

Dear comrades,

The last 18 months we have seen, yet again, how disposable we are to the ruling elites. Whether by police bullets or COVID caught at work, starvation in our homes or floods or fires, they squeeze every drop of profits from our blood and pay for politicians like Kyrsten Sinema to give us the finger.

Those of us who do the work to make our world go, paid or unpaid, have fundamentally opposing interests to the class which own the Supreme Court, the White House, the mainstream media, the corporations polluting our planet beyond repair, and the workplaces of most of us.

They can feel all powerful, but remember, the old world is dying. We are facing down fascists and vicious neoliberals, but a new world struggles to be born.

We can be the midwives, but in the face of this danger we need more power. DSA is not a social club, though we understand the strength that can come from community and comrades. We need more power because we have a duty to win.

And I have some sobering information you need to know. Just a month ago, in June, our membership growth slowed to a trickle. Our growth rate was the lowest it has been in years, and if we don't make a collective pledge to build our strength going forward, we will be battling the monsters of our time with diminished power, or worse yet, battling each other.

This month we lost a giant, Bob Moses, a leader of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and key organizer of the critical 1964 Freedom Summer. He understood the power of *organization and strategy*, and our job in DSA is to channel that kind of energy and help more and more people feel that kind of power.

Because you *are* DSA. And DSA is you. Every single one of you matters because when we work together, we're a formidable force.

I can tell you right now, we were instrumental in kickstarting the pressure campaign for the PRO Act. We worked alongside some key labor partners, particularly the Painters and the Communication Workers, but it was you who organized 1 million calls to working class voters in target states, 86 chapter May Day actions, and numerous media stories with *our* narrative, that the only way to win a GND is by an organized working class demanding it. *We* flipped two holdout Senators to support PRO.

What we have, what we are, is an organized, driven grassroots, based in communities across the country and ready to rumble when we need to. In our dystopian late capitalist society, other organizations simply can't compare.

So I need you to be proud. And I need you to remember, our task is clear: organize, organize, and organize! We need a diverse mass movement in the millions. We need the working class to revolt.

As we gather in convention, it's worth it to look back over the past two years. Your now outgoing National Political Committee started out with big plans and our hopeful campaign for Bernie Sanders, but six months later was confronted with the unimaginable, a pandemic that made human contact dangerous. Within months there was a widespread uprising against police violence, then a dangerous election and subsequent assault on the Capitol.

We had a year where decades happened, and through all the uncertainty the NPC worked in partnership with staff to grow DSA and meet developments moment to moment. Both membership and staff have doubled since the 2019 convention, while at the same time we pivoted to online and socially distanced organizing in chapters and workplaces. We even launched our new Kickstart Your Chapter training series for chapter leaders a year into the pandemic and are gearing up for another round.

Earlier this year DSA renegotiated the collective bargaining agreement with our staff union, and throughout the last two years we have expanded staff, including nine hired and onboarded so far in 2021 alone. What have we been able to do with this additional staff?

- Database and tech projects to make our membership system more efficient and carry out our fall 2020 recruitment drive (and this convention!)
- Seamless dues sharing through the Movement Builder program
- Tech tools for chapters to strengthen organizing, like VAN, text and dialer tools, and for national committees, like Action Network for mass emails and a host of other resources
- Chapter and national priority committee communications resources and trainings
- Expanded HGO (Harassment and Grievance Officer) resources and coaching, a new Code of Conduct, and trainings on conflict resolution, toxic masculinity and racist behaviors
- Doubling the organizing support to the Young Democratic Socialists with new focus on HBCUs and community colleges
- Vastly expanded national mass calls infrastructure plus Zoom lines for chapter use
- Incorporation, Electoral and Treasurer resources and trainings for chapters
- Adding the monthly NPC Newsletter to the monthly Dispatch to better connect with members
- Enhanced new chapter pipeline and general organizing committee and chapter administration support
- Spanish website translation and captioning on national calls
- Faster financial reporting to the NPC for monitoring fiscal health and making decisions about additional expenditures
- Significant support to the Growth and Development committee for member recruitment, retention, training and chapter mentorship
- And as mentioned above, trainings like the Kickstart Your Chapter program, virtual Regional Leadership Trainings, a COVID organizing training in the early months, and

ongoing support from regionally assigned Field Organizers to chapters and to national priority committees

We are in the process of hiring three additional staff, but I want to close by focusing back on the grassroots. We have national infrastructure because we have a global enemy, but that scale is only possible because of your work. Our power comes from the collective.

Here's a sampling of just a few recent victories around DSA:

- Central Connecticut and Charlottesville joined Boulder and other DSA chapters who have won No Eviction Without Representation
- Akron DSA led the campaign that protected their city's drinking water from fracking
- Whatcom DSA, in Bellingham, WA, qualified four pro-worker, pro-renter ballot initiatives for the November ballot, following the lead of DSA organized People First Portland in Maine
- Winston-Salem DSA stopped over 50 evictions and organized hundreds more tenants when the local sheriff tried to ignore the COVID eviction moratorium
- Worcester, Kansas City and other DSA chapters walked picket lines with striking workers
- And from San Antonio to St. Louis chapter endorsed electoral candidates won, while in New York state nationally endorsed DSAers won including convention speaker India Walton

We have learned to fight. But how we handle the need to strengthen our recruitment and build DSA, how we handle the "new normal" of the Delta variant in our workplaces and climate disaster in our communities, how we handle the red-baiting and other divisive attacks from the neoliberals while preparing for a fascist wave in the 2022 elections - these things will define our next two years.

As you debate each other this week, remember that the ruling class works overtime to divide us. I always hold close the timeless words of the late Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis: "Does it unite us? Does it build our strength? And does it give us power?"

Let these words guide our convention!

In solidarity,

Maria Svart  
National Director