



# Emergency Resources for DSA Organizing After Charlottesville

**8/16/17**

Most DSA chapters grew rapidly in the wake of Trump’s election, and we expect after the horrific violence in Charlottesville against counter-protestors and Trump’s press conferences condemning violence on “all sides” and then calling us the “alt-left” that there will be an uptick in both white supremacist activity and also genuine interest in DSA by members and newcomers wanting to resist the racist right in and out of the institutions that shape our lives. Furthermore, the more successful DSA becomes at building a working class, anti-racist, anti-capitalist movement the more we will come under attack.

Successfully absorbing new people and developing them into leaders during “movement moments” like this is critical to growing the democratic socialist movement and sustaining our work for the long haul.

Here are a few key resources you can draw upon in the immediate future:

<b>HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN ANTI-NAZI ORGANIZING</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SAMPLE AGENDA FOR MASS MEETINGS</b>	<b>5</b>
Basic Principles of Absorption	5
Mass Meeting/ Absorption Meeting Agenda Template	6
<b>GUIDELINES FOR RESPECTFUL DISCUSSION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TIPS FOR PLUGGING PEOPLE INTO CHAPTER WORK</b>	<b>12</b>
Three Tips for Plugging People In	12
Intake Interview Template	13
<b>HOW TO DEVELOP CHAPTER LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>DSA’s OFFICIAL CHARLOTTESVILLE STATEMENT</b>	<b>20</b>



## **HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN ANTI-NAZI ORGANIZING**

The specific work your DSA chapter does in the coming months will depend on local conditions, but the list below can help you start to think through what some of those options might be.

[Click here for the Always Anti-Fascist sign](#) created by a DC DSA comrade.

### **1) Organize immediately in self defense and/or solidarity around the most vulnerable communities in your area. This could mean:**

- Neighborhood patrols (if invited)
- Providing logistical support and/or attending vigils or protests at the invitation of groups in those communities
- Organizing trainings for members about how to intervene in street harassment
- Pushing on specific emergency legislation around things like DAPA<sup>1</sup>, militarization of police, or normalizing vigilante violence (such as state laws allowing drivers to plow into protestors.)

The specific groups you might reach out to in starting this work will also vary by location, but here are some types of groups you might try:

- Immigrants rights groups
- Mosques/Muslim community groups
- Synagogues
- Movement for Black Lives and other racial justice organizations
- LGBTQ organizations
- Planned Parenthood/abortion access groups and clinics
- Indigenous rights organizations

### **2) Develop a rapid response team to allow your chapter to mobilize your members very quickly in response to emergency mobilizations that come up. This involves**

- 1) Creating a spreadsheet of all your chapter's members and active supporters with their phone numbers/email addresses
- 2) Assigning a reasonable number of those members/active supporters (say 8-10, ideally people the core member has a personal relationship with) to a core member of your chapter. Those core chapter members will then become the point person during moments of rapid mobilization for the members/active supporters they have

---

<sup>1</sup> Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents - an initiative of the Obama administration that allows undocumented parents of American citizens to apply to remain in the US.



been assigned. Consider having each point person be on a text loop, then having them each set up a text loop with their assigned members.

When a crucial action or mobilization comes up, an assigned chapter leader will call or text all the core chapter members who have been designated point people for chapter members, and those core chapter members in turn will call and/or text the members/active supporters they have been assigned to ask them to turn out for the action or mobilization.

**3) Organize around economic justice without compromising on racism, as is the usual DSA practice. Long term organizing and institution building to bring poor and working class people together around a shared economic interest and collective action to build and wield power is just as important as mobilizing in protest, if not more so.**

- If you're door knocking or tabling, after talking about whatever the main organizing issues is, raise concerns about the Nazi violence and Trump's lack of response, engage them in work around economic justice campaigns you're doing, organize them into anti-Nazi activities if they seem interested and if not leave the door open for future conversations.
- Do the long term racial and economic justice organizing work that is less splashy than marches and vigils. Door knock to reach beyond the choir, and show up to city or town council meetings, get involved in state level political fights, etc.

**4) Have a plan in place before Nazis show up**

- Develop a list of known white supremacist organizations in your community and their leaders and members, including head shots.
- Monitor their public events and work with progressive and left allies to counter protest them.
- Have marshals familiarize themselves with the white supremacists to watch for them at your events.
- "No-platform" white supremacist events before they start. Identify and contact local decisionmakers about planned supremacist rallies.
  - For example, if the event is on campus, contact the university president en masse. Contact local leaders like mayors and police chiefs.
  - Apply pressure on those decisionmakers until they force the rally to cancel or be held elsewhere.
- Start raising money for legal/bail funds for your members and allies before you need it.

**5) Implement protocols to protect your DSA members.**

- Read and utilize the tips in DSA's Event Security memo:  
[http://www.dsausa.org/safety\\_tips\\_handouts](http://www.dsausa.org/safety_tips_handouts)
- Read and utilize the tips in DSA's Information Security memo:  
[http://www.dsausa.org/info\\_security](http://www.dsausa.org/info_security)



- Build relationships with Lawyers Guild chapters in your community and folks who can be medics at actions. Eventually train DSA members to serve in those roles.
- Organize or participate as a group of DSAers in direct action trainings.
  - Trainings should include information for volunteer marshals and medics
- Develop protocols for how to make decisions in intense and rushed situations at actions. NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT A PLAN. We know all too well that emergencies can happen. Always have contacts away from the action should something happen.

**6) Counter the mainstream narrative saying white supremacists are largely poor and working class whites by writing op eds and letters to the editor and calling in to radio shows to talk about who funds them and who they truly are (for example, the alt-right primarily recruits on college campuses), because that narrative will only empower Trump more and will cut off a natural constituency for our movement.**

**7) Resist and marginalize white supremacists by protesting their events wherever they occur. NOTE: Unite the Right rallies have already been announced for September 11 in Austin and Boston, and there may be more in the works.**

- Nonviolent direct confrontation
  - Stand up to hate groups. Do not ignore their events.
  - Show up with signs and literature to hand out.
  - Give the media an alternative vision of the world.
  - If a situation turns violent, leave. Take responsibility and make sure you and your group is safe.
- Indirect confrontation
  - Build a coalition with interfaith, anti-racism and labor groups to hold a separate rally away from the site of supremacist activity.
  - Create a forum to share ideas with people across race, gender and class boundaries.
  - Develop a plan to build off the momentum of your event.

**8) [Responding to Charlottesville](#) is a crowdsourced document that includes links to many additional resources. These resources include [Action Guides](#), [Creative Action Ideas](#), [Ways to Donate](#) for individuals and organizing, and [Political Education Resources](#).**

**9) Create and join lasting institutions**

- Supremacist activity is a teaching opportunity
- Get names and contact information of potential allies
- Develop ongoing work like anti-racist political education groups and targeted campaigns to marginalize supremacists
- Formally join coalitions working to fight the spread of hate groups



## SAMPLE AGENDAS FOR MASS MEETINGS

### **Basic Principles of Absorption**

#### **1) Plug people in immediately to action**

- Start with whatever's happening so people can feel energy, then find specific role based on what interest is
- Don't have folks' first interaction be a boring meeting
- Actions you plug people into should be easily replicable
- Help people move up leadership ladder so they can recruit and support other people stepping into leadership

#### **2) Build a core team to get the work done and share the work**

- Detail work is hard in mass meetings: helps to have smaller group - the coordinating committee, core team, etc. - that tracks the work of others.
- Clear roles structure: Often one skilled person will try to do everything; try to break out roles that people can do (avoid burnout, savior mentality) - pulling in more people to take on more roles, divvying it up into clear ways

#### **3) Be sensitive to the experience of participants**

- How do we deal with experience of people showing up and not knowing what acronyms are used, who does what, what the context is, what is happening - being a new person and feeling like you're 10 paces behind, don't have a place there - which can lead to many people churning through and not "sticking"
- Mass meetings aim to handle both sides: welcoming new people and keeping people who are longer time members engaged/coming back
- Welcomers should be on the lookout especially for people who are in the minority (as far as you can tell visually) who could feel out of place, for example by age, gender or race, and make a point of saying a friendly word or engaging them in conversation before the meeting starts.
- Goal: Welcome new people to working groups and keep existing members motivated by asking them to take on leadership roles



## Mass Meeting/Absorption Meeting Agenda Template

*The purpose of a mass meeting is to tell people what they need to know and build the relationships they need in order to join the movement and act. This is designed as a template to guide a mass meeting for DSA groups. It borrows heavily from a template provided by Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ).*

<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Person Leading</b>
<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grounding and brief opening inspirational quote or story</li><li>• Accessibility check (explain bathroom location; can everyone hear; does anyone need us to use American Sign Language applause instead of loud clapping; etc.)</li><li>• Pair share (break into pairs to build relationships and tell own story)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Name, neighborhood, personal gender pronouns</li><li>o Why are you here tonight? Why are you called to take action in this moment? What do you hope to get out of the meeting?</li></ul></li></ul>	10 min	
<b>Our story and strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Democratic Socialists believe that the economy, society and public institutions should be run democratically to meet human needs, not to make profits for a few.</li><li>• We believe we can only win this world through building a multi-racial, working class socialist movement that confronts both capitalist class power and the undemocratic power conferred by racism, sexism and other isms.</li><li>• We have 25,000 members in over 150 chapters in communities and on campuses across the country, in almost every state. [For details, review the 2015 <a href="#">Strategy Summary</a>.]</li><li>• We are a political and activist organization, not a party, and we do many types of activities in order to build power.</li></ul>	10 min	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Support worker organizing in unions or even through other forms of direct action in the workplace.</li><li>o Community organizing and direct action campaigns to pressure politicians or corporate decision makers around issues such as health care, housing or immigration.</li><li>o Supporting political candidates who share our values, often times our own members.</li><li>● For example, many of our chapters organized picket lines during a recent CWA strike, all of our chapters educated the public about Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primary, and our chapters are active in campaigns around police brutality.</li><li>● We're organizing as open democratic socialists, in rural, suburban and urban communities, because we believe that many people are feeling economic pain and that many people have largely given up on the formal political system.</li><li>● Our North Star is collective liberation, and we fight in the here and now to defend our communities, fight for socialistic reforms that build working class power, and put forth an explicitly socialist message against the capitalists that tell us to compete with each other and settle for crumbs.</li><li>● We believe that an independent democratic socialist movement organizing the unorganized, but one that works in coalition with other progressives, is the best defense against right-wing populism and authoritarianism.</li></ul>		
<b>Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Give short description of our values<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Calling in, not out</li><li>● Accountability and action</li><li>● Inclusivity and big tent</li><li>● Continually enabling individuals to develop leadership and other skills</li><li>● Push yourself to work outside your comfort zone</li><li>● Growth and change is good</li></ul></li><li>● Have folks discuss the values in pair shares</li></ul>	10 min	



<b>Action!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the action you're asking folks to take? How can people join the movement? It could be any (or all) of these:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Action 1 [ex: rally Thursday night]</li><li>• Action 2 [ex: door knocking Saturday]</li><li>• Action 3 [ex: sign making party Wednesday night]</li></ul></li><li>• Collect donations (if you wish to do so)</li><li>• Break into facilitated groups/committees<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Leaders of groups pass around sign in sheets OR share their email and ask people to all take out their phones and email them their name and phone numbers with subject line "breakout group"</li><li>o Review Guidelines for Respectful Discussion at the start of the breakout time</li></ul></li><li>• Actions/events planning</li><li>• Marshals and/or medics</li><li>• Organizing/face to face outreach</li><li>• Administrative/data management (don't give data to new people right away though)</li><li>• Visibility/Arts</li><li>• Communications/media</li><li>• Political education</li><li>• Child watch/ kid's programming</li><li>• Culture/community building</li><li>• OR committees by neighborhoods or geographic location</li></ul>	45 min	
<b>Commitments</b>	Have a chance for a few folks to speak their commitments and be celebrated for them. Make sure to call on a diversity of people.	10 min	
<b>Closing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If someone had asked for ASL applause during the opening, announce that there will be chanting or singing at the end of the closing (so people can depart early if the noise would be overstimulating)</li><li>• Clearly share what comes next for each of the action steps you've laid out earlier</li><li>• Announce after-event drinks or coffee nearby</li><li>• Closing (a song like Solidarity Forever's first two verses or Anti-capitalista, or a rousing chant like Si Se Puede, etc.)</li></ul>	10 min	
<b>After party</b>	Have one or two people lead anyone who is interested to an after party at a bar or coffee shop nearby.	?	



	Welcomers should make a point of inviting people who seem a little lost or lonely as the meeting wraps up.		
--	--	--	--

### **Roles Needed Before a Mass Meeting**

- Logistics planner (scopes out and reserves the venue and coordinates people and task before and day of the event)
- Turn out coordinator (plans and executes publicity and turnout calls and texts)
- Agenda finalizer
- Child watch volunteer recruiter
- Materials provider (sign-in sheets, literature/buttons, etc., name tags, projecting equipment, markers, pens, collection jar for donations, etc.)
- Food coordinator (protein is helpful)

### **Tasks Needed During a Mass Meeting**

- Set up
- Marshals/de-escalators staff the door
- Get people to sign in [NEVER leave it alone for a right-winger to take a picture with their phone or steal the sheet]
- Welcomers greet people, especially newcomers, after they sign in
- Watch children
- Speakers for each sections of the agenda
- Song and chant leaders
- Pass donation jars during ask
- Hold money after hat pass
- Pied piper to lead people to after party
- Clean up
- What else is specific to your event?

### **Tasks Needed After a Mass Meeting**

- Enter names into database/email system
- Write and send follow up email listing action details within 24 hours of mass meeting
- Breakout group leaders follow up with people from their groups by PHONE



## **GUIDELINES FOR RESPECTFUL DISCUSSION**

*DSA Guidelines for Respectful Discussion. Good to review before every single meeting, which makes it easier for meeting facilitator to hold people accountable if they are dominating the space.*

### **1) 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 challenging someone's ideas or behavior, do it respectfully, and if you are being challenged, receive it respectfully. Remember, mistakes will be made, nobody is perfect.

### **2) 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 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!

### **3) Please ask yourself “Why am I Talking?”**

We have a limited amount of time for discussion and to accomplish the tasks before us. When in discussion, please ask yourself "Why am I talking (WAIT)?" 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.)

### **4) Please recognize and respect others feelings, background, 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.

**5) 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.

**6) 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 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 raises their hand, they go to the top of the list unless they have already contributed significantly to the discussion.

**7) 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.



## TIPS FOR PLUGGING PEOPLE INTO CHAPTER WORK

### Three tips for plugging people in

*Adapted from a pamphlet by the War Resisters League.*

*Bringing in new members or volunteers is essential to any local group that wants to grow in size and capacity. However, attracting or recruiting new people to your group is only the first step. Getting them to stick around can be a much bigger challenge! The good news is that there are tried and true methods you can use to plug new members and volunteers into tasks and roles that will build their investment and leadership in the group, and will increase what your group is capable of achieving.*

#### **Schedule one-on-one intake interviews.**

When someone says they're interested in finding out more or getting involved in your group, don't just invite them to come to your next meeting. Even the most welcoming and inclusive groups tend to develop their own meeting culture that can unintentionally make new folks feel like outsiders. To increase your new member retention rates, schedule one-on-one intake interviews with new folks before they come to a group meeting. Get to know the person. Find out about what attracted them to the group, what kinds of tasks they enjoy or are good at, and how much time they have. Then tell them more about the group and discuss with them what their involvement could look like. You can use and adapt the questions on side two of this sheet. While this level of orientation requires more time in the short-term, it saves time in the long-term; people tend to plug into the work faster and stick around longer. It may make sense for one or two members of your group to take on orienting new folks as an ongoing role.

#### **Accommodate multiple levels of participation.**

In short, some people can give a lot of time, and some can give a little. Organizers with more time on their hands should avoid projecting this as an expectation onto others. A foolproof way to drive new folks away from your group is to consistently ask them to give more time than they are able. Instead learn what kind of time commitment is realistic and sustainable for them. Help them plug into tasks and roles that suit their availability. Check in with them about how it's going. Are they feeling overextended, or would they like to take on more? Take responsibility for helping new folks avoid over-commitment and burnout.

#### **Make people feel valued and appreciated.**

If you want to inspire people to stick with your group for the long haul, you'll need to make them feel valued and appreciated. It's basic. People like to be around people who respect them, and who are nice! If social movement groups want to compete with the myriad of often more appealing options for people's free time, then we have to treat each other well



and take care of each other. Notice and acknowledge new folks' contributions, however small. Make time to check in with them outside of meetings. Ask their opinions often: What did they think about the meeting? the event? the action? Bounce your ideas off of them and ask for their feedback.

## **Intake Interview Template:**

Below is a basic intake interview template to help you orient new members and volunteers to your group. Add questions or adapt these according to what information is most useful to your group. An intake interview is as much about relationship building as it is about information gathering. For this reason it's better for the "interviewer" in your group to fill out the form, rather than to just hand it to the new person.

Meet over coffee or lunch or whatever is most comfortable or convenient. Schedule an hour, and spend the first half asking the new member/volunteer about herself or himself. Start with the basic getting-to-know-you stuff (are they from the area? in school? working? involved in other causes or groups?) before moving into the more formal questions below. Spend the second half of the meeting telling them more about the group and discussing with them possible ways they may want to plug in.

### **Enter the information into your member database and keep it safe.**

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Address:

1. Do you remember the moment when you realized things need to change?
2. How did you find out about DSA and what attracted you to DSA?
3. Are you interested in volunteering time? If so, what is a realistic and sustainable amount of time you would like to commit (a number of hours per week or per month)?
4. Are there specific days or times when you could be regularly available?
5. Do you have skills that may be useful to the group (e.g. finance, book-keeping, fund-raising, design, photography, public speaking, medical training, de-escalation, project management, writing, management, facilitation, mediation, DJing, performance, direct action, watching children, other)?
6. Are there areas of work that you are particularly interested in helping with?



7. Are you interested in skills development opportunities?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## HOW TO DEVELOP CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

### **Three Ways to Build Leadership in Your DSA Chapter (adapted from Jessica Bell, “Three Ways to Build Leadership in Your Chapter”)**

Being a being a volunteer-driven and democratic organization, DSA chapters can't tell our volunteers what to do. We have very little formal power. At the same time we lack the money and connections that other organizations are able to draw upon to achieve their goals when they lack a large grassroots base (i.e. “grassroots” campaigns run by corporate lobbyists). So not only do we depend almost entirely upon volunteer activists to achieve any of our goals, but we also have no means of ensuring our activists will continue doing the work of our organization beyond showing them that we do effective and meaningful work, and that our organizational culture is welcoming, democratic, comradely and most of all full of opportunities for anyone to get involved at whatever level they can. In other words, we must give our activists a reason to stay involved, and effective leadership develop is one of the keys to ensuring them will.

Here are 3 tips for building effective leadership in your chapter.

#### **1. Have a ladder of engagement.**

The Surfrider Foundation produced this great video that succinctly explains the ladder of engagement.





The purpose of a ladder (or pyramid) of engagement is to move people up from observing your organization to being leaders and owners of your organization. At the bottom there's many 'observers' but they don't require a lot of staff time, and I don't use the 'endorsers' category; I think it's redundant. It's very useful to think through:

- **what levels you have**
- **the most useful and strategic things you can do to support people at each level**
- **your plan to move them up the ladder.**

Let me explain how this works using DSA as an example.

#### *Observers*

At the bottom of the ladder are our observers; these folks watch our group, but not regularly or reliably. These are the people who are friends with our active members. These are also the people who occasionally stop by the DSA website or FB page. We attract observers by maintaining our website, social media presence, speaking publicly at events, and encouraging our members to harp on about our work with their buddies.

#### *Followers*

Then there are our followers, who regularly and frequently get information from us. The many thousands of people on our national email list email list and those who follow us on FB and twitter are followers.

#### *Contributors*

Contributors are those who do something to support us, which means giving money or volunteering. Contributors are super important because that's where leaders come from. I want to share a few tricks we've learned about working with contributors. First, we like to organize our events so we can provide opportunities for people to contribute so we can keep recruiting new contributors.

For instance, there might be a campaign to turn your city into a sanctuary city or a campaign to get your state legislature to pass a \$15 minimum wage law. You can ask new people who attend your DSA chapter meetings if they'd be willing to make calls to their various elected officials and input the results of those calls on a spreadsheet. If they do that task, then follow-up with them to see if next time they'd be willing to do a bit more, like text other DSA members to get them to make calls to their elected officials.

Second, it's important to set up systems to track contributors in particular. Start with google sheets, which allows you to create a shareable spreadsheet that all of your chapter leaders can update. Be vigilant about taking contact information for people who attend your meetings or express interest via email or social media, and always ask if they'd be interesting in volunteering to get more involved. Then, create a column next to each new volunteer's name where you can track the commitments they've made and another where you can track



what they've actually done. This will allow you to readily assess which new volunteers are the most promising ones therefore those you should be reaching out to as people who might take on more responsible in your chapter.

Third, always do more outreach than you think to get contributors. You can never do too much outreach because outreach is all about recruiting people and building power. There's this theory out there that if you want 100 people to come, you have to personally invite a minimum of 400 people (mass emails don't count folks); half of those 400 people will say yes, and 200 of those who say yes will turn up. Use this rule until you work out what rules are working for your base.

Finally, I want to give a tip about how who you do outreach to. You might think that society is made up of disconnected individuals, that are arranged something like this....



But society is actually structured into social circles like this:



(Thanks George Lakey et al and their book called *Grassroots and Non-Profit Leadership: A Guide for Organizations in Changing Times* New Society Publishers, BC.)

And when you believe that society is structured like this you need a different outreach plan. You must recruit people who are natural leaders within each of those groups and then they need to bring their friends. Social media is important, but accessing networks is critical.

That is why it's extremely useful to build relationships with key people in each social cluster, and encourage them to recruit and bring in others. It is also why I always prioritize a face-to-face meeting or a dinner with members, over doing mass outreach, like postering or



tweeting or mass emails. It's the relationships with other key leaders that count. I'm not saying mass outreach is not important – it is – but when it comes to working with contributors I always prioritize the personal approach.

### *Owners*

Contributors can become owners by taking on a position of responsibility in DSA. There is no formal point at which a contributor becomes an owner, but a general rule of thumb is that someone is an owner when they not only attend DSA events and take on discrete tasks that are assigned to them, but also bottom-line a chapter project such as rapid response, serving as a liason with local racial justice organizations, organizing an educational event, etc. New owners should always have a leader assigned to them to provide them with mentorship as they learn the ropes.

### *Leaders*

Finally, there are our leaders who are the elected leadership of each chapter (co-chairs, treasurer, secretary, at-large members). They are highly committed members with a proven track-record.

That's our ladder.

## **2. Structure matters**

Structure matters because people will not know how to get involved and stay involved unless there's structure. Structure matters because if you don't have structure then power is hidden, and potential leaders don't like to hang around when they feel powerless.<sup>2</sup>

The good news is that structure is easy to create!

The first tip is to have regular meetings – like once a month, and try and keep the location the same. It doesn't work to constantly reschedule meetings to suit the time constraints of the few who cancel at the last minute. Get a member to collect agenda items at least a week before a meeting, and don't make the meetings too long (an hour to an hour and a half max). Second, have a clear decision process – consensus, consensus minus 1, 81% vote, 51% vote, whatever. Make sure people know it, and stick to it.

## **3. Carefully choose who you mentor and empower**

There is this perception that leaders are good speakers, that leaders are charismatic, and that leaders must be popular.

There is also a tendency that I have – and I struggle with it – to choose to mentor and recruit people who you like to hang out with, and who are like you, in race, in class, and tastes. Activism can be fun, sure, but it isn't 100% about feeling good and having fun with your

---

2 For more discussion on the importance of structure, see Jo Freeman's essay, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*. This essay, written in the context of the women's movement of the 1970s is available at <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>.



friends. It's about change, and that means choosing people and mentoring people who are going to help you achieve that, even if you don't especially like them. Activism is not about you feeling good. Here are some other things I look for when choosing which of our contributors do I want to mentor into becoming owners and leaders.

*Leaders take ownership over tough tasks and really own them.*

There are NOT the people who say I am going to 'help' with something, like come do phone calls at a phone bank. Help can be helpful, but help is not bottom-lining. When someone says I will help what they are saying is that they don't want to lead, they want to be managed. I look for people who want to manage, the people who will make that phone bank, or event, or fundraiser happen no matter what, despite the obstacles. And there are always obstacles.

*Leaders are respected.*

We had one member for a brief time who was a great policy analyst. She could call up the local newspaper and get an op ed published just like that. But this same member would go to coalition meetings and yell at our allies for disagreeing with her. That's not a leader. In contrast, recently, our group decides to award a transit champion award to an elected official or community member who had taken a leadership role on fixing transit. Three of our members independently approached the awards organizing committee and recommended one of our own members, Brenda, who was known to be very reliable, hardworking and dedicated. We couldn't exactly give out an award to our own member, but Brenda was clearly a leader in our group.

*Leaders have time and resources to give.*

So many of us are involved in five or more groups because we care so much about so many things. But you cannot be a leader if you're only going to give a few hours a month. I only want to mentor someone who can dedicate time to DSA.

*Leaders stick to the decisions and maintain discipline.*

Say you're involved in a strategic planning meeting for your chapter. The chapter has a range of possible causes they were choosing between, from running a campaign to build more affordable housing to starting a hosting a series of public forums on socialism. The group develops up with section criteria, debates the pros and cons of each idea, and then votes. Launching a campaign on housing was the clear winner! At the end of the meeting one of your members – a very active one – says that he is going to do the public forums on socialism anyway. Now, of course, this person is showing initiative, but this is not of kind of person who's going to be a great leader for the group because he's cares about doing his own thing first.

At DSA not all of us agree with the decisions we make. Our group had many conversations about whether we should advocate for a fare freeze or a fare reduction, for example. But our



**Democratic  
Socialists  
of America**

leaders are always willing to stick to the decisions and rules that we all collectively make. Your people are so valuable. And the time we have to campaign for change is so short.



## **DSA's OFFICIAL CHARLOTTESVILLE STATEMENT**

*Below is the official statement put out by DSA's National Political Committee steering committee on August 13, 2017. We encourage chapters to circulate the statement among new and existing chapter members, and to use the statement as a subject of chapter discussion/reading groups.*

### **Statement on Nazi Violence in Charlottesville**

Yesterday's events in Charlottesville, Virginia are a stark reminder that we must fight for socialism or succumb to the barbarism of white supremacy.

We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the white supremacist, racist, anti-Semitic terrorist attack on our comrades in the DSA, the ISO, IWW, Antifa and all others who joined forces in the streets of Charlottesville, VA yesterday.

The final number remains unknown. However, latest reports suggest that at least one person has lost their life and at least 19 injured. Two DSA members were hospitalized and have since been discharged. There are reports that an ISO comrade was also injured. A comrade reportedly from the Industrial Workers of the World lost their life on the front line of the battle against fascism. [It was later reported that she was a comrade but not a member of the IWW.]

In the face of growing racist, anti-Semitic, white supremacist violence, comrades from across the left came together in an incredible display of left unity. They came from many different organizations but spoke with one voice, chanting "Black Lives Matter" and other pro-solidarity slogans. Undaunted, they held the line and showed the fascists that they shall not pass. The day ended with the streets of Charlottesville free of Nazi scum.

We call on the left to build a strong united front against this emboldened right wing. We need to be clear and recognize that white supremacist terrorism will not simply go away if it's ignored. This violent and dangerous movement should never be allowed to have a platform. It should always be fought against by the strength of our united front.

It is important to acknowledge the differing responses of the police to white supremacist marches and terrorism and their reactions to Black Lives Matter protests and marches. Black Lives Matter protests are always met with the worst police brutality and suppression while white supremacist marches are allowed to freely attack counter-protesters on many occasions.

In this way, we plainly see whose side the police are on. From the days of the creation of the modern day police in the 1800s, they were used as a violent force for the physical suppression of a resistant working class, of Black slaves, and indigenous people. Today, their role of social control and oppression remains largely the same.



Trump delivered a meandering and at times incoherent statement Saturday afternoon. During the statement, where at one point he even talked about totally unrelated "record employment", he predictably blamed "all sides" for the violence, as if the left has a centuries-long history of state, systemic, and societal violence against oppressed groups. This is a tired line that the right wing uses to justify its terror. Trump also spoke of the need for "law and order", but we know that this is a signal for more police and vigilante terrorism against Black and Brown communities and the left.

We believe that the terror unleashed on our comrades can be defeated. We also believe that the wider system of racist oppression can be defeated, but only with the ending of the capitalist system which birthed it.

We encourage you to [donate to help with the medical costs](#) of comrades injured in the attack. As we mourn for the dead, we must also fight like hell for the living. DSA members across the country are turning out for solidarity actions in their communities. Get in touch with your [local chapter](#) to find ways to participate.

Together, we will fight fascism and build the better world we know is possible. Solidarity forever.