



DSA

Democratic Socialists of America

**National Harassment Grievance Officer
2019-2020 Annual Report on
Convention 2017 Resolution 33**

Paula Brantner, National Harassment Grievance Officer
November, 2020



PB Work Solutions

Part I: Results of HGO/Chapter Leader Survey:

Democratic Socialists of America is committed to creating a space that is welcoming and inclusive to members of all genders, races, and classes. This policy (passed as Resolution 33 in 2017) provides guidelines to ensure that everyone is able to organize without fear of harassment, abuse, or harm. Part I of the report evaluates Resolution 33's operation with a full year of data received from chapters who have been involved in the implementation and enforcement of Resolution 33. Part II is the National Harassment Grievance Officer (NHGO) report.

Scope

This report, compiled with information from NHGO Paula Brantner and/or supplied by DSA chapters, is prepared in compliance with DSA's National Harassment Policy, Resolution 33 from the 2017 national convention, which requires mandatory annual reports. **This report covers the dates July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020**, to follow last year's report from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. Future reports will cover the same time period from here on out, and will be ready in time for subsequent DSA Conventions.

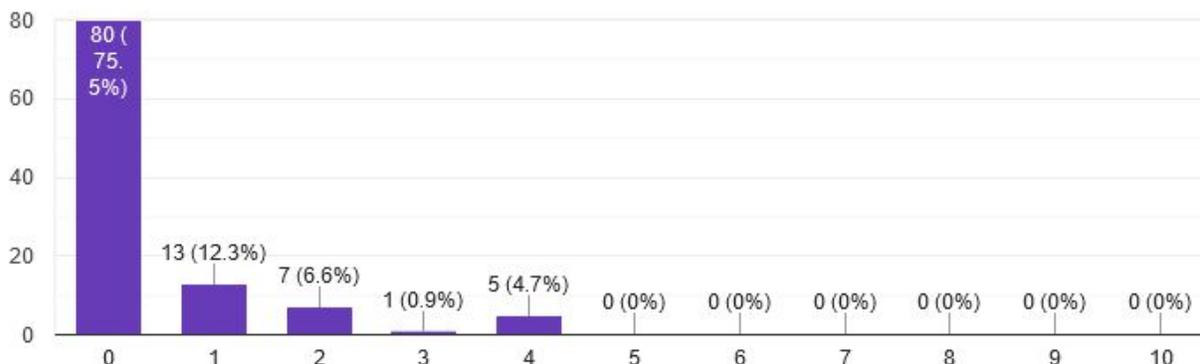
Methodology:

DSA HGOs and chapter leaders were sent a survey link in August 2020 to facilitate gathering data for the report. The first set of 12 questions was required to report compliance with Resolution 33. Section 2 was a set of 7 optional questions concerning the HGO position. Section 3 was a set of 7 optional questions concerning grievance/conflict resolution more generally, including questions about an organizational code of conduct, the impact of the pandemic and the summer's racial justice protests, and confidentiality. Section 4 was required with 5 questions requesting contact information.

We set a goal of exceeding last year's 81 responses because the more participation the more holistically we can understand the program. We extended the deadline a couple of times in September and early October, and National staff conducted some additional outreach so that as of November 15, 2020, there were 106 responses which are included in this report.

Each of the following responses will be provided individually, along with my interpretation, and any relevant comments submitted for each question. Please note that Google Forms did not always display the full question when the answer graph was copied, so I have cut and pasted questions where necessary to display the full question asked. The x axis varies by question. The y axis on each chart is the percentage for a given answer of the overall responses.

Question 1: Between ONLY July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, how many formal harassment grievances were filed with your chapter under Resolution 33?



Commentary:

While of course as NHGO, I primarily deal with chapters that have grievance problems, I was pleased to see that **75% of reporting chapters did not have any reportable grievances** in 2019-20 (up from 69% last year). Last year established a baseline for future reporting, so that we can try to analyze whether more members feel empowered to file reports once the program has been going for some time, or whether over time, the number of reports will diminish due to the effectiveness of prevention strategies and/or other methods of resolving conflict. Last year's higher numbers may also reflect pent-up demand, in that conduct that occurred prior to 2017, but without a process to address it, or the increased societal awareness of harassment issues spawned by the #MeToo Movement, was first brought to the organization's attention in 2018-19.

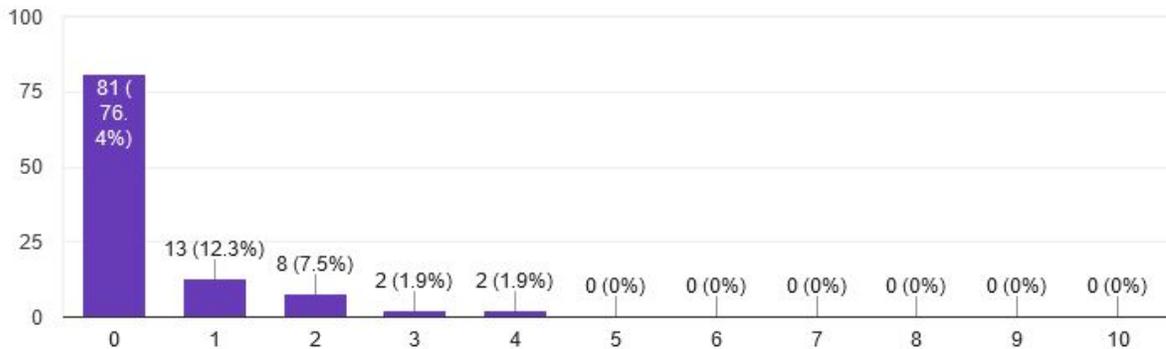
It's important to keep monitoring whether people are choosing not to report reportable conduct because they don't have faith in the system (as is often the case in the workplace setting and criminal law setting), or because they don't know about the grievance process (especially with a newly adopted process.) Or they may not feel any harassment occurred and therefore there is nothing to report (which is ideal when and if it's the case.) This is consistent with conventional wisdom about reporting barriers in other settings.

It is also unclear whether chapters with a higher number of grievances (five here) are more contentious and problematic, or whether it's a function of their greater size. We would expect chapters in major cities with thousands of members to have more grievances than a chapter or OC with fewer than 100 members. Future analysis plus anecdotal information from individual grievances will help determine what a high number in a chapter signifies, and whether the lack of grievances indicates that harassment is less of a problem in that chapter, or because reportable conduct wasn't reported. At this time, however, it seems that most of the chapters with high numbers are ones that are also larger chapters.

Question 2: Of the Res.33 grievances filed, how many were investigated by your chapter HGOs?

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106 responses



Commentary:

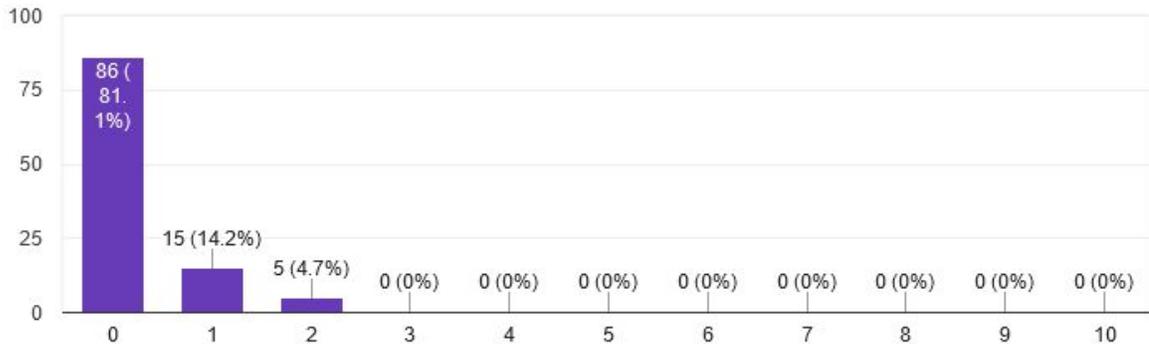
The disparity in each answer indicates that in some circumstances, a formal grievance did not lead to an investigation by the HGOs. Unless there is evidence of an effort in a particular situation to suppress an investigation, then it is to be expected that some would be handled informally and not warrant a full investigation. Also, sometimes parties choose not to move forward with a full investigation. That should be respected unless a full investigation is necessary to determine whether there was a pattern of harassment or misconduct and/or people other than the original reporting party continue to face harm. Sometimes, even with a formal grievance pending, chapters are exploring (often with NHGO support) whether other processes, such as mediation, restorative justice, etc., may be a possible solution instead of proceeding with the grievance.

Those identified as the accused in grievance filings are not permitted to resign to evade the consequences of the grievance outcome, so that there is a determination which will inform the chapter should the accused member seek to return to DSA at a later time. However, some who file grievances choose to leave the organization rather than engage in a protracted battle that embroils the chapter in conflict. The more that individual chapters employ the grievance process, the more likely that people will see the voluntary resignation of the accused as an effective way to solve conflict. A voluntary resignation removes the potential harm to other members from the accused's continued presence, and quickly accomplishes Res. 33's primary enforcement mechanism, a separation from DSA's membership. Having the grievance process in place gives chapters multiple tools to address the behavior and resolve the conflict in the best manner, whether there is a formal grievance or not, and whether there was a full adjudication of the matter.

Question 3: Of the formal harassment grievances investigated by your chapter HGOs, how many were referred to chapter leadership for a resolution?

3) Of the formal harassment grievances investigated by your chapter HGOs, how many were referred to chapter leadership for a resolution?

106 responses



Commentary:

This is where you would expect to see a significant dropoff, with grievances getting resolved in other ways besides making a formal report to chapter leadership. Given the time it can take for chapters to resolve grievances, and other ways of resolving conflict-filled situations, grievances that make it all the way to chapter leadership for resolution are usually the most serious that cannot be dealt with in any other way.

While I had expected that this number over time might go up before it goes down, as people become more familiar with the grievance process and more grievances work their way through the various stages of the process, it went down this year. I had expected that number would stabilize at less than 50 annually, and am glad it has done so. Over time, chapters are becoming more experienced at handling conflict and discouraging inappropriate behavior, therefore making it more likely that they will be able to handle some grievable behavior/conflicts without a referral to the steering committee.

Over time, the goal is still to discourage those with a history of problematic conduct from joining the organization and causing harm, and to create awareness locally that DSA has successfully established and is committed to enforcing conduct standards, and there are consequences for violating them. While DSA is pursuing a membership drive and hopes to grow the organization, it is not counterproductive to discourage those with a history of problematic behavior from joining, if their participation will discourage others and negatively impact DSA's reputation locally.

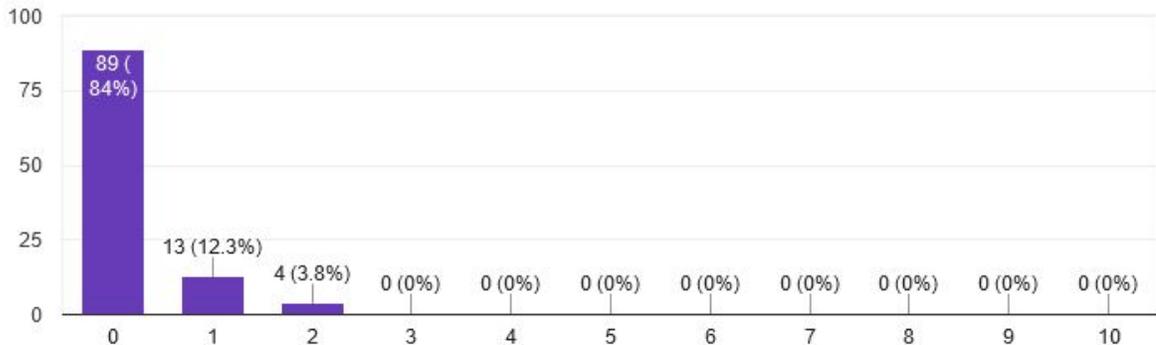
Reporting to the local steering committee is still an oft-misunderstood yet critical piece of the grievance process. As provided in Res.33, “The HGO(s) responsible for adjudicating the dispute will determine whether the report is credible and, if necessary, make a recommendation to [the] Steering Committee of appropriate disciplinary action....” The steering committee is the elected leadership of the chapter and ultimately accountable to chapter members for the climate/culture of the chapter environment. It is important that chapters not bypass this step when there is a live conflict, by punting to the chapter HGOs and/or expecting the National HGO or NPC to solve this problem without making an effort to devise appropriate solutions and consequences, tailored to the specific conflict and assessment of what is needed to resolve it.

The system of referring the HGO’s report to the steering committee for a decision is also an important set of checks and balances. If the steering committee is concerned that the HGO did not conduct a thorough investigation or reach an accurate conclusion, that can be overturned or modified. Conversely if the HGO’s recommendation is rejected, the appeal can explore why that happened, whether due to bias or misconduct on the leadership’s part or the need for better training and guidance for HGOs. Also, in smaller chapters and/or in situations where all the parties to the grievance are well-known to the chapter leadership, having an independent HGO report and a separate consideration and validation by the chapter leadership helps reassure the parties that the Res.33 process was followed, and that the consequences imposed were not selected by a single individual or a biased group.

Question 4: Of the formal harassment grievances referred to leadership for a resolution, how many resulted in a finding in favor of the reporting party and/or actions impacting the accused's membership status (finding of a Res. 33 violation)?

4) Of the formal harassment grievances referred to leadership for a resolution, how many resulted in a finding in favor of the reporting party and/or actions impacting the accused's membership status (finding of a Res. 33 violation)?

106 responses



Commentary:

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The first year's numbers set a helpful baseline, so we can see that even with significantly more chapters reporting, the numbers still went down. We hopefully have reduced some of the pent-up demand we experienced during the first year, before a process was in place, but still have a considerable amount of inappropriate behavior that was addressed.

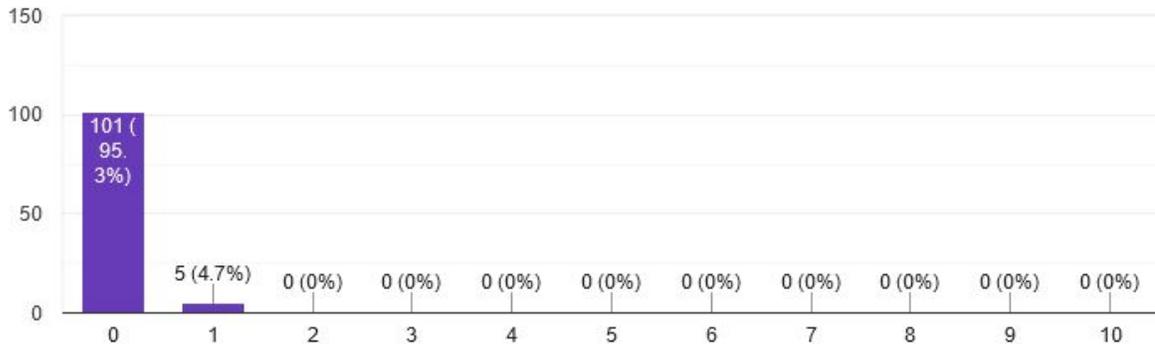
With 25 grievances referred to the chapter leadership body and 21 resulting in a finding of harassment, that is a good ratio of HGO recommendations being upheld. We want leadership bodies trusting their HGOs' judgment and generally following their recommendations, without becoming such a rubber stamp that there is no longer sufficient oversight of the HGO's role and an independent view of the evidence. This also includes situations where the steering committee didn't make a formal finding but was able to resolve the conflict another way, so we cannot conclude that the remaining four situations actually "overruled" the HGO.

I have also advised in my trainings and one-on-one technical assistance conversations (advising on applying Resolution 33 in the chapter's specific situation) to avoid an overly legalistic approach to Resolution 33. **84% (up from 79%) is a very good affirmance rate** -- much higher than we find in the legal system for complaints of this nature. Ideal is a high but not 100% affirmance rate, so we remain in the ballpark we would like to see.

Question 5: Of the formal harassment grievances that resulted in a finding of a Res. 33 violation, how many resulted in an appeal to National DSA?

5) Of the formal harassment grievances that resulted in a finding of a Res. 33 violation, how many resulted in an appeal to National DSA?

106 responses



Commentary:

[The text in this block is heavily garbled and appears to be a corrupted scan of the commentary. It is not legible.]

This is a very positive and welcome development, as our goal has been to resolve grievances much more effectively and adversarially than the appeal process is designed to do. An appeal means the parties were not able to reach a resolution at the chapter level, and sometimes with the NHGO's assistance before the appeal is presented to the NPC. The NPC Steering Committee, who hears the appeals, has many other items on its agenda, and so I make every effort to work with the chapter to reach a resolution that does not necessitate an appeal.

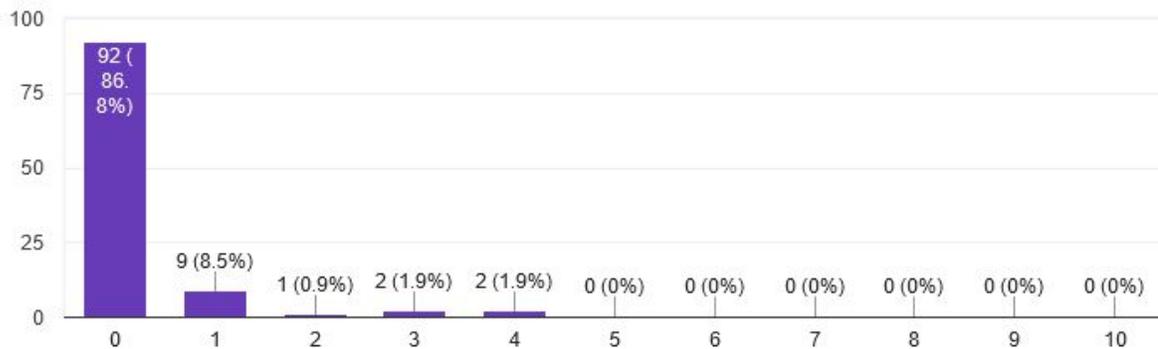
In the first year, there was a great deal of triage involved, which may not be visible to the NPC or membership. Progress made in the first year has streamlined the process over time, so that there aren't as many appeals with policy or process issues to address before the underlying appeal could be processed and recommended consequences could be determined. Virtually every appeal early on identified new issues that lacked concrete guidance from Res. 33, but that is not as often the case now.

I continue to rely upon my professional background and best practices and assess the grievance's impact to prioritize appeals for resolution. Of course, there were sometimes also other, non-appeal priorities that were addressed through technical or other support to chapter HGOs. If a case in a chapter was particularly severe or required swift action, that would take precedence over processing an appeal at the national level. This is especially the case when the appealing party has already been expelled by the chapter, and the subject of the appeal is when they will be permitted to return.

Question 6: How many formal grievances were filed where the conduct didn't come under Res. 33 but was handled under your Chapter By-Laws/Code of Conduct (non-Res.33 grievances)?

6) How many formal grievances were filed where the conduct didn't come under Res. 33 but was handled under your Chapter By-Laws/Code of Conduct (non-Res.33 grievances)?

106 responses



Commentary:

With Resolution 33 in place for over three years, and 200+ individuals within DSA have been trained as HGOs, it is clear that there are a number of situations that do not fit under Res. 33, but are nonetheless disruptive to chapter operations. Early on in my tenure, I observed that some members would file a grievance any time that they became upset about another member's conduct, which required HGOs and chapter leaders to define the parameters of the grievance program and weed out those conflicts that didn't fit under Res. 33. Some chapters have created codes of conduct that encompass other conduct. Others have used the expulsion procedure contained within their by-laws that typically covers "undemocratic, disruptive behavior," and/or "failure to follow the policies of DSA."

To handle the volume of non-Resolution 33 grievances, National staff and the NPC created an alternative appeal procedure to enable a member who has been expelled from a chapter to appeal their expulsion to the NPC, separate and distinct from the Res. 33 appeals process. Cases were heard under that process for the first time in 2019, and have continued in 2020.

Based upon that experience, the NPC voted in November 2020 to approve the NHGO's recommendation to consolidate the process, so that there are equivalent protections regardless of the basis for the expulsion. While this has been the most complicated part of Res. 33's language for chapters to navigate, we have further refined our approach to this issue to make this easier for parties and chapters. Some do not think Res. 33 goes far enough, in that

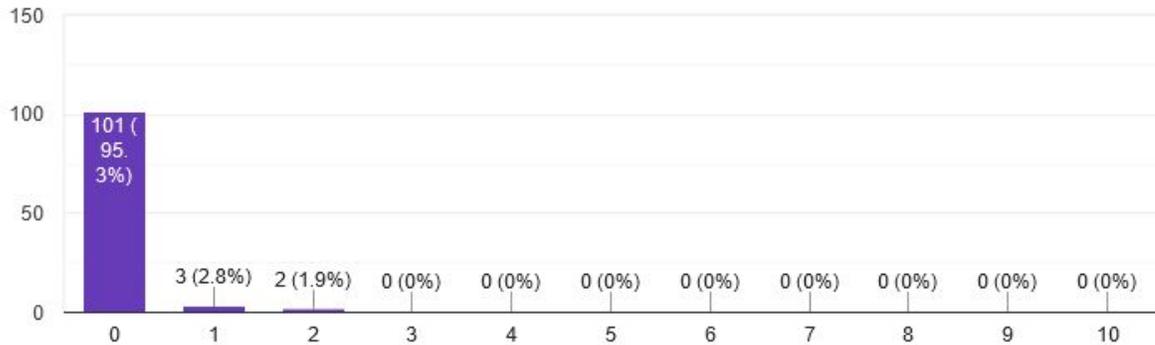
harmful conduct is not covered unless it is motivated by the target's membership in a protected class. Others think it goes too far, by using a process developed for "harassment" to deal with what they see as less important, minor disputes. Accused parties often feel that facing a grievance under this process labels them as an abuser and causes them to dig in and fight the process and its outcome much more than they might otherwise.

There is still a lack of organizational consensus around dealing with disruptive conduct that is not based upon a person's individual characteristics. Some would prefer a more punitive approach that removes the accused's access to organizational resources and prevents further harm to the chapter's reputation. Others feel strongly that a restorative justice approach is warranted, consistent with DSA's other deeply held values. Several chapters have unsuccessfully attempted to employ a restorative justice process which either did not lead to the desired outcome or which caused a perception that the chapter did not sufficiently address undesirable behavior.

While my trainings and technical assistance conversations have previously urged a broad funnel to consider and investigate potentially grievable conduct, rather than immediately dismissing it as not fitting under Res.33's coverage, in 2020, the NPC devoted significant resources to building a National Code of Conduct that reconciles the various approaches (Res. 33, chapter expulsion, National expulsion by the NPC), eliminates barriers to enforcement against parties and chapter leadership, uses a consistent methodology to managing conflict and inappropriate behavior, and takes into account current threats and disruption within DSA. The National Code of Conduct was passed in September 2020, and the consolidation of the two appeals processes in November 2020, so we do not yet have any data from implementing these changes, but we expect them to be more effective and less confusing for everyone involved in the grievance process, from HGOs and parties, to chapter leaders and the NPC charged with evaluating behavior and assessing consequences.

7) Of the non-Res.33 grievances handled by the chapter, how many resulted in chapter expulsion?

106 responses



Commentary:

Of the 106 responses, 101 (95.3%) of responses resulted in 0 expulsions, 3 (2.8%) resulted in 1 expulsion, 2 (1.9%) resulted in 2 expulsions, and 0 (0%) resulted in 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 expulsions.

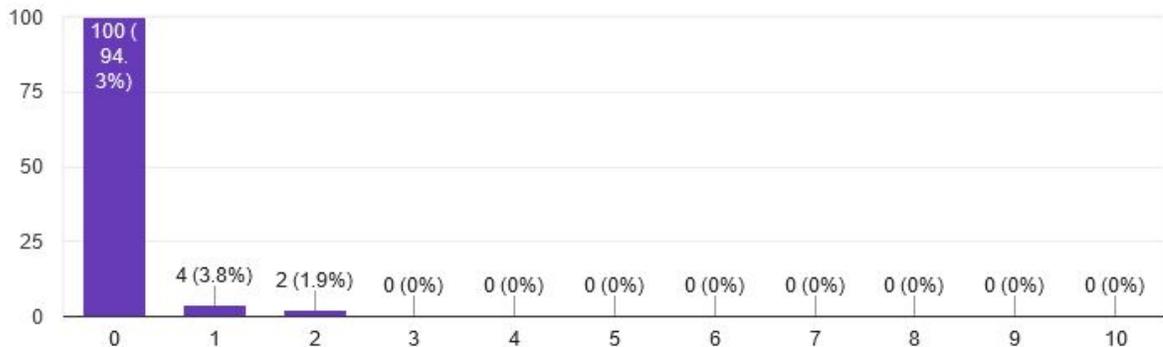
If only seven of 25 grievances that were not brought under Res. 33 resulted in an expulsion (8 of 29 in 2018-19), then **it is still reassuring that chapters are reserving expulsion for the most serious offenses, and not overly weaponizing the expulsion process for minor transgressions.** The recently enacted National Code of Conduct is expected to significantly standardize the treatment of non-Res. 33 grievances among chapters and reinforce specific cultural norms throughout the organization nationwide, which was hard to do without a common standard for non-Res.33 conduct.

This remains one of the major challenges to be faced by DSA at the current time. The left is well aware of the dangers of expulsions without verification of the underlying conduct, and those who believe in restorative justice may believe that expulsion is a last resort before someone is cast out of the community. However, this is also coupled with the reality that the continued presence of a toxic individual or small group in a chapter can sometimes cripple the chapter's operations, causing the chapter to either spend all of its time mired in conflict resolution and grievance processing, or individuals in the chapter using their organizing skills and available time to organize around individuals instead of issues and politicians. This level of toxicity in an organizing committee can prevent DSA from ever establishing a foothold and creating an active and functioning chapter in a particular community. There also are continuing concerns about infiltration from within, where an individual's access to organization resources can permit significant damage if there is not a quick way to separate someone from the organization.

Question 8:

8) Of the chapter expulsions, how many did you send notice of to the National office via the form on the national website or via other means?

106 responses



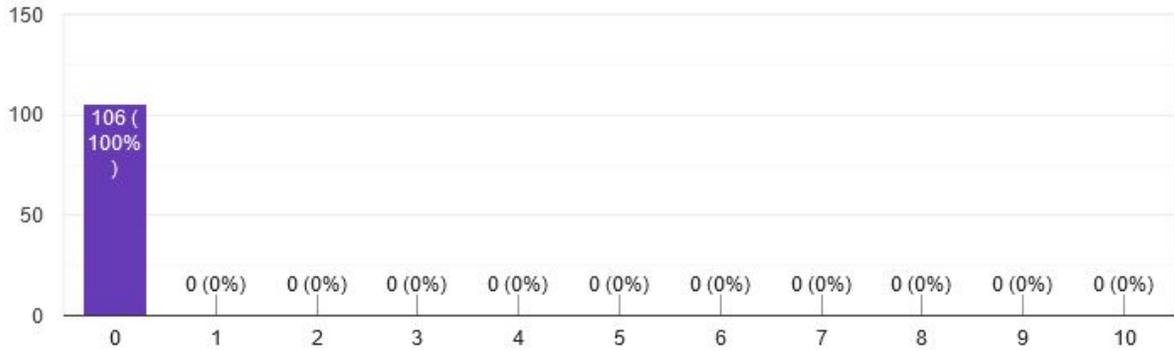
Commentary:

While there has been much publicity surrounding Res. 33, there has been less coverage of the National expulsion procedure. **Some chapters have also chosen to expel a member locally, but have not pushed for a National expulsion.** In most cases, we have been communicating with chapters more closely and working with them at an earlier stage, before the expulsion is actually voted on. That way we know what chapters are recommending when they expel a member locally, and chapters know when they expel someone, that there should also be a recommendation regarding National membership.

The National office continues to maintain a list of members who have been expelled, whether under Res. 33 or the expulsion procedure, as well as those who resign without facing consequences, so that all concerned are in agreement as to an individual's membership status, especially if it is believed a particular member's continued participation presents the risk of harm to others within DSA. To alleviate concerns that people are getting back in and causing harm, we have the "do not fly" list referenced above, and continue our work to ensure that chapters and the National office have consistent membership rolls and a shared understanding regarding someone's grievance status and any consequences attached to its resolution.

9) Of the non-Res.33 grievances that resulted in expulsion, how many were referred to National for a National Expulsion (using the form on the national website)?

106 responses

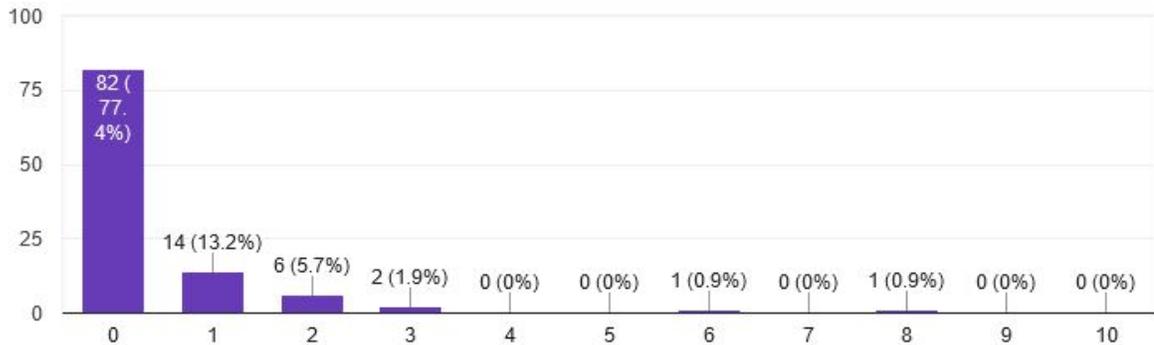


Commentary:

All of the National Expulsion appeals in 2019-2020 were referred before the cutoff date of the previous year's report (June 30, 2019). Now that the expulsion procedure is further integrated with Resolution 33 and/or a National code of conduct, it will be one number for all appeals.

10) Of the inquiries or requests to file a grievance (whether Res. 33 or not) how many were resolved without the filing of a formal grievance?

106 responses



Commentary:

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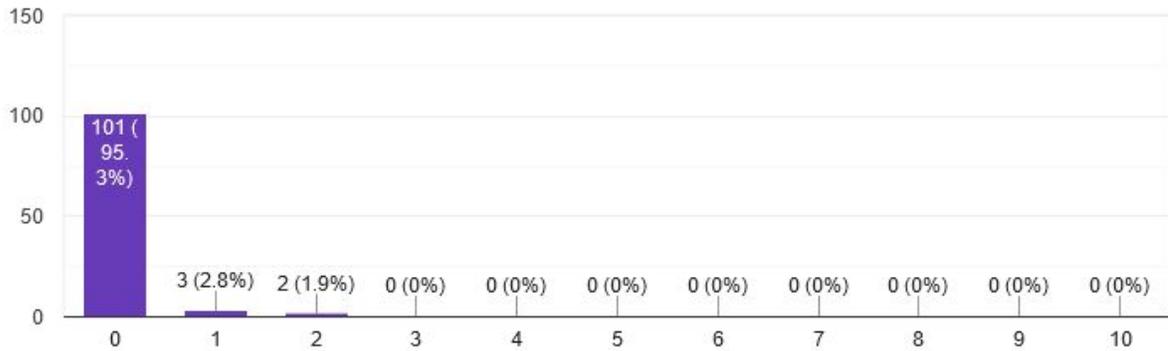
It remains positive to see so many situations resolved without filing a formal grievance. This demonstrates to me that chapters are working in good faith to resolve relatively minor complaints without the formality of the process, and educating their members about when it is appropriate to use the grievance process vs. working out their conflict some other way. The steps built within the grievance process to ensure a full HGO investigation and a fair, unbiased consideration of the party’s complaint can also be time-consuming and impact a chapter’s operations while they are pending, as well as prevent the parties from full participation in chapter activities while the determination is being made. So following the full grievance process through to completion may not always be the best way to handle every conflict.

The goal is to create a climate where it is perceived as safe to report conduct issues, but also where the HGOs can work with members to resolve their conflict without going through the formal grievance process every time. These numbers are consistent with that goal. Some chapters have also created ombuds or mediation teams, to sort out conflicts of this nature which do not require the formality of the Res.33 process or chapter expulsion procedures. Sometimes, when particularly abrasive/adversarial individuals are asked to file a formal grievance and/or advised about DSA’s grievance process, they decide to move on of their own accord, which is also healthy for DSA’s culture.

Members should understand that in an ideal, healthy organizational culture, complaints of inappropriate behavior will be listened to, taken seriously, and thoroughly investigated, but there will also be a sorting process where the full machinery of the grievance process is reserved for the situations with the most egregious behavior and/or the greatest amount of conflict.

11) As of June 30, 2020, how many Res. 33 grievances were pending/unresolved? (defined as not having had your leadership body vote yet)

106 responses



Commentary:

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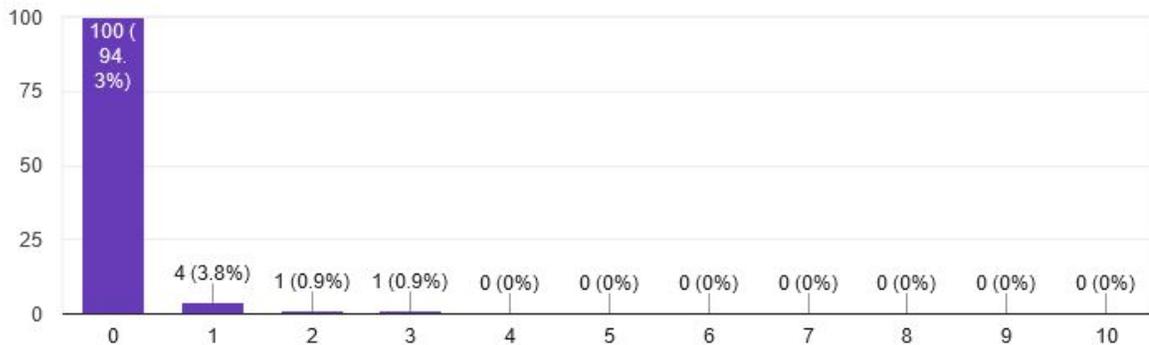
While this number is very promising, there still remains a significant volume of grievances. This increased number may reflect the fact that more chapters have grievance programs and are reporting here, and also that 2020 has been a stressful and contentious year (to be discussed in more detail below when assessing the impact of the pandemic and the racial justice protests of summer 2020).

However, by establishing processes and procedures, we continue to provide chapters with the tools to channel this conflict productively by separating disruptive individuals intent on engaging in harassing behavior from the organization and enabling other conflicts to be handled informally, which means the process is working as intended.

New conflict can and does arise at any time, so it is unlikely we will ever see zero in any category listed here. That would be just as alarming as having hundreds in any category. As we keep moving towards increased “timely, efficient, accurate, and discreet adjudication of all reports” contemplated by Res. 33, we have also been able to focus on continued improvements to the process rather than having to triage the backlog of either grievances at the chapter level or appeals at the national level.

12) As of June 30, 2020, how many NON Res. 33 grievances (based only on code of conduct/chapter by-laws) were pending/unresolved? (defined as not having had your leadership body vote yet)

106 responses



Commentary:

Similar to the number in question 11, I am glad to see this number be relatively low, but still consistent with my impression of the level of conflict existing within the organization. It also indicates that chapters are understanding and addressing the differences between conflicts that arise under Res 33 and those which do not, and handling the latter less formally.

We expect that with enacting the National Code of Conduct that chapters will both have another key tool to handle non-Res. 33 conflict and that these conflicts will start to be handled more consistently throughout the organization, especially as it relates to restorative justice and/or expulsion.

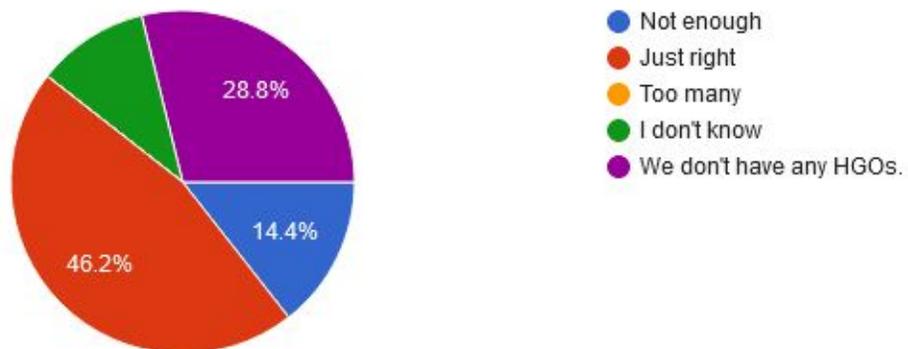
How many HGOs does your chapter have?

105 responses



Is the number of HGOs in your chapter:

104 responses



Commentary:

Based on chapters that filled out the form, a majority of chapters which have HGOs have at least the required minimum number of two HGOs, with some recognizing that the workload is enough that even more than the minimum is needed. 36% do not have HGOs, whether required by Resolution 33 to have them or not. **Our continued focus will be on helping chapters without HGOs identify, select and train them, and in giving additional support to HGOs who have particularly time-consuming grievances or difficult situations that don't fit cleanly into the parameters of the grievance program.**

We still find that because grievances typically involve significant conflict between individuals and sometimes groups of individuals, and the outcome often leaves at least one side unhappy, the HGOs' work can be very stressful, and can also become very politicized within the chapter. People don't join DSA to do grievance work, but those who embrace it as part of their commitment to DSA need considerable support, especially in the initial phases of grievance program implementation where there are few "routine" grievances. **We continue to provide that extensive support on a personalized basis through technical assistance calls and emails.**

Are your HGOs Elected or Selected?



87 responses



Commentary:

Based upon my experience in 2018-19, I wanted to gather information about this to determine whether a specific requirement should be added to Resolution 33.

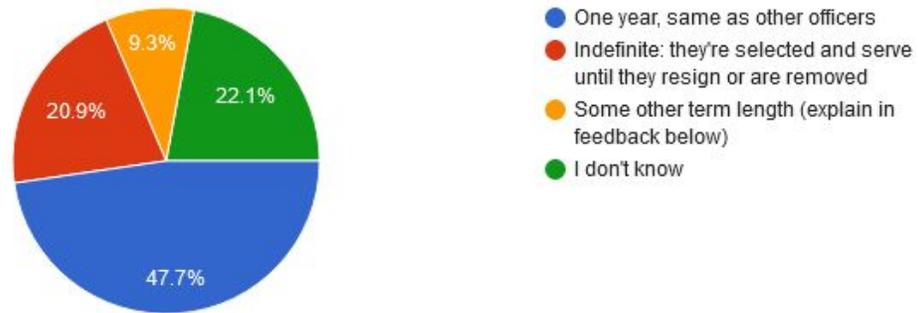
This result is still fairly evenly divided, and while Res. 33 requires chapters to develop a process for having HGOs, it is agnostic as to whether they should be selected or elected.

I am still not aware of any situation where an HGO has been voted out due to an unpopular recommendation, or voted in due to their loyalty to individuals which would compromise their integrity in dealing with grievances. I am aware of situations where HGOs have resigned over the level of stress caused by handling a particular grievance and/or blowback over their role. Obviously all of these situations present a possibility that HGO selection could become politicized according to the prevailing chapter politics and/or factions.

My general inclination remains to minimize the number of specific requirements on chapters that are not required by Res. 33. So while I am not making a specific recommendation whether to favor election or selection, it still may be something for future consideration if Res. 33 is amended or there is further evidence of the HGO position being politicized or weaponized through particular means.

How long are the terms in office for HGOs?

86 responses



Commentary:

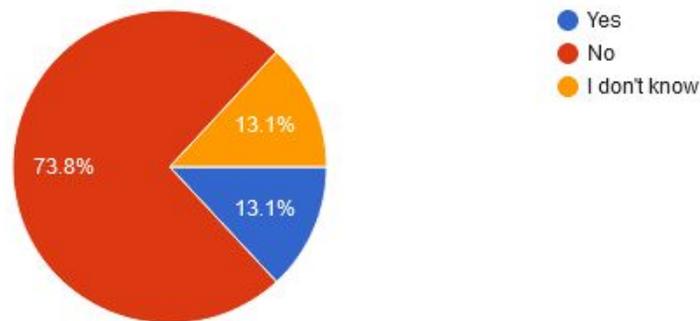
Resolution 33 requires chapters to develop terms of office for HGOs, but doesn't dictate what they are. While it is important to develop term limits, it also takes some time for HGOs to be trained and get up to speed. If, for example, the term of office is a year, but there were no pending grievances, and they were not able to attend an in-person training until their term was nearly complete, then the term limit would be counterproductive in that instance. Now having been in the NHGO position for over two years, I am starting to see turnover among people who were trained in 2019, but they have also been a valuable resource to new HGOs as they transition.

It helps to strike a balance between accountability to the membership and not having someone in office indefinitely, and the value of having someone in the role for long enough that they can be trained and develop experience from going through the process at least once. Over time, it is hoped that HGOs can be a stabilizing influence on chapter culture and help educate the entire active membership as to appropriate conduct within the organization.

Since this still does not rise to the level of something that requires national-level consistency, nor have there been serious problems with a particular approach, I am not making a specific recommendation at this time about the length of a chapter HGO term. This remains something to watch in the future when and if revisions to Res. 33 are under consideration.

Do your HGOs also serve on the chapter's leadership body (Steering/Coordinating/Executive Committee)

84 responses



Commentary:

It appears that a clear majority of HGOs do not serve on the chapter's leadership body, and some of the comments received indicated that the respondents did not think that was appropriate.

Based upon my experience with particular grievance situations, I have previously recommended that **we specifically advise chapters to NOT have HGOs serve on the chapter leadership body. That recommendation was tabled by the former NPC Steering Committee, and has not been resurrected**, as other changes have been more urgent.

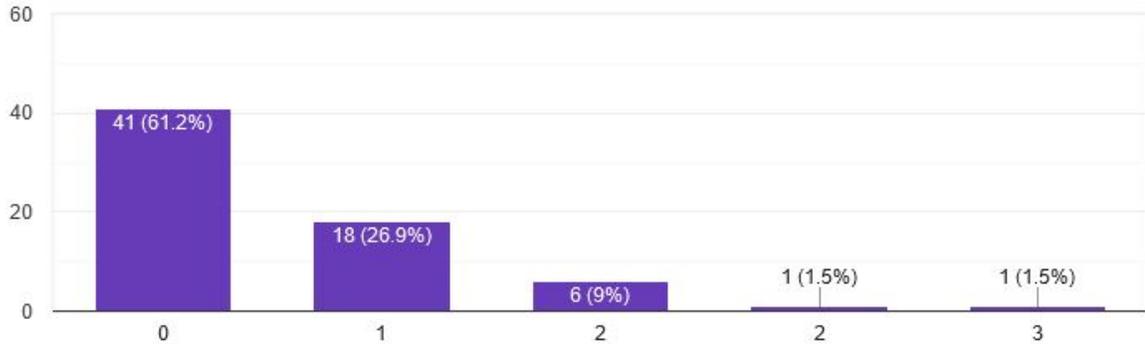
It remains something I will recommend if there are proposed amendments to Res. 33 under consideration the 2021 Convention, or if it continues to propose a problem in particular grievances. I recognize that there would need to be a phase-out period, so that additional candidates can be identified, and elected in their next chapter elections. It may also pose a hardship for chapters of fewer than 100 members who are attempting to comply with Res. 33, even though not officially required to, since they may not have enough individuals willing to assume leadership roles.

I continue to see it as properly aspirational, something chapters should be working towards, rather than a strict requirement, but it is something that could impact the grievance program.

How many HGOs in your chapter have gone through training provided by National, at a regional conference in the spring or at the national convention in August?

How many HGOs in your chapter have gone through training provided by National, at a regional conference in the spring or at last year's national convention in August 2019?

67 responses



Commentary:

Based upon asking training participants to sign in, and doing a head count at each training, the actual number of HGOs who were trained in 2019 was closer to 200 total. This included not just chapter HGOs but also officers and other interested members, especially from chapters who had not yet gotten their grievance program off the ground. It also included some former HGOs.

The reduced number this year is primarily a function of not having scheduled trainings in 2020, since DSA's regional trainings are held in odd years, and the 2020 training plan was sidelined by the pandemic and some delays in NPC approval of policies that would be part of the training. However, the significantly increased amount of one-on-one, chapter-specific technical assistance has substituted for a more generic training, akin to having a personal tutor instead of learning from a teacher in a class with 20 or 30 people. Detailed training materials have also been posted to the National website, so that new HGOs can first look those over before handling a case.

We hope to get back to a regular training schedule in 2021 that will be more accessible due to its likely virtual nature. We also hope to offer an enhanced training program which would enable "certification" of trainees and interactive trainings via the platform Teachable, which was planned for 2020. We also hope to provide additional administrative support to reach out to HGOs and chapter leaders and help ensure new HGOs have a seamless transition into their role by starting with our basic training. We want chapter leaders and HGOs to be proactive, so that training is not conducted simultaneously with a live grievance, but ~~so they know~~ so they know what to do when a conflict in the chapter arises and are prepared to quickly and appropriately respond.

If none of your HGOs have gone through training, why not? (Select the answer that best fits.)

63 responses



Commentary:

This feedback is useful to determine future training needs, both in-person, via webinar, and on a one-on-one basis. **There are some common responses that indicate that HGOs haven't had the opportunity to attend the in-person trainings that are offered, or are waiting until they actually have a grievance to be trained.** There are also a number of other more individual responses that will need to be addressed with each chapter. We hope to make more progress with training in 2021 that we were able to do in 2020, given extenuating circumstances.

We previously learned a great deal from our earliest regional trainings about what was most effective. **Although we started with an NPC-approved training, we then incorporated feedback from each training to focus on the needs that HGOs were actually experiencing.**

But as far as the content, we learned several things over the course of doing the trainings and chapter HGO support.

One, the nuances of distinguishing behavior under Res. 33 and that which doesn't meet the guidelines are very fact-specific, especially when there is not a standardized code of conduct nationally and many chapters do not have one at all. **Now that we have passed a National Code of Conduct, we hope to counter some of this confusion.**

Two, we have recognized that true trauma-informed training takes far longer than the organization has capacity to provide in a 90-min or two-hour time slot (one HGO reports that the training they conduct in their professional capacity is 40 hours). **In 2020, Ana Avendaño, who has specific expertise in trauma-informed work, worked with NHGO Paula Brantner to take over the responsibility of investigating some grievances based on incidents of sexual violence or emotional abuse, so that individuals without that training would not cause more harm and trauma.**

Three, technical assistance and maintaining confidentiality throughout the grievance process is critical to ensuring that HGOs and chapter leaders do not exacerbate the conflict through their

handling of the grievance. The chapters who have sought out and are receptive to technical assistance seem to have much better outcomes, handling grievances faster and with less disruptive drama. **These are considered best practices in the field of survivor-centered and trauma-informed responses.** It makes it less likely that confidentiality will be breached and the survivor will be forced to relive the harm they suffered over and over in the chapter and local community. It also communicates to other survivors that if they choose to step forward to report misconduct that matters they wish to keep private will be handled sensitively and without retaliation.

Have any of your HGOs ever had a listening session/meeting with and/or requested assistance from Paula, the National Harassment Grievance Officer, or Ana, who works with Paula?

80 responses



One best practice that I established almost immediately upon beginning my tenure as NHGO was the availability of listening sessions to those with a vested interest in the grievance program. Early on, the listening sessions were with chapter leaders and HGOs who helped develop Res. 33 itself or chapter grievance programs. Over time, and after I had conducted more regional trainings and became more well-known in DSA, I was referred many more calls, either initiated by HGOs or chapter leaders, or referred from the Field Organizers with conflict in their chapters.

I will have final numbers later in this report, but **estimate I have averaged at least three sessions weekly in 2019-20, and quite possibly more. Some weeks I have as many as five or six, with three in one day. I also estimate approximately 7-10 technical assistance email exchanges weekly, not counting the appeals that are part of my regular workload.**

Often these calls head off what could have been a major misstep jeopardizing the grievance outcome or even raising legal liability for the organization. Sometimes the HGOs/chapter leaders have figured out an approach, often but not always through reviewing the written guidance I have provided on the national DSA website, yet they seek validation that it is the correct one. Sometimes the calls are with parties who have encountered barriers in their chapter to filing and/or fairly processing grievances, which is one reason that the number of HGOs reporting calls does not match up with the number of calls I have done. Some cases required significant follow through including subsequent conversations; others were quickly resolved in a single call.

What all have in common is that they are a way for HGOs and members who have been harmed to get customized confidential advice tailored to their situation, and a survivor-focused, trauma-informed perspective on harassment and other conduct.

I plan to continue my outreach to encourage those with concerns about how grievances have been or should be handled to contact me for assistance. Many concerns about the grievance

program’s effectiveness can also be quickly clarified and resolved once they are brought to my attention by those with the necessary information and/or insight to resolve these issues.

My chapter has community or meeting guidelines that apply to general meetings/committee meetings/leadership meetings, such as progressive stack, pronoun usage, accessibility accommodations, etc.

99 responses



Aside from HGOs (Harassment Grievance Officers), do you have any other position in the chapter who plays a specific role regarding conflict resolution (aside from leaders stepping in)? (like an Ombudsperson, Comrade-at-Large, Mediation Team, etc.)

94 responses



Would you support developing a National Code of Conduct applicable to all DSA members nationwide?

97 responses

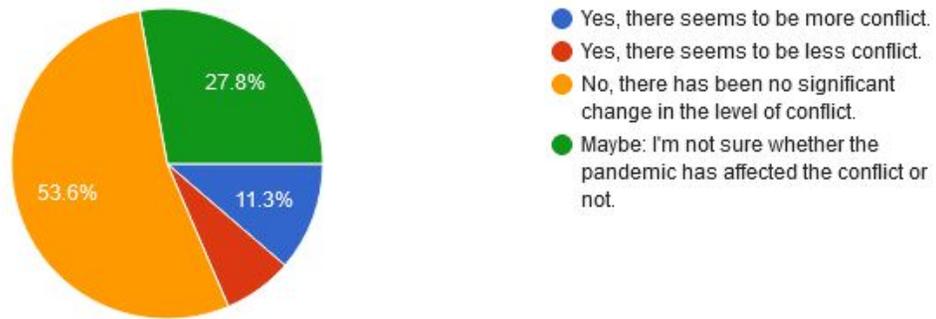


These questions all informed our work this year to develop a National Code of Conduct, that was passed in September 2020, and will continue to inform our work as we work with chapters to implement the code. Chapters who have drafted their own codes of conduct, community agreements, and other chapter norms will be able to continue their use of those documents to the extent they provide greater protections for members. However, chapters who are experiencing conflict over conduct that doesn't fit under Resolution 33 will have this as part of their toolbox to manage and adjudicate conflict and non-Resolution 33 grievances.

We will continue to look to what is happening in chapters to guide our work at the National level, to determine what has been the most effective, and what is not working as intended. We also anticipate further updates to the language of "Version 1.0" of the National Code of Conduct, as the intent was to provide a starting place, without foreclosing future updates. We will keep refining the National Code of Conduct, as we have developed standard operating practices under Resolution 33, based upon what is working and what is not as effective as we had hoped.

Has conflict in your chapter been affected by the pandemic?

97 responses



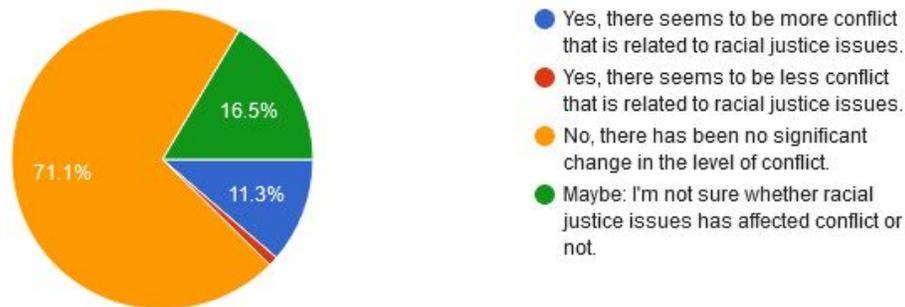
The NHGO anecdotally observed a significant rise in conflict that appeared to be pandemic related, and thus wanted to ask chapters what their experience had been, since only the worst situations make their way to the NHGO. 39% said yes or maybe, while the rest, a majority, said either no or that there was less conflict.

The pandemic has impacted some individuals who personally experienced COVID-related stress, due to loss of employment, caregiving or remote schooling responsibilities, or themselves contracting the coronavirus. Most chapters moved to virtual meetings early on, and to our knowledge, very few have resumed meeting in person, as such gatherings are not advisable and perhaps not legally allowed in their state or city.

But perhaps, based upon what chapters are reporting, the impact is not as significant as originally thought, as chapters adapt to organizing in the “new normal.”

Has conflict in your chapter been affected by the racial justice/#BLM protests/increased spotlight on racial justice issues?

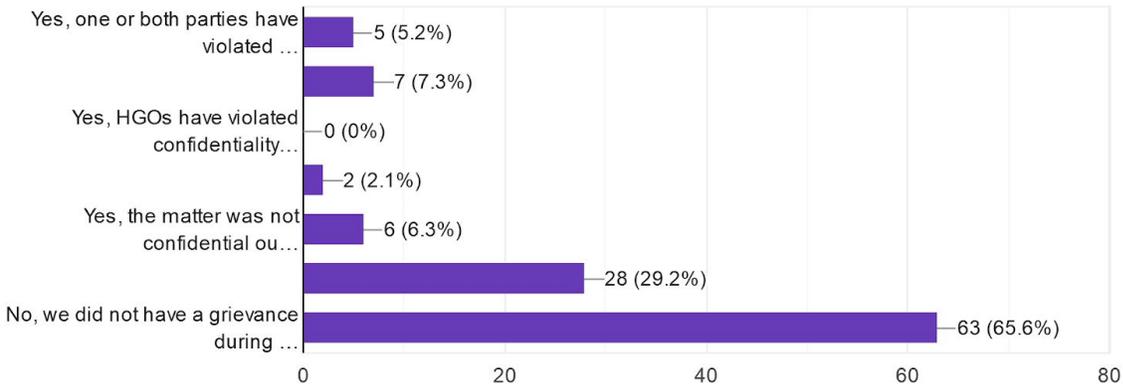
97 responses



This summer’s protests in many communities throughout the United States in response to the murder of George Floyd and the Movement for Black Lives’ organizing efforts captured national attention. Given the demographics of DSA, and some individual grievances that we knew about, we wanted to survey HGOs to determine whether what was happening nationally had an impact in chapters. Over one-quarter of those responding answered yes or maybe to the question about whether there was more conflict related to racial justice issues, while the rest, nearly 75% said there was either no change or less conflict. This will assist with and inform training priorities for 2021 and beyond.

Have you had issues with keeping matters related to the grievance process confidential? (Check all that apply.)

96 responses



(See below, as choices did not print above, & add up to +100% with multiple responses allowed):

- Yes, one or both parties have violated confidentiality during the process. (5)
- Yes, supporters of one/both parties have violated confidentiality during the process (7).
- Yes, HGOs have violated confidentiality during the process. (0)
- Yes, chapter leadership has violated confidentiality during the process. (2)
- Yes, the matter was not confidential outside DSA, which made managing it inside DSA more difficult. (6)
- No, we have not had significant issues related to confidentiality. (28)
- No, we did not have a grievance during this time period. (63)

The NHGO was called to assist in a number of cases where the confidentiality of the Resolution 33 process was violated. These results indicate that the breaching party was fairly evenly divided between parties, supporters, and outsiders (consistent with the NHGO’s experience).

We continue to work with HGOs and parties to ensure that they keep the grievance process confidential, and work to limit confrontation and escalation of conflict while the grievance is still pending. It remains a struggle when conduct is brought to DSA from outside the organization, where either the individuals are not aware of or are not beholden to DSA’s process, and/or believe the best way to proceed is via a public confrontation or “call out,” or shaming via social media. DSA members often feel the need to “inform” the chapter publicly.

However, our experience over the two years has only reinforced our view of best practices that handling these matters confidentially is less harmful to the reporting party/survivor, encourages future reporting, leads to a less adversarial response from the accused party, better facilitates restorative justice and mediation, and is less harmful and disruptive to the chapter’s operations. So we will keep working to minimize the disclosure and dissemination of private information

within chapters and to publicize the expectation that DSA members will not “organize” around parties in the grievance process.

Part II: Status Report on the NHGO’s Work:

Last year’s annual report included a status report by NHGO Paula Brantner that was submitted to the NPC in February, 2020, as a quarterly update on the processes and operations of grievance matters and appeals. The NHGO continues to submit quarterly reports and/or as otherwise requested to the NPC. This portion of the report will identify non-confidential portions that can be released to the membership. My quarterly reports are typically focused on the current state of grievance matters, but with 2 1/2 years worth of progress, I have also identified some important “big picture” next steps to continue to make progress in changing DSA’s culture to comply with the intent and values expressed by Resolution 33 (Res 33) from the 2017 convention.

Part of my work is building capacity at the chapter level by providing technical assistance to advise chapters so that they may learn by doing, in addition to the trainings I have conducted. The technical assistance is tailored to a specific chapter’s situation in a way the training can never be. The longer I have been in the organization, the more that this has become a significant part of my work (perhaps even the most significant), as I have built visibility, awareness, and trust through my work.

Some of this work may fly under the radar, as when done correctly my assistance to chapters helps them head off conflicts that will either not result in an appeal, or will make the appeal outcome significantly less complicated because the chapter complies with Res.33 and uses best practices in handling the matter. But by handling matters confidentially between us and helping HGOs and chapter leaders navigate that at the chapter level, we have minimized harmful conflict and drama which can not only harm the survivor but also other individuals who may be deterred from reporting other grievances and damage the chapter’s reputation and effectiveness.

Another key part of my work is handling appeals of chapter level decisions under Res 33 and carrying out decisions of the NPC based on my recommendations. We set up the appeals process in April 2019, and then have steadily moved through a backlog of appeals cases. We have now resolved 10 grievance appeals total, with 2 more potentially pending at this time. (One handled in 2020 was a repeat of an earlier one first handled in 2019.)

Starting in August 2019, Ana Avendaño has been part of the NHGO team, and has continued to be an essential partner in our work, handling a major chapter investigation and multiple grievance reports where the reporting party has reported sexual assault, sexual violence, and/or emotional abuse. She prepared an initial Code of Conduct report and training for the NPC’s February meeting, a Meeting Code of Conduct passed by the NPC in April 2020, and a National Code of Conduct that was passed in September 2020.

When I was hired in June 2018, I was advised about the importance of closely following Res 33's language in setting up the grievance program, and of course that is important so that everyone understands the policy and the consequences for violating it. I was not involved in the drafting of Res 33. I thus inherited a harassment policy with clear intent about the values it sought to instill among DSA members, and considerable evidence of a need for the policy. Yet there were critical gaps that needed to be filled before the grievance policy could even be considered operational, much less effective at curbing harassment. I frequently am called upon to use my best judgment, based upon over 28 years of work in this field, as to what is workable, and to make recommendations to HGOs, chapter leaders and to the former NPC. Over time, we continue to build out the grievance program and establish precedents for handling particular issues that were incorporated into advising HGOs, added into trainings, coordinated with DSA National staff and guided consistent recommendations to the NPC for resolving complex grievance situations.

Here are the most persistent issues the NPC will need to understand and address in 2021:

Integrating the Code of Conduct into Other Grievance Adjudication and Conflict Resolution:

My previous reports discussed the limitation that **DSA as a whole did not have a mechanism to address conduct that falls into the latter category outside of the Res 33 enforcement process beyond the expulsion and appeals process which does little to indicate what are the norms of acceptable behavior.** This gap was one of the most challenging aspects of effective Res 33 enforcement, leading to confusion and frustration at the chapter level, as chapters are not sure what they can and cannot do to address this type of behavior. The gap also allowed individuals who engaged in problematic conduct not covered by Res 33 to weaponize the Res 33 process and keep acting in ways that are toxic, disruptive, and in some instances, with what appears to be malicious intent to harm the chapter and its leadership, because they know it is unlikely they will be held accountable. Moreover, it also made it difficult to consistently enforce disruptive and harmful conduct within the organization, since some chapters have individually adopted codes of conduct with varying language and enforcement mechanisms. We needed to be able to go beyond Res.33 and reach this conduct, without providing an opportunity for those whose conduct is at issue to tie up HGO and chapter resources endlessly with fights about whether they can be held accountable.

In the last quarter of 2019, with funds allocated in the 2019 NHGO contract, Ana and I worked together to create an initial code of conduct report for the NPC's consideration. On that basis, the NPC voted to expand the 2020 NHGO contract so that DSA could tackle this issue head on with the amount of resources that are needed to make sufficient headway. This resulted in the following outcomes:

- Code of Conduct/conflict resolution training at the February 2020 NPC Meeting
- Meeting Code of Conduct passed in April 2020
- National Code of Conduct proposed for July 2020 NPC Meeting and passed in Sept. 2020
- Conflict Resolution training for Field Organizers, started November 2020 and continuing.

Some of the specific tasks conducted in 2020 include:

- Identifying the types of conduct that have proven problematic in DSA so far based on my time as NHGO (bullying; interpersonal political disagreements, abuses of power, etc.)
- Soliciting and reviewing existing codes of conduct within DSA chapters and in other organizations
- Drafting language that covers online and offline conduct, social media usage, meeting and event behavior and other venues in which DSA members interact
- Proposing an enforcement mechanism that defines the roles of chapter HGOs, chapter leaders, the NHGO and the NPC.
- Creating model language for a National Code of Conduct to be recommended for ratification by the NPC.
- Recommending conflict resolution techniques that address code of conduct violations in a helpful, proactive fashion to strengthen chapters and improve the quality of cooperative relationships between members.

Enforcement of the Appeal Outcome/Censuring Grievance-Related Misconduct:

A successful grievance outcome requires that each link in the process handle its duties maturely and in accordance with Res 33.

1. HGOs must be fair and impartial, evaluating grievances and conducting investigations in compliance with Res 33 and the training and technical assistance they've received.
2. Chapter leaders must fairly and objectively consider grievance reports, taking the facts considered by the HGOs and determining appropriate and consistent consequences.
3. If a grievance decision is appealed, the NHGO must look at the big picture, taking what the chapter determined and making a recommendation that both represents best practices and demonstrates consistency with Res 33's language and how similar types of grievances have been handled.
4. The NPC must look at the facts presented and make a fair and impartial determination as to the conduct at issue, resolving each matter in a way that strengthens the grievance policy and the organization's interest in deterring future harassment.

While none of these four steps should merely be a perfunctory rubber stamp, over time as DSA's culture transforms, there will be trust built between HGOs and chapters, HGOs and the NHGO, chapters and the NHGO, the NHGO and the NPC, and chapters and the NPC, so that everyone involved in the process will trust that the process was executed correctly in accordance with best practices, even if they don't agree with the outcome.

In 2019, the 2017-2019 NPC passed the following [Censure/Removal from Leadership/Expulsion for Non-Compliance with Resolution 33 Appeal Ruling](#) so that participants in the grievance process are put on notice about the consequences of misconduct and/or noncompliance.

The NPC will be asked to rule on instances where particular individuals and/or chapter leadership bodies have not complied with the Resolution 33 process. For the integrity of the grievance program and for DSA as an organization, it will be important to assess these situations fairly and objectively, without regard to which chapters, individuals, and/or factions are involved. While I will do all that I can to keep as much of the matter confidential to prevent the need for recusals, the ongoing defiance may in some cases involve people publicizing the matters as widely, on Twitter, Slack, DSA forums, chapter communications, or any other communication channels that chapter leadership or individuals can access. And when those channels contain misinformation, to counter the misinformation and repair the harm, the correct information will need to be as widely and publicly spread. Over time, with strict enforcement of confidentiality, these matters will not have to play out publicly, but until then, a strict line regarding enforcement will be necessary to have the necessary impact and establish appropriate boundaries around what is permissible under DSA's policies and culture.

NPC members who engage in conversations with members about specific grievance cases, or post about grievance situations in DSA spaces represent a huge risk that can undermine effective resolution of those cases. It may mean the NPC member may need to recuse themselves, based upon the information learned outside of the process which has not been investigated and had its credibility assessed by HGOs, chapter leaders, and the NHGO. It undermines the process itself when DSA members are allowed to bypass the process by going outside of established and appropriate channels to obtain information.

In 2019-2020, the NPC dealt with one expulsion appeal based upon this provision, with the outcome still pending as of the date of this report. There was a second appeal that appeared headed to a return consideration by the NPC, but it was successfully resolved with the chapter agreeing to implement the appeal, after initial resistance to doing so.

Enforcement Considerations and Analysis:

There are a number of categories of grievances that do not fit neatly into the parameters of Resolution 33, or were difficult to assess in the HGO's Annual Report, so I will give them supplemental consideration here. Please note that these categories are not 100% precise and that the numbers supplied are estimates, since we are establishing and describing these categories essentially for the first time.

Administrative Expulsion (Total: 4; 8 in 2018-19)

This is when a member who is either facing a grievance or who lost a grievance decided to resign rather than face consequences from the grievance process. They have been noted in the membership database and will not be allowed to return without permission from the chapter/notification that they have gone through a grievance or accountability process:

- 3 members have been expelled from a chapter when they chose to resign once being notified there was a grievance process instead of being accountable to it
- 1 member was notified several times that a grievance had been filed against them, but never responded to the notifications of the investigation. When that member's annual membership expired without renewing, they were designated as resigned so that they could not later rejoin without first cooperating with the investigation.

Active Appeals: (Total: 2)

As of November 15, 2020 (not adhering to the July-June time frame of the Annual Report) I have two potential appeals pending, which can be described as follows:

- 1 appeal will be ready for consideration at the next SC meeting, after ongoing attempts to resolve the matter at the chapter ultimately failed.
- 1 appeal I am working with the chapter to either further investigate or attempt to resolve at the chapter level, so the NPC SC appeal will hopefully not be necessary.

Closed Appeals: (Total: 5; 8 in 2018-2019)

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- 5 were heard by the NPC SC and resulted in some action being taken (1 before the Convention by the prior SC in July 2019, and 3 since then by the current NPC.)
- 1 of those was heard for a second time after the conduct recurred.
- 1 involved a couple where the appeal was combined because it presented a common factual situation with the same chapter, so action was taken against 6 individuals.
- 1 appeal originally closed in 2018-2019 required significant additional attention in 2019-20, and was recently closed again in November 2020.

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Extraordinary Circumstances: (Total: 10; 2 in 2018-2019)

- With the expansion of the NHGO's annual contract in 2020, Paula and Ana took on a significantly deeper level of involvement with four times the number of chapters as happened previously (two from the prior year, and eight more since then).
- These 10 chapters had levels of conflict and multiple grievances with multiple parties that required far more of our time and involvement than the rest. While the two chapters from the previous report have mostly quieted down, the eight new ones are still involved in active conflict prior to and after the June 30 deadlines.
- Some of the reasons why these are considered extraordinary include:
 - more than 25 hours worth of work by Paula and Ana;
 - the need for an extensive investigation conducted in full or in part by Ana;
 - mediation, restorative justice, or more extensive conflict resolution work;
 - a public disclosure and/or confidentiality breach that has impacted DSA's reputation in the community and/or invited involvement by individuals outside DSA;
 - incidents of sexual violence or emotional abuse that require additional survivor support by those trained in trauma-informed best practices;
 - multiple grievances/counter grievances that arise out of the same incident or pattern or which involve common parties;
 - an organizing committee where virtually all of the local DSA members are part of leadership and/or involved in the conflict.
- We use the term "extraordinary circumstances" in lieu of that term of art, "shitshow." We will work with these chapters until the high level of ongoing conflict is resolved or calmed and the chapter's operations are not severely impacted by the pending grievances.

Inactive Grievances: (Total: 15; 18 in 18-19)

This is a category of items that are currently on hold, either because they have seemed to resolve themselves, the reporting party is not choosing to move forward at this time, or there are other factually-specific reasons why the grievance/appeal does not require the resources of the organization right now.

Please note that Res. 33 doesn't require a deadline for filing or moving forward, so if the parties want to move forward in the future, I have retained the information that would permit them to do so.

- 5 that required some level of investigation or at least a couple of emails, and which could end up being grievances/appeals in the future
- 10 that were minor queries where the person didn't get back to me about proceeding or declared that they didn't want further processing at this time

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Intrachapter Disputes/HGO at-large:

This category was created once a particular type of dispute kept arising, between members who were in different chapters, or when a party had at-large status, or where the dispute arose in DSA spaces online, and so there was not an chapter HGO available to accept the dispute.

The NHGO cannot handle these cases because I need to be able to objectively review the investigation if either party wishes to appeal the initial decision. There must be checks and balances, so that I am not a “party” to the outcome. (This in my opinion was an unforeseen problem with Res. 33’s drafting that I would recommend updating so there is a clear structure to handle these cases.)

There was a resolution submitted at the Convention for an HGO committee who would be available to hear disputes of this nature, but it was not considered. Following the Convention, we worked to identify a person who would serve as an “HGO at large.” However, that person was unable to continue due to pandemic-related responsibilities, so we are revising how we address this type of complaint. In the meantime, we have also passed the National Code of Conduct, which should apply to such situations as well.

We will be revisiting the ones that were most recently pending and come up with a new protocol to address these issues within the organization.

Non-Resolution 33 Expulsion Cases: (Total: 7; 17 in 2018-19)

These are cases where upon closer examination after a chapter expelled a member, that we determined that there were not grounds for a Resolution 33 appeal, and/or the chapter did not use Res.33 to perform the expulsion.

After starting work at the NHGO, I learned that while both chapters and the National organization have grounds for expulsion in their by-laws, that an expulsion procedure had not really been developed and used. The passage of Res.33 prompted the filing of a lot of grievances, which in turn resulted in many more expulsions than had taken place in the past. An expulsion process was developed and cases were heard starting in early 2020.

- 2 that went to the National Director for administration under the Expulsion Process
- 4 that required some level of investigation before determining there hadn’t been a chapter process or that they were otherwise not appropriate for appeal
- 1 which was a minor query that was clearly not appropriate for any process

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Chapter Technical Assistance: (total: 22; 70 in 2018-19)

These are requests for assistance not related to a potential grievance. While the number went down dramatically, that is to be expected, as the ones in the prior year were questions about a

brand new process and how it worked. Having the regional and Convention trainings in 2019 reduced the number of questions that were not related to specific grievances.

Here are examples of the types of technical assistance I provided chapters during the time period covered by the Annual Report, most focused on ensuring the chapter was compliant with Resolution 33:

- requesting assistance with enacting their harassment policy/by-laws changes;
- requesting training/templates/forms or following up from trainings;
- questions about selecting or electing HGOs.
- conflict resolution assistance generally, not related to Resolution 33;
- requests referred by the National field staff when they identified chapters who needed assistance.
- reaching out to share materials chapters had developed

Whether it relates to general implementation matters or matters that are more specific to grievances, I highly encourage chapters to use me as a resource for technical assistance.

Grievance Technical Assistance--Basic:

For this report, I've created two new categories under technical assistance, in an attempt to further refine my descriptions of my work. I've divided this category into "basic" and "intermediate." The basic category will refer to one-time involvement in a grievance by a chapter that is five hours or less of work, including one or two phone calls or an ongoing email exchange. It's a quick check in about how the HGO is handling the situation, usually involving the following:

- whether particular conduct is grievable under Resolution 33, and if so, how to proceed
- whether a particular individual was eligible to file a grievance
- input regarding documents the chapter developed for use in a particular grievance
- conflicts of interest in the grievance process
- how confidentiality applies in the grievance process
- some other question that can be quickly resolved

As the grievance program expands, and new HGOs come on board, this number will increase. Over time, as HGOs become more proficient at handling grievances, hopefully more grievances will stay in the "basic" category as opposed to the "intermediate" category.

Grievance Technical Assistance--Intermediate:

The second category is "intermediate." It will refer to more extensive involvement in a grievance by a chapter that is five to fifteen hours of work, including several phone calls, meeting with parties or assisting with an investigation, or an ongoing email exchange over many months. Handful involved concerns about legal liability or what they saw as legal questions, which may

have required a consultation with DSA's attorney. It generally involves ongoing monitoring of how the HGO is handling the situation, usually involving the following:

- whether particular conduct is grievable under Resolution 33, and if so, how to proceed
- whether a particular individual was eligible to file a grievance
- input regarding documents the chapter developed for use in a particular grievance
- conflicts of interest in the grievance process
- how confidentiality applies in the grievance process
- some other question that can be quickly resolved

Since they generally take longer to resolve, five were completely resolved in 2019-20, while five started in 2019-20 and have continued into the current year; and there have been four more which have started since July 1, 2020 (for a total of nine active current intermediate cases.)

As the grievance program expands, and new HGOs seeking the NHGO's assistance or who participate in training come on board, this number will increase. Over time, as HGOs become more proficient at handling grievances, hopefully more grievances will stay in the "basic" category as opposed to the "intermediate" category. Sometimes these will become appeals, but the goal if at all possible is to reach a resolution within the chapter that doesn't require an appeal.

Ana Avendaño's Work:

(No specific numbers provided because they are addressed in other categories as appropriate.)

Ana is a colleague of Paula's who joined the NHGO team in mid-2019 to assist with particular types of grievance work that Ana's skill set uniquely qualified her to address.

- Based upon her experience drafting and working with codes of conduct and civility norms, she began working with the code of conduct drafting and was involved in drafting the Meeting Code of Conduct, passed in April 2020, and the National Code of Conduct, passed in September 2020.
- Based upon her experience as a trainer and adjunct professor, she has trained the NPC on codes of conduct and civility norms and the National field organizers on conflict resolution. She is expected to play a key role in working with the NHGO to develop future curricula for conflict resolution, "new masculinities," and racial justice training.
- Based upon her experience in conflict resolution and mediation, and as a trained restorative justice practitioner, she has been involved in several of the "extraordinary circumstances" and "technical assistance - intermediate" conflicts, where she has performed investigations, made recommendations about conflict resolution and restorative justice, and conducted mediations/healing circles.
- Based upon her experience with survivor-focused, trauma informed work, she has taken the lead in conversations and investigations where the grievance allegations involve sexual violence, harassment or assault, and/or emotional abuse within relationships. This requires specialized training and sensitivity that goes far beyond what HGOs can

learn in training, so enables us to quickly respond when survivors need support beyond what those involved in the chapter-level investigation can provide.

I greatly appreciate all that HGOs, chapter leaders, National staff, and the current and former NPC have done to establish DSA's grievance program and to bring the aspirations of Resolution 33 to life. While we still have considerable work to do to transform DSA's culture to create a fully harassment-free, safe organizing space, we have also made considerable progress since my hire in June 2018. I look forward to the opportunity to continue and expand the grievance program's work in 2021 so that DSA's grievance program effectively exemplifies and advances the organization's values through Resolution 33 and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Brantner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paula Brantner
National Harassment Grievance Officer, DSA
President and Principal, PB Work Solutions, LLC