instructions to the national staff about how to carry forward DSA's day-to-day work. The NPC creates task forces and committees to guide particular areas of DSA's political work. The DSA Constitution gives the NPC the power to charter DSA locals and commissions, as well as DSA's Youth Section. The NPC conducts long weekend meetings three or four times each year.

The NPC also elects a five-person NPC Steering Committee, which meets more frequently, both in person and by conference call. The Honorary Chairs and Vice-Chairs are also elected at each biennial National Convention and may also participate in internal governance issues through the NPC meetings. They do so to a varying extent.

Electoral Work

Democratic Socialists of America is not a political party, nor are we an "arm of the Democrats." Rather, we view electoral politics as one of many avenues for political change. Below are from the DSA Electoral Working Group's 2018 guide to endorsing candidates:

The National Electoral Committee of the NPC will propose endorsements to the NPC in the 2018 elections. These endorsements will be tiered as follows:

Tier 1 – we would provide the extensive support that the candidate requests.

Tier 2 – we would provide more limited support such as social media promotion.

Tier 3 – candidates could use the DSA name on their literature and website but no other support would be made available.

The number of endorsements in the top tier would be limited by national DSA’s capacity to meet our obligations to the endorsed candidate.

The NEC should provide assistance and programming to any local that wants to take advantage of its resources, regardless of whether they are working on a nationally endorsed campaign. However, national endorsements still have a role to play under this electoral model.

Any candidate endorsed by national should be thoroughly researched and vetted. Before endorsing any candidate, national should establish that the local chapter has a plan to ensure that a victory for the endorsed candidate will be a victory for DSA, not just a victory for the lesser evil. Candidates should be running to win, meaning they should have a credible path to victory, and be endorsed by their local DSA chapter. The flexibility and knowledge of local conditions gained by basing much of the organization’s decision-making power in the chapters will be the greatest asset available for guidance in this area.

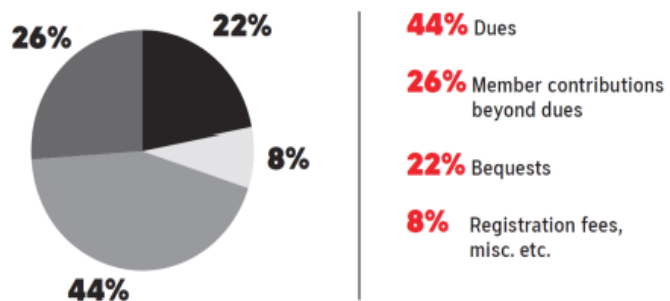
National DSA is well placed to build a coherent narrative in the media about the rising tide of socialism, by strategically spotlighting nationally endorsed candidates and using the megaphone provided by DSA social media accounts to elevate chapters’ electoral work. Furthermore, nationally endorsed candidates can be aided by national DSA’s assistance with fundraising.

The ultimate goal for the NEC should be first, to see the local achieve its electoral goals, and only second, to ensure any particular candidate is elected.

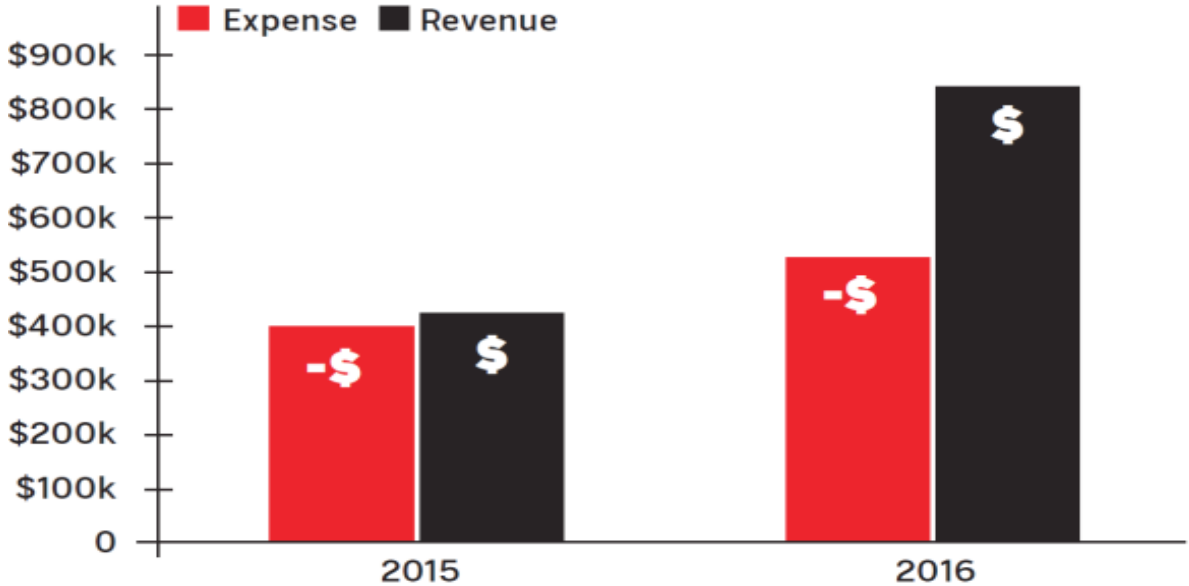
Dues

DSA is funded by our membership, not corporate foundations or private companies. This ensures that DSA members are in full democratic and political control of

DSA INCOME FOR 2016: \$837,000
Sources by percentage:

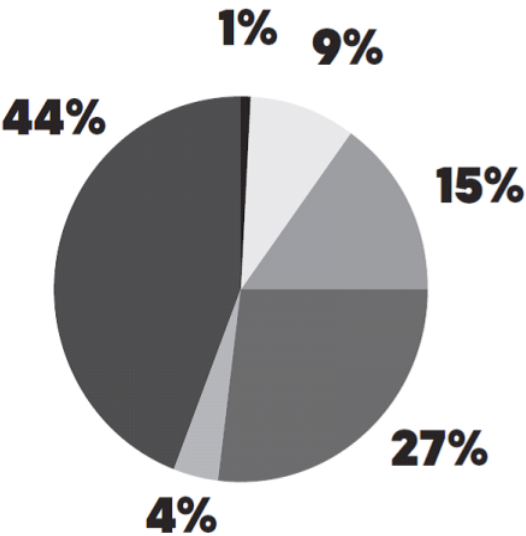


our organization. By paying dues, DSA members self-fund our own tools for liberation. No one is turned away for lack of funds.



TOTAL EXPENSE: \$525,000

Expenses by percentage:



- 44%** Staff
- 27%** Organizing and Education
- 15%** Supplies
- 9%** Occupancy
- 4%** Misc.
- 1%** Consultants

MIAMI DSA CHAPTER HISTORY

The socialist movement in South Florida has built membership and organizational capacity with the growth of DSA organizations in Dade, Broward and Palm Beach County in 2017. The first local DSA chapter was formed as the South Florida DSA, which then divided into three separate DSA organizations in each of the three counties. The Miami DSA recently acquired chapter status in early January of 2018, further solidifying the accomplishments of the local socialist organization. The election of officers for the Miami DSA, which includes Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, took place in August 2017, as was part of the early stages of developing a political structure that was equipped to advance socialist politics across a range of local activism. Regular monthly general meetings have been complemented by the creation of working groups in the areas of Communication and Outreach, Health Care, Mutual Aid, Political Education, and Elections. The organization also has a monthly reading group to discuss socialist politics. Attendance at monthly meetings is typically in the 20-30 range, with overall Dade County membership at 104.

The Miami DSA has built good working relationships with progressive political organizations in South Florida, working in coalitions with South Florida organizations in actions to protect and expand access to healthcare, to defend immigrants from political attacks, to fight gentrification policies in Little Haiti, and to help coordinate relief efforts to poor and marginalized communities harmed by Hurricane Irma. Miami DSA members also worked with DSA members on the Florida International University campus to help create a YDSA organization, which is now applying for official recognition as an FIU student organization and as an official YDSA chapter. The YDSA has built an effective presence on the campus, becoming a regular coalition partner of student organizations fighting for immigrant rights, defending college students against the punitive terms of the Congressional corporate tax cut bill, and protesting the visit of Trump Administration officials to campus. DSA members spoke at pro-DACA rallies, as well as rallies protesting Trump Administration policies.

The politicization and engagement of Miami DSA members is a high priority of the next phase of local organizing. Toward that end, the Communications and Outreach Working Group will work closely with the Political Education Working Group to guide and encourage member involvement in creating content for the weekly newsletter The Red Tide, and the newly emerging Miami DSA website. The Red Tide provides a concise weekly summary of Miami DSA political

activities, alongside historical snapshots of famous events and figures in left history—so engaging visually and in content that these profiles have been picked up by the national DSA organization. The Red Tide also provides members, supporters and followers with a calendar of upcoming events, providing dates and details for a wide scope of left political activities throughout South Florida. The Miami DSA website is a vehicle for a more engaged and detailed analysis of political issues. Members are volunteering to produce content that introduces readers to the relationship between building socialist politics and the roles of the various working groups of the Miami DSA. These introductory pieces will be followed by analyses of the political activities and coalition building that the organization is carrying out in Health Care (the fight for Medicare for All), Mutual Aid (the plans being implemented for providing free brake lights for underserved communities), Electoral Politics (the drafting of a questionnaire to help us determine whom to endorse in local elections), and Political Education (overseeing the politicization of the membership by encouraging self-reflection and political analysis of ongoing activism).

The ability of the organization to advance socialist politics will hinge on deepening the political relationships between the elected four-member Steering Committee, the general membership, the working groups, and our political alliances across the county, as well as deepening engagement with regional DSA organizations in Broward and Palm Beach—which have continued to work with us in South Florida organizing efforts. To do this, the Steering Committee is encouraging politicization at all levels of the organization, with more members being asked to contribute to the day-to-day activities of the chapter. More could be done to ensure that existing members are able to contribute to the Miami DSA. In addition, there needs to be a better effort at recruiting potential new members, making sure there is an active Miami DSA presence at important political events, and working to find ways to better connect with poor and marginalized working-class communities. The emphasis of the national DSA leadership on “praxis” offers a potential guidepost for deepening engagement with these communities. Miami DSA needs to be at the forefront of building relationships and providing solidarity with these communities through mutual aid activities (the brake light campaign), as well as coalition activities where our membership stands in solidarity with oppressed groups. With these efforts, Miami DSA will be able to go beyond the confines of our existing routine to build socialist solidarity across the multiracial and multicultural landscape of South Florida.

MIAMI DSA BY-LAWS

[Adopted on August 20th, 2017]

ARTICLE I. Name

The name of the Local Chapter shall be the Miami-Dade County Local Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). DSA is a not-for-profit corporation. The Local Chapter shall also be known as the “Miami DSA”.

ARTICLE II. Purpose

The Miami-Dade County Local Chapter of the DSA seeks to facilitate the transition to a truly democratic and socialist society, one in which the means and resources of production are democratically and socially controlled.

DSA rejects the capitalist economic order based on private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power, discrimination based on identity, ecological destruction, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo.

DSA envisions a humane social order based on popular control of resources and production, economic planning, equitable distribution, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships.

Our conception of socialism is a profoundly democratic one. It is rooted in the belief that human beings should be free to develop to their fullest potential, that public policies should be determined not by wealth but by popular participation, and that individual liberties should be carefully safeguarded. It is committed to a freedom of speech that does not recoil from dissent, to a freedom to organize independent unions, groups, parties, and other formations -- recognizing these as essential bulwarks against the dangers of an intrusive state.

We are socialists because we are developing a concrete strategy for achieving that vision. In the present, we are building a visible socialist presence within the broad democratic left. In the long run, we hope to build a majority movement capable of making democratic socialism a reality. Our strategy acknowledges the class structure of society. This class structure means that there is a basic conflict of interest between those sectors with enormous economic power and the vast majority of the population.

ARTICLE III. Membership

Section 1. Membership

Members of the Miami DSA will be those individuals whose dues to national DSA are paid in full, who reside and/or work in Miami-Dade County. It will be the responsibility of members to approve policies and guidelines for the operation of the Local Chapter, to elect delegates to the national convention, to vote on matters related to national policy, and to make recommendations on issues and other matters to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Section 2. Removal of Members

If a full member is found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies of national DSA, or if the member is found to be consistently engaging in undemocratic, disruptive behavior, or if the member is found to be under the discipline of any self-defined democratic centralist organization, the Local Chapter may vote to expel the member from DSA. In order for such a finding to be made, another DSA member must formally submit written charges against the member in question to the Local Chapter Steering Committee, which shall set the date of a Local Chapter meeting for deliberations on the charges. The member in question must receive a copy of the written charges and notice of the meeting a minimum of two weeks before that meeting takes place. Expulsion of a member or affiliate member requires a two-thirds vote of the Local Chapter meeting. An expelled full member may appeal to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Section 3. Voluntary Donations

The Local Chapter may establish a pledge system of voluntary donations for its members.

ARTICLE IV. Local Chapter Meetings

Section 1. General Meeting

The Local Chapter will hold a minimum of one General Meeting annually, and all members of the Local Chapter will receive, by either electronic means, postal mailing or telephone call, three weeks' notice and an agenda of the General Meeting. The General

Meeting will elect Local Chapter officers and may adopt an annual budget. In general, it is the highest legislative body of the Local Chapter.

Section 2. Regular Meetings

The Local Chapter will hold Regular Meetings at least four times annually, the time and place of which shall be set in a schedule published and distributed by the Local Chapter Steering Committee. The Regular Meetings will set Local Chapter policy and work priorities, and will include political education sessions.

The Local Chapter Steering Committee will set the agenda for Regular Meetings. In general, the Regular Meeting is the operating legislative body of the Local Chapter.

Section 3. Emergency Meetings

The Local Chapter Steering Committee may call an Emergency Meeting of the Local Chapter on five days' notice when an urgent and important matter requires deliberation.

Section 4. Quorum

A quorum of 15 percent of the members (but not fewer than six persons) is required for General, Regular, or Emergency Meetings to transact business.

ARTICLE V. Local Chapter Officers: Powers and Duties

Section 1. Officers and Terms

The officers of the Local Chapter will be the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The term of office will be one year, and shall run from September 1st to August 31st or until their successors are elected. No more than three of the officers may be male-identified.

Section 2. Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in the office of Chair, the Vice Chair will assume that office. In the event of a vacancy in any other Local Chapter office, the Local Chapter Steering Committee will appoint a replacement for the remainder of the term.

Section 3. Chair

a. The Chair will be the chief executive officer of the Local Chapter. The Chair will preside over Local Chapter and Steering Committee meetings or will appoint a substitute to assume the powers and duties of the presiding officer as specified in [Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition](#). The Chair will be the official public spokesperson for the Local Chapter and will initiate such actions and policies as the Local Chapter's general welfare may demand.

b. The Chair will also be responsible for coordinating the operations and political work of the Local Chapter's branches, working groups, caucuses, and committees.

c. The Chair will report to Local Chapter Regular Meetings on the business of the Steering Committee Meetings, at which time a copy of the minutes of those meetings will be available for inspection.

Section 4. Vice-Chair

a. The Vice-Chair will coordinate and communicate regularly with the nearby DSA locals to facilitate planning and participating in regional and state-wide events as appropriate.

b. The Vice-Chair shall oversee outreach strategies to increase membership and address diversity underrepresentation within the Local Chapter.

c. The Vice-Chair will temporarily assume the responsibilities of the Chair in the event that the Chair is unable to perform their duties for a single event or a longer period of time.

Section 5. Secretary

a. The Secretary will be responsible for answering all correspondence and queries of the Local Chapter, and for maintaining an up-to-date membership list of the Local Chapter. The Secretary will ensure effective communication with the national DSA. The Secretary will temporarily assume the responsibilities of the Chair, if the Vice Chair is not able to do so.

b. The Secretary will be responsible also for the taking of minutes of all Local Chapter, General and Regular Meetings and Steering Committee Meetings, and shall have custody of these minutes, and the resolutions, reports and other official records of the Local Chapter. The Secretary shall transfer official records in good condition to their successor. Official records shall include meeting minutes and member lists.

Section 6. Treasurer

The Treasurer will be responsible for the funds and financial records of the Local Chapter. All funds collected by the Local Chapter will be turned over to the Treasurer, who shall deposit them in a bank account under the name of the Local Chapter. In cooperation with the Secretary, the Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that membership dues are paid up-to-date. The Treasurer will prepare the annual Local Chapter budget, and deliver the Local Chapter financial report to the General Meeting of the Local Chapter, as well as periodic progress reports as requested by the Steering Committee of the Local Chapter.

Section 7. Additional Duties

The Local Chapter Steering Committee may assign additional temporary duties to an officer of the Local Chapter, so long as such assignments do not conflict with the designation of responsibilities outlined in these Bylaws.

ARTICLE VI. Steering Committee

Section 1. Composition

The Steering Committee will be composed of the four officers of the Local Chapter. In the future, branches and/or YDSA chapters may choose to elect representatives to the Steering Committee.

Section 2. Duties

a. The Steering Committee administers the affairs of the Local Chapter and oversees the implementation of the decisions of the General and Regular Meetings; it may also propose policy to the General and Regular Meetings. It shall have the power to receive reports of any Committee, Working Group, Caucus, or Branch, and advise thereon, to call emergency meetings of the Local Chapter, and to act on any matter that requires immediate and urgent action. The Steering Committee is the regular executive body of

the Local Chapter, and thus subordinate to its Legislative bodies, the General and Regular Meetings.

b. The Steering Committee will be responsible for establishing program activities for the Local Chapter, for proposing guidelines and policies that will subsequently be voted on by full members of DSA, and for acting on the organization's behalf between Local Chapter meetings.

Section 3. Meetings

The meetings of the Steering Committee will be held at the call of the Chair at such intervals as may be determined by a prior Steering Committee Meeting or by consultation with any three members of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee must (ordinarily) be given four days oral or written notice of regular Steering Committee Meetings; a 24-hour notice may be given under special emergency circumstances.

Section 4. Quorum

A quorum of three members of the Steering Committee is required for the transaction of Executive Committee business. If branches or YDSA chapters have representatives, a quorum will be a simple majority, including at least three officers.

ARTICLE VII. Branches, Caucuses, and Working Groups

Section 1. Definition

A branch, caucus, or working group is a subgroup of the Local Chapter consisting of at least five full members in good standing with national DSA. Generally, Branches may be defined by geography, Caucuses may be defined by constituency (e.g., People of Color, Women, Queer, Religious), and Working Groups may be defined by area of political work (e.g., communications, peace action, environmental movement). Branches, Caucuses, and Working Groups may democratically determine their own internal structure but are required to identify an individual who will be a point of contact to the Local Chapter membership.

Section 2. Responsibilities

Any branch, caucus, or working group wishing to form must receive approval from the Steering Committee via the submission of a written proposal outlining the scope and purpose of the work that they will undertake. All subgroups are required to be accountable to the general membership by presenting a report of their recent activities and progress at each regular meeting of the Local Chapter and are expected to make recommendations to the general membership and the steering committee on issues pertaining to the nature of their work. Failure of a branch, caucus or working group to adhere to the above guidelines will be grounds for it to be dissolved by the Local Chapter Steering Committee.

ARTICLE VIII. Committees

Section 1. Duration

The Local Chapter will have Ad Hoc Committees, which will exist for a limited and explicit duration. Ad Hoc Committees may be established by a vote of full members at a Regular Meeting of the Local Chapter. A majority vote of a quorum of the membership is required to establish an Ad Hoc Committee.

Section 2. Duties

Chairs of Ad Hoc Committees will keep the Steering Committee and the Regular Meetings of the Local Chapter informed on the activities of the committee.

ARTICLE IX. Delegates to National, Regional, and State Bodies

Local Chapter delegates and alternates to the National Convention will be elected by full members of the Local Chapter. Elections for the National Convention delegation shall be held on the schedule announced by the national organization.

ARTICLE X. Prohibited Activity

Miami DSA shall not engage in activity prohibited by the IRS guidelines established for 501(c)4 organizations or similar rules established by the state of Florida. Nor shall the Local Chapter engage in any activity prohibited by resolutions adopted by DSA's National Convention or DSA's National Political Committee.

ARTICLE XI. Nominations, Elections, and Recalls

Section 1. Nominations Committee

A three-person Nominations Committee shall be established at least one month prior to every election by vote of a Regular Meeting. It shall solicit and receive nominations for the positions to be elected.

When nominating candidates, the Local Chapter should be representative of not only its membership but also the community. The Local Chapter should strongly emphasize nominating candidates who identify as being part of one or more oppressed or underrepresented groups such as: women, people of color, LGBTQ, among others.

Section 2. Nominations Process

Nominations for Local Chapter officers and delegates to the National Convention shall be opened 10 days before and closed at the Annual Meeting. The call for nominations shall be announced to members of DSA in good standing in advance of the General Meeting.

Section 3. Uncontested Positions

If a position is uncontested, the nominee will be declared elected by acclamation.

Section 4. Elections Process

When single-seat officer elections take place for officers or for any other elected position, the process used will be ranked choice voting; that is, if there are more than two candidates running for a given position, members shall rank their order of preference for the candidates rather than just giving their most favored option.

In multi-seat elections (such as the nomination of convention delegates), each member in good standing will receive an allotted number of equal votes total to the number of seats (such as five votes for five convention delegates). Members must cast all of their allotted votes, but may cast no more than one per candidate. The winners will be those with the highest vote totals proportional to the number of seats available.

Section 5. Recalls

Officers, delegates, and executive committee members may be removed from their positions at any time by a two thirds vote of a quorum of the membership, after at least one week's notice to all members that such a vote will take place.

ARTICLE XII. Amendments

Proposed amendments to these Bylaws must be made by written resolution, endorsed by five members of the Local Chapter, and submitted to the Local Chapter Steering Committee a month in advance of a General or Regular Meeting. The Steering Committee is required to provide the Local Chapter membership with two weeks' written notice of the proposed amendments.

The Steering Committee may make any of the following non-substantive changes in the Bylaws by majority vote at a Steering Committee meeting:

- Capitalization or punctuation.
- Typographical, spelling, or grammatical errors
- Lettering and numbering of a rule or the subparts of a rule, according to style conventions in current policy
- Cross-references to rules or sections that are cited incorrectly because of subsequent repeal, amendment, or reorganization of the sections cited.

ARTICLE XIII. Rules of the Local Chapter

Section 1. Rules

The Rules contained in [Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition](#) shall govern this Local Chapter in cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these Bylaws. Consensus decision-making is desirable where feasible, but meetings must submit to [Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition](#) upon the request of a member.

Section 2. Action Out of Order

Any action taken by an officer or member of the Local Chapter in contravention of these Bylaws is null and void.

ARTICLE XIV. Young Democratic Socialists of America

Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) chapters on college campuses in Miami-Dade County will establish their own organizational structure in accordance with the Constitution of the YDSA.

We have ten staff workers:

DSA STAFF

Maria Svart, National Director | msvart@dsausa.org

Sasha Hammad, Operations Director | incorporation@dsausa.org

Eileen Casterline, Database Coordinator | ecasterline@dsausa.org

Fatou Camara, Financial Manager

Lawrence Dreyfuss, Administrative Assistant | ldreyfuss@dsausa.org

Ryan Mosgrove, Assistant Youth Organizer | yds@dsausa.org

Hannah Allison, Travelling Organizer | hallison@dsausa.org

Claudia Cahill, Member Engagement Coordinator

Lisa Flores, Administrative and Office Coordinator

Anna Bonomo, Campus Organizer

MEMBER'S GUIDE

The way our active members become active members is usually, “show up to meetings, then take on work.” We have a variety of meetings every month: Each of them should include opportunities for members to dig into ongoing projects.

We think of all DSA members as socialist organizers (that’s what it says on your membership card!), but at the same time we know that almost no one comes to DSA a fully formed socialist organizer. Organizing requires us all to develop a variety of skills: being able to map out a social group, identifying natural leaders, figuring out what people need to hear in order to bring their best, and making courageous asks. These are skills you can apply inside the organization as you get your feet under you, but also outside of it: figuring out what friends to invite to which events, testing which appeals work on your uncle at Thanksgiving, and otherwise advancing socialism through honest conversations. Organizing also requires practical skills like being reliable, organized, and communicative about your limits and your availability.

Showing Up Builds Trust

In this organization, what you do matters. We might be socially conditioned to window-shop every single possible choice until the last minute, but that doesn’t foster a strong organization. Commit to something, and hold to it.

We’re not asking you to martyr yourself because that’s how burnout happens. Don’t take on more than you can sustain. We also recognize that not everyone has a few extra hours per week because capitalism is awful. Just do what you can. You’re not going to get fired or yelled at if you get overwhelmed or drop the ball every once in awhile. But when you honor people’s time and energy, you build trust. When we have strong bonds of trust, we build power.

Forming A Working Group

Working Groups are independent formations of members within the Chapter. They’re a big part of internal democracy. If you think we need to do more on a particular front, if you want to gather people who are interested in the same issues or shared experiences, or if you want to push the leadership to consider alternatives to the current path, a working group might be what

you're looking for. Chapter working groups have formed around community outreach and organizing, political education, mutual aid, health care and electoral politics.

Any member can form a working group, for any reason. If you want your working group to be officially recognized (which means you get listed on the website) you'll need to get together five members and a statement that includes the name and purpose of the working group and send it to the Steering Committee.

While we encourage self-organizing, there are still a couple of things where it's important to get approval from the larger body of the membership (or their elected representatives).

Electoral Endorsements

You can feel free to get involved in a campaign as an individual, but the big-tent nature of our org makes it important that the collective membership gets to vote on it before someone starts claiming a DSA endorsement.

Speaking For The Group

Be mindful of when you're representing the Chapter and when you're speaking as an individual. This isn't a hard and fast rule, but basically, if you're in communication with another organization, a business, or the press, feel free to mention you're a member and speak your mind. There's no muzzle here. Just make it clear you're not speaking on behalf of the organization until you're sure it's a position approved by a democratic process. The Steering Committee approves official chapter representatives for the purposes of interacting with other organizations or within a coalition space. Steering Committee and general membership meetings vote to approve positions, events, and strategies for the chapter; any work done by working groups or ad hoc members should be presented as such.

RULES FOR RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT

[DSA Guidelines for Respectful Discussion]

Meetings are more productive – and more fun – when the conversation includes everyone. Respectful discussion guidelines are helpful for keeping things focused too. You can read these before meetings and forums. (We’ve sometimes asked for volunteers to read each one off.) This has been helpful at DSA and YDS meetings, especially when new people are present. We’ve also shared them with our coalition partners as a useful resource.

Assume Good Faith In Your Fellow Comrades

Assume good faith in each other. Please try to speak from experience, speak for yourself, and actively listen to each other. When someone makes a point, repeat what you heard, summarize, and ask clarifying questions like “did you mean X?” or “what makes you say that?” to get more information. Encourage yourself and others to maintain a positive attitude, honor the work of others, avoid defensiveness, be open to legitimate critique and challenge oppressive behaviors in ways that help people grow. We want to “call each other in” rather than calling each other out – in other words, if you are being challenged, receive it respectfully. Remember, mistakes will be made, nobody is perfect.

Know Whether You Need To “Step Up” Or “Step Back”

Help create a safe and inclusive space for everybody. Please respect others by recognizing how often, much, and loud you’re speaking and whether or not you’re dominating the conversation. Step back to leave space for others to voice their opinions and feelings. If the facilitator of the meeting asks you to wrap up, recognize that you should step back. This especially applies to participants who have privileged backgrounds. On the other hand, if you don’t often speak up, we encourage you to do so now!

Please Ask Yourself “Why Am I Talking?”

We have a limited amount of time for discussion and to accomplish tasks before us. When in discussion, please ask yourself “Why am I talking?” Consider whether or not what you want to say has already been said, whether what you want to say is on topic or if there’s a better time and

place to say it, and other methods for showing how you feel about the conversation (nodding your head, etc.)

Please Recognize And Respect Others Feelings, Backgrounds, And Cultural Differences

Many people have different levels of experience, knowledge, and feelings in social justice and radical activism and all participants should respect and embrace this diversity. Many people from different backgrounds have different definitions of what it means to be an “activist” or “radical.” While we all don’t have to agree on everything, we should respect our diversity of opinions. Recognize that everyone has a piece of the truth, everybody can learn, and everybody has the ability to teach and share something. Don’t use language that’s clearly oppressive or hurtful. Please, refrain from using acronyms or complicated language that could exclude others.

We Have “One Mic” So Do Not Interrupt Or Speak While Others Are Talking

Many of us will have different opinions on matters. However, speaking while others are talking or adding comments when they cannot respond appropriately does not build community. If you have a disagreement, wait for your turn to address it. This is basic politeness.

Respect The Facilitator When They Use Progressive Stack

Progressive Stack is a form of leading discussions which involves a facilitator keeping a list of names of people who wish to speak. The facilitator scans the group during the discussion, and if someone wishes to speak, they raise their hand and catch the facilitator’s eye. The facilitator nods and makes eye contact to indicate the person is now put on the list to speak, and then the person can put their hand down so it does not distract other discussion participants. However, the facilitator does not simply write a list of names in the order that people raise their hand. Rather, if someone who has not spoken raises their hand, they go to the top of the list. If someone who is of an oppressed group raised their hand, they go to the top of the list unless they have already contributed significantly to the discussion.

Have A Sense Of Humor

Who said movement building can’t be fun? This is a great opportunity for people to get to know one another, building lasting friendships and relationships, to laugh, love and build a movement.. And, as always, please inform organizers of inappropriate behavior immediately!

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

DSA and the American Left

“A Brief History of the American Left”, Maurice Isserman, “Where We Stand”
(http://www.dsausa.org/where_we_stand)

Marxism in the United States: Remapping the History of the American Left, Paul Buhle

E.V. Debs, A Biography (originally published as The Bending Cross), Ray Ginger

There Is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America, Philip Dray

Classical Socialist Thought

The Marx-Engels Reader, Robert C. Tucker, ed.

The Rosa Luxemburg Reader, Peter Hudis, Kevin Anderson, eds.

The Antonio Gramsci Reader, David Forgacs, Eric Hobsbawm, eds.

Democratic Socialist Theory

Towards Freedom: Democratic Socialist Theory and Politics, Joseph Schwartz and Jason Schulman (bit.ly/TowardsFreedom)

Renewing Socialism: Democracy, Strategy, and Imagination, Leo Panitch

Socialism Past and Future, Michael Harrington

“Beyond Social Democracy”, Ralph Miliband and Marcel Liebman (
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/miliband/1985/xx/beyondsd.htm>)

Envisioning Real Utopias, Erik Olin Wright

Race and Democratic Socialism

“Towards a Socialist Theory of Racism”, Cornel West, (bit.ly/CWSocTheoryRacism)

Race Matters, Cornel West

How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America, Manning Marable

Socialist Feminism

The Socialist Feminist Project: A Contemporary Reader in Theory & Politics, Nancy Holmstrom, ed.
Ilene Philipson & Karen Hansen, eds. *Women, Class & the Feminist Imagination: A Socialist-Feminist Reader*. *Women and the Politics of Class*, Johanna Brenner

Barbara Ehrenreich, “What is Socialist Feminism?”

(<https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm>)

Economic Justice

“The Economic Justice Agenda” (bit.ly/DSAEconJustice)

Nickel and Dimed, Barbara Ehrenreich

In Solidarity, Kim Moody

Poor People's Movements: How They Succeed, Why They Fail, Frances Fox Piven & Richard Cloward

Globalization and Imperialism

Empire of Capital, Ellen Meiksins Wood

A Brief History of Neoliberalism, David Harvey

The Economics of Global Turbulence, Robert Brenner

Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance, David McNally

Miami and the Caribbean

Black Jacobins, C. L. R. James

Black Miami in the Twentieth Century, Marvin Dunn

The Civil Rights Movement in Florida and the United States, Charles U. Smith, ed.

South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, Raymond Mohl