



Boston DSA

Democratic Socialists of America

Boston DSA 2021 Internal Priority Proposals

Table of Contents

Political Education (p. 2)

Member Engagement and Inclusion (p. 6)

Transformative Justice for Resolving Conflict and Addressing Harm (p. 14)

Returning the Local Option on Housing (p. 19)

Flexible and Dynamic Approach to Political Discussions (p. 24)

Boston DSA Internal Priority Proposal

Internal Proposal Title

Political Education

Author's Name(s):

Claire Blechman and Avir Waxman

Email address(es):

claire.blechman@gmail.com; avirwaxan@gmail.com

What is your internal priority proposal? What are the intermediate goals and the long-term vision for this external priority? How will you evaluate your progress towards them? How do you plan to achieve the intermediate goals?

Over the past few months, the DSA has grown enormously, bringing in a flock of newly radicalized members, many of whom are new to socialist theory. As the crisis of capitalism heightens around us, it is now more crucial than ever that every member of our chapter be equipped with the tools necessary to:

1. Generate a rigorous and competent critique of capitalism
2. Understand the obstacles to achieving socialism
3. Articulate these points confidently and eloquently, so as to be an effective advocate of socialism wherever they go

This priority proposes that the chapter focus on a political education program that will strengthen our members' ability to form theoretical critique, think analytically about strategy, and speak confidently and persuasively on political issues.

In order to achieve these long-term goals, we will develop a number of new events which will focus on political analysis, as well as facilitation and rhetorical skills. Night schools will introduce the theory behind a variety of socialist ideas without the high-barrier to entry that a traditional reading group poses. Debates on strategy will be held regularly as stand-alone events and at general meetings, both to raise the level of theoretical discussions in the chapter and to teach newer members the variety of different theories of change and power within leftist tendencies. These new events will be supported by trainings on public speaking and facilitation skills, which will give members the confidence and competence to participate in these events.

As many events as possible will be recorded so that we can begin to develop a catalogue of educational material. Additionally, working groups and committees will be encouraged to work with the political education working group to develop internal and external-facing educational materials which can support existing chapter projects (e.g. blog posts, zines, teach-ins, etc.). We will aim to build a useful and accessible body of work that members can draw on to learn independently and/or share with others.

Everything the chapter does should be informed by our understanding of socialism grounded in a solid political education.

How will you evaluate your progress towards them?

This campaign would be successful if we can develop an increasing number of facilitators and speakers who are confident and able to express socialist ideas and critiques at teaching events and debates. It will be successful if we can compile existing resources for political education, create new trainings, and see the membership accessing those resources regularly. Lastly, we would consider it a success for every working group to produce political education materials that communicate our socialist project to the general public.

How does this internal priority make Boston DSA a more effective socialist organization?

In order to properly navigate the path towards a socialist society, we must first understand our current historical conditions.

As a big tent organization, members should be able to understand the different schools of socialist thought in order to participate in collective decision-making. It is crucial for members to have an understanding of the different strategies being proposed, how they relate to each other, and the strengths and weaknesses of each. We must also effectively communicate our shared values and practical disagreements as comrades.

Socialists must have a background in theoretical critique and analysis in order to determine what to do, why we should do it, and how to accomplish it.

Increasing the political education of our chapter will give members the ability to speak confidently about our goals, and will strengthen our collective ability to determine the path towards achieving them.

We will learn from the experience of socialist thinkers past and present to develop a socialist strategy that is suited for the 21st century.

What resources would this internal priority require? For example, volunteers, supplies, funding, meeting space, time (5 hours per month for 100 people? 20 hrs/month for 10 people?), etc.

This priority would require consistent meeting times for the new events, time allotted at general meetings for political education, and chapter-wide promotion of the events.

We will need support from other working groups and the Coordinating Committee to collaborate on a variety of events, and a commitment to devote time and resources to political education. Political education should be integrated into the day-to-day activities of all working groups, and to that end we would need liaisons willing to facilitate this work in a meaningful way.

We will need volunteers to help facilitate and plan political education events while they get off the ground, as well as a growing number of trained facilitators to lead them.

We will also need people to write, edit, and post educational materials.

How will this internal priority mobilize or engage a large number of DSA members? How will this help our members to develop as socialist organizers?

This priority is designed to engage a large number of members with educational events that have a low barrier to entry, and through political education that integrates with existing issues and working groups. It will seek to strengthen their theoretical and speaking skills, which will in turn allow them to speak more confidently when organizing and support their arguments in internal discussions. The development of an educational catalogue will also allow members (and non-members) to participate in educational events regardless of schedule, ensuring that engagement is not limited by who happens to be available at certain times.

Because there will be coordination with a variety of working groups, it is also an opportunity to get members excited and informed about other work in the chapter.

How will your priority adapt to changing covid infection rates?

Because this is an internal campaign focused on event creation and promotion, it can be done completely remotely. We will draw upon best practices educators have developed over the last 10 months of teaching remotely to make our online night schools and trainings as engaging and pedagogically sound as possible.

If the vaccination rate allows us to meet again safely in person, members will be able to take those debate, facilitation, and speaking skills they learned in a more regulated online environment and transfer them to in-person settings.

What's your 30 second "elevator speech" version of why **this** internal priority should be one of Boston DSA's two internal priorities? 100 words or less!

Society is deteriorating before our eyes, and capitalism is the root cause. We don't have time to re-learn the mistakes and lessons from the past 150 years of socialist organizing.

In order to bring about a new socialist world from the ashes of the old, we need rigorous analysis of our material conditions and a nuanced understanding of socialist history and ideology. We need a robust system of political education that is integrated into the work of Boston DSA to give us the training necessary to think critically and strategically.

A revolutionary movement *must* be armed with revolutionary theory.

Boston DSA Internal Priority Proposal

Internal Proposal Title

An Internal Priority on Member Engagement and Inclusion

Author's Name(s):

- Joel G. (he/him)
- LE G. (they/them)
- Beth Huang (she/her)
- Michael Bakshi (he/him)
- Chris F (he/him)

Email address(es):

- @dsa.jbhg@gmail.com
- l.e.ganzhorn@gmail.com
- bhuang12@gmail.com
- michael.bakshi@gmail.com
- ???

What is your internal priority proposal? What are the intermediate goals and the long-term vision for this external priority? How will you evaluate your progress towards them? How do you plan to achieve the intermediate goals?

What does positive engagement for an individual look like?

- Becoming involved with a long-term BDSA organizing campaign, and coming to understand and identify with the goals and tactics of that campaign.
- Participate in the ongoing work of one's neighborhood group.
- Organize with a working group or with a project that is endorsed by a working group.
- Build competencies among BDSA. For example, working with BDSA members and labor leaders to train our members on organizing their workplaces.
- Build trust in BDSA by representing our principles well in other organized or to-be-organized spaces (e.g. within community and religious groups).
- Train leaders to step into new roles within BDSA — a working group or initiative should cause new leaders to emerge.
- Attending a rally, march, or demonstration; or participating in other lobbying/campaigning in conjunction with our allies.

What does a culture of inclusion look like?

- In BDSA initiatives, centering the voices of those most affected by the issue under discussion — even if those voices come from outside BDSA.
- Among BDSA leaders, a firm commitment to ensuring that voices within BDSA of people with identities marginalized by capitalism are heard and taken seriously, and minority viewpoints are included in political discussions about chapter strategy.
- Ensuring that DSA endeavors are broadly accessible to members, even post-COVID; some examples: people who cannot commute, low-wage workers, third-shift workers, BIPOC, immigrants who are limited English proficiency, parents and caregivers with family commitments, people with disabilities, people who require accommodations (e.g. ensuring that meetings have slide shows for those who are hard of hearing)

How do we get there?

- A deliberate, open tone of welcomeness by DSA leaders.
- Regular systems of outreach to new and inactive members, especially regarding external priority campaigns.
- Maintenance of attendance and participation at various DSA endeavors, especially within working groups and neighborhood groups.

Taking Stock

- Boston DSA has 3,189 total members across Eastern Massachusetts. In 2020, 1,138 members joined Boston DSA.
- Since tracking in Action Network in November 2020, 300+ new members (out of 585 since August 2020 - target group) have signed up for a New Member Orientation. About 250 have attended, based on Zoom sign ins. In 2020, Boston DSA held 15 new member orientations facilitated by 21 chapter leaders, and 381 new members participated.
- Currently the Membership Committee supports neighborhood groups and regional branches for building power locally, and the activity of these local groups/branches ebbs and flows
 - Neighborhood Groups: Cambridge, Somerville, Jamaica Plain, Allston-Brighton, Dorchester/Roxbury/Mattapan
 - Regional Branches: Merrimack Valley, North Shore, South Shore, MetroWest, Waltham
- The AfroSocialists and Socialists of Color Caucus holds monthly meet ups.
- Boston DSA receive weekly membership updates from national DSA.

Our Strategy

Streamline online and virtual spaces

- Make Zoom meetings more accessible, including regular circulation of links (especially members.bostondsa.org/home/zoom) and adherence to an agenda.
 - Train leaders to facilitate effective and interactive meetings on Zoom.
 - Prioritize establishing meeting norms, such as roles within meetings to provide technical support, monitor for trolls, and to help folks share content or mute/unmute themselves to keep the meeting going smoothly.
 - Ensure that meeting organizers are watching Facebook chat, email, and Action Network for folks trying to join their meeting but who do not know where to find the right information.
 - Circulate agendas as early as possible and experiment with agendas of different lengths (60, 90, 120 minutes) — and ask that groups respect meeting lengths to accommodate folks who cannot stay longer than the allotted time.
 - Encourage leaders to develop ways for members to engage in a group setting asynchronously — Discord, Google Groups, etc.
- Speed up moving our emailing capability into Action Network.
 - Formalizing infrastructure for on-boarding and training working group leaders, project bottom-liners, DSA local committee chairs, and members of relevant committees on how to use Action Network for emails, actions, petitions, etc.
 - Encourage working groups, committees, branches, and teams to move announcements and communication to Action Network
 - Continue to store longer-term information on the chapter Wiki and host frequent sessions to update the Wiki.
 - **Capacity needed:** 5-10 hours per month from Tech Committee for hands-on training on Action Network; 3 hours per quarter from the Coordinating, Communication, Membership, and Tech Committees for updating the wiki
- Track attendance at general meetings and the number of people on email lists
 - Establish a baseline of chapter activity in the first half of 2021. Increase the percent of members attending general meetings by 25% by the end of the year.
 - **Capacity needed:** 2 hours per month from 1-2 people on the Membership Committee to attend General Meeting Planning Committee meetings and create/analyze GM attendance.
- Lead meetings and group efforts in a way that does not preclude new participants from seeing previous conversations.
 - Technologies like Signal are essential for safety and security when organizing in possibly sensitive or dangerous situations.

- Otherwise, leaders and sub-groups should ensure that new people and new voices are welcomed into their communities by making their agendas, meeting minutes, and ongoing conversations available to new participants.

Strengthen systems for new member on-boarding

- Recruit at least one-third of new members to join New Member Orientations.
 - Organize at least two monthly member orientations per month, text and email new and dormant members, and promote on social media.
 - Create a survey for all members to share their updated address, mobile number, demographic information, student status, and union membership
 - Build a core of 25 facilitators across working groups and neighborhood groups/regional branches, and train at least 10 leaders to bottomline the trainings
 - Update the wiki with instructions and best practices for organizing new member orientations as needed
 - **Capacity needed:** 5-8 hours/month from 2 bottomliners to plan prep calls, send promotional and follow up communications to new members, recruit leaders to facilitate; 2 hours/month from 3-4 additional facilitators to present on the orientations
- Follow up with participants to support on-boarding after the orientation
 - Phone bank new member orientation participants at the end of the month to plug them into tactics related to the external priorities
 - **Capacity needed:** 5 hours/month from 1-2 Membership Committee bottomliners to create the list, recruit volunteers, and select volunteer opportunities; 2 hours from 10-15 volunteers to call new members
 - Plug new members into monthly new member reading groups organized by the Political Education Working Group
 - **Capacity needed:** 5-10 hours/month from PEWG to facilitate new member reading groups
 - Introduce an opt-in “new comrade” system to pair new members with each other following an orientation.
 - **Capacity needed:** 1-2 hours per month from Membership Committee bottomliners to match new members
 - Develop and train active leaders in a working group and DSA localcommittee chairs to have “mentor” conversations with new activists in the working group and periodically reach out to formerly active activists.
 - **Capacity needed:** 5-10 hours every quarter for a Membership Committee bottomliner to host trainings on one-on-one conversations for active working group members; 1-2 hours per month from working group members for 1-2 conversations with new members

- Pair new BIPOC members with active BIPOC leaders and support regular hangouts of the AfroSocialists and Socialists of Color Caucus (and build similar spaces for people with identities historically marginalized by capitalism)
 - **Capacity needed:** 3-4 hours per month from AFROSOC leaders to plan promotion, facilitation, and follow up for hangouts; 1-2 hours per month from working group members for 1-2 conversations with new members
- Host informal “office hours” events for open conversation between active leaders of working groups/campaigns/local DSA groups and members interested in getting involved.
 - **Capacity needed:** 2 hours from one bottomliner from the Coordinating Committee to promote the office hours and recruit working group leaders; 1 hour per month for facilitation by at least 3 active leaders
- Quarterly collaboration between the Membership and Communications Committees to update the new member handbook
 - **Capacity needed:** 2 hours per quarter from at least one member each from the Communications Committee and the Membership Committee

Recruit & train members to be organizers for external priority campaigns

- Call members on a quarterly basis about chapter external priorities and text members as needed (but not more than once per month) about tactics related to external priorities, and call inactive members to check in and share what’s happening in the campaigns.
 - **Capacity needed:** 5 hours/month from 1-2 bottomliners from the priority campaign and Membership Committee to create the list, set up systems for the phone/text banks, recruit volunteers, and select volunteer opportunities; 2 hours from 10-15 volunteers to call new members and send texts
- Host quarterly trainings on organizing skills related to the chapter priority campaigns
- Create a “Committed Comrade” activist list
 - Asking members to pledge to take part in at least 5 Boston DSA actions per year (mobilization for protests and picket lines, phone banks, canvasses, flyering, turnout for hearings) related to the external priorities and/or chapter campaigns.
 - **Capacity needed:** 5-10 hours to coordinate phone/text banking members about priorities
 - Text the “Committed Comrade” activist list more frequently than quarterly.
 - Send swag to people who have completed 5 Boston DSA actions.
- Support introductory events about the external priority campaigns for intentional recruitment of prospective members, especially working-class people and within BIPOC communities, and set up systems for recruiting prospective members to DSA.

- **Capacity needed:** varying time commitment from priority campaigns to promote and host events and follow up with participants
- Connect the external priority campaign leaders with the leaders of the neighborhood groups or regional branches, with a goal of implementing priority campaigns in at least one-third of the groups/branches.
- Survey members annually about interest in participation in the external priorities, demographics, skills, and relevant networks/affiliations (unions, school, etc.).
 - **Capacity needed:** regular General Meeting announcements, integrate into new member on-boarding tasks

Raise Funds for Chapter Campaigns

- Host quarterly chapter fundraising events to pay for child care (for in-person gatherings), interpretation, materials for outreach and recruitment, speaker honoraria, sending members to external trainings or bringing in trainers, and low-cost materials for new member reading groups (e.g. bulk order of ABCs of Socialism)
 - **Capacity needed:** 20-30 hours each quarter from fundraising team bottomliners to organize quarterly chapter fundraising events; 5 hours from Communications Team for promoting the chapter fundraiser; 10 hours from treasurer for setting up and administering contributions
- Design and sell swag (enamel pins, bottle openers, phone wallets, tote bags, face masks, etc.) to increase a sense of member identity
 - **Capacity needed:** paying a graphic designer to create swag, setting up an online store, 10 hours from treasurer for setting up and administering payments
- Call members who are annual dues payers to national DSA to become monthly dues payers for a larger chapter dues split.
 - **Capacity needed:** 5-10 hours from 1-2 bottomliners twice per year to organize the phone bank, 2 hours from 20-30 people to make calls twice per year

How does this internal priority make Boston DSA a more effective socialist organization?

- **An urgent need for socialism.** Our neighbors are starving, are not being adequately housed, and every level of formal government is showing lack of resiliency to fascism.
- **Winning the future.** Long-term DSA priorities require a culture of both established relationships and the ability to meaningfully onboard people to new initiatives.
- **We need to scale out.** There are innumerable areas for us to put our focus. Broader involvement is a meaningful step in broader development of leaders within the organization, to interact with our community partners, and to interface with, advise, or even become elected officials.
- **Sustainable engagement is more difficult when it lacks a solitary focus.** Without Bernie Sanders on the ballot, there is not one solitary galvanizing force that engages people with DSA.

- For example, when DSA chooses a chapter priority campaign or endorses a candidate for office, some non-negligible amount of our membership should be active in the campaign.
- And, when a DSA-endorsed candidate wins office, a broad swath of DSA members should maintain contact with the now-elected official on the topics of the ongoing work of DSA, especially issues related to chapter priority campaigns
- **Overcoming isolation of COVID-19 with socialist comradeship and power.** During the pandemic, so many of us feel isolated from each other. We can build shared analysis and fight for a better world, now virtually and someday in-person!

What resources would this internal priority require? For example, volunteers, supplies, funding, meeting space, time (5 hours per month for 100 people? 20 hrs/month for 10 people?), etc.

Each strategy above is listed with some idea of what capacity would be necessary to achieve our goals.

Some themes of the above:

- **There's a role for almost every working group.** Each working group is going to be asked to make at least a small change toward this priority — if only to track meeting attendees more precisely.
- **There's specific emphasis on onboarding new members**, as a third of DSA members joined since 2020, **and also...**
- **There's emphasis on deep canvassing dormant members** to get to know their interests better and to hopefully coordinate them with a local group, a neighborhood group, and/or a working group.
- And, if nothing else, **there's a role for almost any individual to reach out to their comrades** to get to know them a little better and to help find a place for them in our organization.

How will this internal priority mobilize or engage a large number of DSA members? How will this help our members to develop as socialist organizers?

This priority is crafted specifically to engage a broader swath of our comrades in socialist endeavors, under the guise of building a socialist movement through training new socialist organizers.

By making a deliberate effort to bring our new and dormant members into the fold, we expand our capacity to canvass our neighborhoods, commit to lobbying our elected officials or running our own, and we begin to build the relationships, structures, and competencies necessary to have sustainable leadership in a fully-volunteer chapter. This last point is crucial — **it should be a marker of success for a working group or neighborhood group to be developing new leaders** as comrades inevitably need to adjust their commitment to BDSA due to family, work, school, moving, etc..

See *"What does positive engagement for an individual look like?"* above.

How will your priority adapt to changing covid infection rates?

Everything about this priority should adapt to changing COVID infections, and beyond.

A goal of this priority is to make a specific point to ensure that participation in Boston DSA is as open as possible to our members in the context of their needs.

In the short term, we anticipate a continued need for Zoom meetings, digital conversation spaces, and asynchronous collaboration.

We expect these digital practices to continue even as concerns around COVID diminish. Furthermore, we anticipate making our space more accessible to folks including those who are hard-of-hearing, those who cannot commute, third-shift workers, and those with family commitments like caregiving.

See *“What does a culture of inclusion look like?”* above.

What’s your 30 second “elevator speech” version of why **this** internal priority should be one of Boston DSA’s two internal priorities? 100 words or less!

In 2020, Boston DSA gained 1,138 members to grow to 3,189 total members across Eastern Massachusetts. This priority seeks to:

- Engage our membership, with a focus on creating systems for on-boarding new members and also deepening involvement of existing members in newways.
- Focus specifically on inclusion of a broader selection of members of our community.
- Reconsider BDSA’s culture as something that derives from proactive outreach to a diverse membership, and not the self-selection of a few voices.

This proposal presumes that the world around us shares our belief in that no human being can ever be illegal, a disdain for the corporatism that runs our country, and that our collective success requires the voices of those most affected by these issues to be centered.

References

[2020 Priority Proposals](#)

Boston DSA Internal Priority Proposal

Internal Proposal Title

Transformative Justice for Resolving Conflict and Addressing Harm

Author's Name(s):

Kit Cali, L.E. Ganzhorn, Matt Miller

Email address(es):

kit.cali@gmail.com, l.e.ganzhorn@gmail.com, matt@bostondsa.org

What is your internal priority proposal? What are the intermediate goals and the long-term vision for this internal priority? How will you evaluate your progress towards them? How do you plan to achieve the intermediate goals?

In a society defined by capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and other structures of exploitation & oppression, we are accustomed to authorities responding to violence and other harm with either punitive overreaction or neglectful underreaction. Even as we reject the premises on which these injustices are founded, it's all too easy to fall into similar patterns ourselves when called upon to respond to conflict & harm within our own communities. We may be tempted to excuse harmful behavior, minimize the hurt of those affected by it, or brush off an escalating conflict as "drama"--or we may take the opposite tact and resort immediately to calling for expulsion of a perceived transgressor without fully addressing the community-wide circumstances (for which we ourselves might bear some responsibility) that enabled them to cause harm or exploring opportunities for reconciliation and repair.

Observing the damage wreaked by the carceral state (and by communities and individuals mimicking it), a group of mainly indigenous community & political organizers and other collaborators sought to develop an alternative framework: transformative justice (TJ). Transformative justice is grounded in the principle that we all have the power and responsibility to meet intra-community harms with responses other than vindictive punishment or indifferent neglect. In simplest terms, TJ aims to respond to harm without perpetuating more harm. It explicitly rejects the involvement of police & prisons, correctly identifying them as sources of further trauma, violence, and community destruction. TJ seeks to *transform* the underlying conditions that enable harm to occur. While centering the needs of survivors, TJ necessarily includes all those affected in finding long-term solutions and supporting one another in cultivating conditions of healing, accountability, resilience, and safety that will help prevent future harms and repair past ones.

Boston DSA, as discussed in the next section, has already implemented some effective practices that align with TJ principles while still relying on others that contradict TJ and tend to be less effective or even additionally harmful. (Two of the authors of this proposal are current harassment & grievance officers and are therefore intimately familiar with the limitations of the

chapter's current approach.) This priority project aims to equip members with the TJ training they need to a) undertake a thorough review of our current internal processes and b) develop recommendations in line with TJ principles to make them more effective in resolving conflict and addressing harm. These recommendations can then be debated, amended, and, we hope, adopted by the chapter.

1. Boston DSA will form a transformative justice committee including the 4 harassment & grievance officers (HGOs), 4 members appointed by the CC, and 2 members appointed by the HGOs.
 - a. Those 10 members may appoint other members to the committee as they deem necessary.
2. The TJ committee will solicit feedback from the chapter membership about their experiences with conflict & harm within Boston DSA as well as in other organizing spaces, their thoughts on current resolution and harassment & grievance processes, and the changes they would like to see made.
 - a. The committee may use an anonymous online survey, GM breakout groups, working group & committee visits, and/or any other formats they deem appropriate.
3. The TJ committee will work with trained external facilitators to offer a series of internal DSA training workshops for 20-30 BDSA members (including the committee) in Transformative Justice principles and practices and exploring how to apply them within Boston DSA. The exact number of training sessions will need to be left to the discretion of the committee in consultation with external facilitators.
4. The TJ committee will develop recommendations for changing chapter practices to better reflect TJ principles. These recommendations should include, but not be limited to, a proposed revision of the chapter's resolution and harassment & grievance policies that also reflects the chapter's code of conduct and national DSA harassment policies.
5. The TJ committee will have at least 30 minutes at two General Meetings or equivalent chapter-wide events to provide a basic introduction to Transformative Justice to the membership and facilitate discussion of our approach to conflict and harm within the chapter.
6. By the end of January 2022 at latest, the TJ committee should issue a report to the chapter outlining its recommendations for integrating TJ more formally into the chapter's approach to addressing conflict and harm, including updated resolutions and harassment & grievance processes and any further recommended changes to policies and/or bylaws.
7. Six months after the committee's recommendations have been debated, amended and adopted in whole or part by the chapter, the committee will solicit further feedback from membership on the results of the changes.

How does this internal priority make Boston DSA a more effective socialist organization?

Our political project is hard. But that work becomes harder if we don't also build a strong organization that is able to handle interpersonal conflict and the harm that we do to each other (intentionally or otherwise). We are taking on well-financed and powerful opponents who want

to see us fail. Lacking the same resources, socialist organizations are only as strong as the solidarity among their members. Our chapter has faced and will continue to face challenges stemming from internal conflict and interpersonal harm, including cases of intimate violence, harassment, bigotry, and more. And these conflicts can become interwoven with political disagreements in a way that fractures our organization and robs us of our collective power.

In recognition of this fact, Boston DSA has prioritized making our chapter a more inclusive, accessible, welcoming, anti-oppressive, and supportive environment that nurtures bonds of solidarity. We've paid particular attention to how we handle friction between comrades and incidents of harassment, abuse, and other harm. Currently, Boston DSA's approach to these issues includes a mix of practices that both align with and contradict transformative justice principles--and we believe that our most effective practices belong in the former category. We can celebrate the safety stewards program, "be a comrade, not a creep" campaign, pre-meeting review of our norms for respectful discussion, and periodic trainings in bystander intervention, de-escalation, and comradely communication as both TJ-aligned and as having markedly increased the sense of solidarity among our members. Those involved in the chapter for a few years can attest to Boston DSA being a far more comradely environment now than it was even two years ago.

However, and importantly, the practices that got us to the (much improved!) place where we are now are mainly preventative or acute measures rather than long-term ones. Unfortunately, our approaches to responding to harm once it has already happened (or when it is chronic or recurring), and to resolving conflict that has already escalated, are less in line with TJ principles. Not coincidentally, they are also less effective and contribute to the erosion of solidarity. All too often rifts with the chapter that emerge despite the measures we take to prevent them will widen. Conflicts escalate; hurts fester; distrust grows; groups fracture into opposing parties; friction increases; organizing suffers, and so do the organizers themselves. Instead infusing them with a sense of hope, purpose, and camaraderie, organizing becomes a grim and isolating duty. They burn out, they give up, and often they leave. Each loss like this is a tragedy that weakens our solidarity with one another and our strength in the struggle for socialism.

Without a focus on building transformative justice practices in our organization, we will continue to risk losing experienced organizers and fraying the trust among those who stay. And we seriously risk damage to our organization like that experienced by other DSA chapters or, that has outright destroyed other socialist organizations. It is a particularly opportune moment to focus on this priority because, thanks to the ongoing work of dozens of comrades over the last few years, the chapter is in a relatively healthy position. If we wait until escalating conflict is actively upon us, it will be too late.

What resources would this internal priority require? For example, volunteers, supplies, funding, meeting space, time (5 hours per month for 100 people? 20 hrs/month for 10 people?), etc.

We'll need approximately one hour/week volunteering effort from the members of the committee and an additional time commitment from members who are able to go through the

workshops we agree to with the outside facilitators (time TBD.) We also hope to consult with members of the Direct Action, Deescalation, and Security (DADS) committee, and the Mental Health, Prison Abolition, Socialist Feminist, and Political Education Working Groups; that time commitment is also TBD and would depend on the availability of those members.

We are requesting the ability to spend up to \$5,000 of chapter funds to compensate outside facilitators/trainers with expertise in TJ. Our chapter has already worked with an organization that provides very affordable training rates, and this would translate into about 3 full days of class time for 20 members.

The committee will not spend these funds unless necessary for the purposes of training members on Transformative Justice. If additional funds are needed, the committee will work with the CC to determine if additional chapter funds can be allocated to this project or otherwise undertake internal fundraising to cover costs.

How will this internal priority mobilize or engage a large number of DSA members? How will this help our members to develop as socialist organizers?

A core group of 20 to 30 members will be trained on Transformative Justice practices, and present their learnings to the full membership at a GM, and at other chapter events. Because organizing as its core about building and maintaining relationships, training like this which develops skills around conflict resolution and dealing with harm will be invaluable in all of our future work in DSA. Very few socialist organizers manage to avoid dealing with internal conflict among their comrades, and members will bring their skills back to every project, working group, and committee in which they participate. Developing strong internal practices for dealing with harm will result in a stronger organization able to withstand conflict and therefore make all our other campaigns and work stronger.

How will your priority adapt to changing covid infection rates?

The work of the committee can be carried out in much the same way even if it's relegated mainly to video calls. The authors of this proposal have already participated in a Zoom-based TJ training run by the organization that we hope to engage and can attest that it works very well in that format.

What's your 30 second "elevator speech" version of why **this** internal priority should be one of Boston DSA's two internal priorities? 100 words or less!

Any organization, no matter its political platform, will face conflict and harm between its members. But if confronted with courage, care, and thoughtfulness, these painful episodes don't have to weaken our movement or wound our comrades. Transformative justice (TJ) provides an anti-carceral, survivor-centered framework to respond to harm without creating more of it. It teaches us to forge deeper solidarity from moments of friction. Integrating TJ principles into our approach to conflict & harm will equip us to bridge gaps between opposing groups before they become insurmountable and prevent the loss of our comrades to unresolved strife and disregarded abuse.

Boston DSA Internal Priority Proposal

Internal Proposal Title

Returning the Local Option on Housing

Author's Name(s):

Willie Burnley Jr

Email address(es):

willieforsomerville@gmail.com

What is your internal priority proposal? What are the intermediate goals and the long-term vision for this external priority? How will you evaluate your progress towards them? How do you plan to achieve the intermediate goals?

For years, DSA has spoken on the need to bring back rent control. Now is the time to build the coalitions, messaging, and backing necessary to make this a reality through a referendum. Statewide referendums are brought in even years and submitted in odd years, which gives us two years to create the landscape necessary to put a referendum on the books for 2024 - 30 years after a referendum took the right to create rent control measures away from municipalities.

We need coalitions broad and strong enough to run up votes on this measure across the state, which means engaging people in places like Worcester, Springfield, Holyoke, Haverhill, Lawrence, Fall River, in addition to the more traditional Boston metro area. This will take building connections to community organizations that do work in these communities, such as the Coalition for Social Justice, labor unions, NAACP, Urban League, and more. It will also take strategic messaging directed toward a variety of audiences, including those who are triggered by the debate around rent control due to the fight decades ago. This is why I propose we should use unifying language to talk about this: that it's about local control to determine our community's fates, that it's a measure against displacement and gentrification, that it's about protecting the most vulnerable in whatever ways communities decide make sense for themselves.

We need to start polarizing around this now. We need to start getting residents to pressure their elected officials during the 2021 election to take a stance on bringing back rent control and bringing their supporters into this fight. As someone who has worked on multiple statewide campaigns in Massachusetts, I want to bring my connections to bear in this fight.

We make this a priority. We ask members to start polarizing around this and building the strongest talking points around it that we can. We bring in more coalition partners across the left and the working class. We create an entity for this and start raising money. We create a google form in which elected officials at all levels of government sign on to the measure, after they've been lobbied. We submit a petition in 2023 to collect signatures and put it on the

ballot. We use our collective resources to fight the power of the real estate industry on this - and we keep our language around specifics vague so that small property owners cannot claim that they will be destroyed by this measure. By 2024, we've created the ideal fighting conditions to bring this to voters across the state so that areas that do not traditionally consider this a prime issue are competitive and cities are heavily in our favor. Then, we win and push all the elected officials on the municipal level to vote to establish some form of rent control.

How does this internal priority make Boston DSA a more effective socialist organization?

It broadens our connection to other activist groups, non-profits, and housing advocates. It allows us to claim a major victory that hasn't been taken in three decades. It allows us to bring in more members who know that DSA is a prime advocate in this fight.

What resources would this internal priority require? For example, volunteers, supplies, funding, meeting space, time (5 hours per month for 100 people? 20 hrs/month for 10 people?), etc.

Currently, it is a pandemic so I am imagining remote organizing at the moment. But it will require volunteers, supplies, funding, meeting space, plenty of time, and eventually staff. The golden opportunity of making this a priority now is that we will have time to build up these resources over the next two to three years and it they can be built by many hands.

How will this internal priority mobilize or engage a large number of DSA members? How will this help our members to develop as socialist organizers?

For many of our members, this would be the greatest protection that we could secure in the near future. Rent control is one of the highest needs/priorities of the DSA. Thus, if we state plainly that we're going for it, we can mobilize a large number of our members. The process of organizing and engaging voters across the state and political spectrum will transform our membership - steadied by a singular goal and vision of hundreds of varied legislative flowers blooming.

How will your priority adapt to changing covid infection rates?

It is 100% possible to start doing this organizing remotely. I've led campaigns to pressure elected officials during this pandemic that has successfully reallocated over a million dollars in my municipality. I know we can put people on the record supporting rent control. As the rates go down, we will be able to do more direct and creative actions. Canvasses are the most impacted by these adjustments, in my mind.

What's your 30 second "elevator speech" version of why **this** internal priority should be one of Boston DSA's two internal priorities? 100 words or less!

(To be clear, this is my pitch for why this pitch should be chosen for DSA members and not Massachusetts voters.)

We still have a long way to win a consensus on many of our socialist goals. Bringing back rent control is the largest material gain that we can secure in the near future and will, through the process of organizing, securing a larger members, and building coalitions, bring us much closer to winning other statewide campaigns. We cannot just rely on elected people to the statehouse - the statehouse is at least a decade away from a progressive majority. We have to take our fight to the people and know who is really on their side.

Boston DSA Internal Priority Proposal

Internal Proposal Title

Flexible and Dynamic Approach to Political Discussion

Author's Name(s):

Emilia Morgan & Bruce Castonguay

Email address(es):

ealmorgan@protonmail.com; bmc525@gmail.co;

What is your internal priority proposal? What are the intermediate goals and the long-term vision for this external priority? How will you evaluate your progress towards them? How do you plan to achieve the intermediate goals?

A number of recent events have drawn national attention from socialists, people on the left, and progressives more broadly. In November, Chicago DSA called on Ald. Andre Vasquez to resign from DSA after he voted for Mayor Lori Lightfoot's austerity budget. In another example, the #ForceTheVote campaign, which aimed to encourage progressives in Congress to force Pelosi to hold a floor vote on Medicare for All before voting for her for Speaker, became a controversial debate about how to best challenge the Democratic establishment and fight for things like Medicare for All. Lastly, following the storming of the capital by far right and fascist elements, the strategy of the Democratic Party was solely aimed at impeaching Trump. This, as well as the initiation of protests locally, raised a question within our organization about what the best strategy is to defeat not just Trump, but the broader far right that has been emboldened during his presidency.

These debates raise incredibly important questions about how to hold "progressive" electeds accountable, how to take on big business and the political establishment, and how to fight back against the growing far right. This is why we are proposing an increased focus on organizing discussion and debate around important political issues throughout Boston DSA as they come up. The intermediate goal is to have more flexible political discussion in general meetings, working groups and one-off meetings (similar to the recent debate on mass demonstrations) on political topics of the day. Longer-term this could have the effect of increasing the political level and engagement of existing and new members alike. We can introduce and track this by asking working groups and general meeting planners to include time for discussion on the topics of the day in agendas.

How does this internal priority make Boston DSA a more effective socialist organization?

DSA is the largest socialist organization on the left and a defining feature is that we are a multi-tendency, big tent organization. As the three examples above highlight, important questions are being raised for our movement, and people are moving into struggle against the political establishment, the far right, racism, and other things. Our organization has the opportunity to be a decisive leader in these struggles and we should expect continued growth as more people are drawing socialist conclusions. In order to be as effective as possible when struggles arise, we will need ample space for internal discussions on the current political debates, and provide that space in a timely fashion. It is crucial as our organization and the US left grows to offer room to clarify ideas, strategy and tactics. We need to deal with these complex questions in dynamic discussion with fellow DSA members, not just through relying on social media to have these debates externally.

To again use the example of #ForceTheVote, this debate hasn't been substantively discussed within BDSA despite being the most heavily debated topic on left social media for several weeks. Drawbacks of online-only debating are it doesn't allow members to address the deeper political content underlying the debate, or they miss it entirely if they don't take part in these online platforms. Online debate is also often unnecessarily polarized where in-person (or Zoom) debate can both be more comradely and clarifying.

Through the process of debate and discussion, members develop politically, are better equipped to grapple with multiple viewpoints, and can begin to sharpen their analysis of the events that are drawing people to the ideas of socialism. This process serves as training for our members to engage in political debate and discussion outside of our membership meetings, so they are best positioned to recruit newly radicalizing people to our organization and to socialism more broadly.

What resources would this internal priority require? For example, volunteers, supplies, funding, meeting space, time (5 hours per month for 100 people? 20 hrs/month for 10 people?), etc.

While the Political Education Working Group is one effective place to raise political debates, it is not sufficient to ensure that our organization is collectively able to discuss events that are unfolding. The resources needed to fulfill this priority are time and space on existing meeting agendas or additional meetings depending on the nature of the debate topic. We would also propose a transparent mechanism for members to propose amendments to meeting agendas in real time, if pressing events or issues are unfolding. This is an important democratic mechanism in any left-wing political organization. Proposed amendments to agendas would of course not automatically need to be taken up, but could be voted on by the attendees of the meeting, if a majority viewed the topic as a priority.

How will this internal priority mobilize or engage a large number of DSA members? How will this help our members to develop as socialist organizers?

We think that members will be more engaged in meetings that have a political discussion component. A recent example is the January general meeting where attendance stayed strong all through the 2 hours as members were excited to get to the political discussion portion of the event. If even more time was dedicated to the debate and it was focused on a contemporary or “hot” topic, it’s possible we could have seen even stronger engagement. Debate and discussion is a mechanism for developing members politically to be able to critically analyze the important questions in front of us and sharply reach the most radicalizing people turning to socialism.

Lastly, debate may at times allow us to arrive at more political clarity around our perspectives and strategies to intervene in struggle, and grow the socialist left and around DSA.

How will your priority adapt to changing covid infection rates?

Having a flexible approach to debates within our organization is precisely what will allow us to adapt to changing conditions, whether COVID-19 or otherwise. These debates can absolutely take place in a dynamic way while we are meeting on ZOOM, and would probably only become more engaging and exciting when we are able to return to in person meetings.

Additionally, we can predict that people will continue to radicalize based on the worsening conditions we are faced with due to COVID, and the economic crisis. As this happens, we will want to discuss and debate the strategies and tactics for reaching these newly radicalizing layers

What’s your 30 second “elevator speech” version of why **this** internal priority should be one of Boston DSA’s two internal priorities? 100 words or less!

With the tremendous and exciting growth of DSA in recent years, it is more important than ever that we create an organization that can be flexible in response to rapidly developing situations. Political clarity on important debates is necessary to decisively push back against far right and fascist elements, big business, and the political establishment. This is why we propose a flexible and dynamic approach to allowing political discussions around current events and important debates as they arise. This is a crucial factor in developing our organization so that we are best positioned to build the forces of socialism