

NNJDSA Hudson County Branch Co-Chair Candidate Questionnaire - January 2021

Please use this form to submit your candidacy for one of the (2) Hudson County Branch Co-Chair positions on our executive committee. Deadline for submission: January 8, 2021 at midnight

For full descriptions of all executive committee positions, please view our by-laws:

<https://north.dsanj.org/chapter-by-laws/>

Full Name *

Walter Keady

Why are you a member of DSA? *

I have a somewhat typical story for joining DSA -- online political education. I joined in 2018 after a lot of time following various DSA people on Twitter. I was kind of a centrist liberal for most of my life, but I got sucked into the Bernie-verse and then more radical politics in my early 20s. I owe that inclination, more or less, to the Black Lives Matter movement and anti-rape-culture movements on my college campus which radicalized me. I then went on to become heavily involved in progressive climate activism. Since then, I have become much more interested in organizing both within and beyond the state, especially organizing at the intersection of racial, economic, and climate justice. I found DSA to be my home because it combined a wide range of struggles (e.g. climate justice, immigrant justice, labor organizing) under the banner of socialism. I am glad to have many comrades with a similar story to mine, but I would like to work towards a DSA where my path is not the norm. I want to work towards a DSA where people join because their chapters are meaningfully and powerfully embedded in their social and political realities.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? *

I would bring a deep commitment to open communication and mutual respect. I will also bring daily attention to keeping the Branch running. I have had previous Executive Committee experience in my old DSA chapter (Champlain Valley) in which I was Social Media Coordinator. In addition to those responsibilities, low capacity from other EC members meant I often filled additional co-chair and secretary roles as needed (for instance, organizing/facilitating monthly meetings, updating member lists, etc). Because NNJDSA and the Hudson County Branch have more developed institutions than my previous chapter, I am eager to apply my skills here in partnership with chapter members and leaders.

What is your vision for North NJ DSA and how will you work to achieve it? *

My overall goal is to grow this branch into an organization that has political leverage in Hudson County, that serves the people and its members, that is very supportive for active members, and that fosters more participation (through encouragement and leadership development) of new and inactive members. I want to help build a branch that: 1) does not rely on too few people for too much work, 2) has a comradely and supportive culture, and 3) prioritizes the recruitment and leadership development. A central component of the last piece must be a deep focus on oppressed peoples -- whether in terms of race, gender, sexuality, ability, immigration status, or anything else.

As co-chair, I would work towards an 'organization of organizers,' drawing inspiration and skills from Jane McAlevey. In this kind of organization, members receive organizing training, advice, and resources from leadership. In turn, member organizers can divide work appropriately, organize effectively, and easily plug in new members to their work. I would lean heavily on steps like member one-on-ones, power-mapping/ "wallcharting" exercises to develop organizing strategies. I would also strive for close partnership with the NNJ chapter membership coordinator to ensure new members can integrate themselves easily. I would also strive to support NNJ Chapter Working Groups to expand their efforts into Hudson County OR put down deeper roots if they already operate.

This organizing model would thrive in a branch that undertakes winnable campaigns with clear opportunities for participation, active leadership support for organizing work, and committed, capable members. Many of these our branch already has, providing an excellent basis for extending it across all of our work.

I also want to find ways to build camaraderie -- we can only organize effectively when we can restore ourselves and know our comrades beyond Slack. I would love to have DSA movie nights (which can work virtually), DSA hikes (I know a lot of people talked about that as part of New Years Resolutions), sports teams, happy hours or cookouts or potlucks or... whatever else!

If you could change one thing about our chapter/branch, what would you change? *

I would want to re-orient branch communications towards outreach, coordination, and individual support from leadership. I would aim for clear communications across the usual channels (e.g. Action Network, Slack, Twitter) alongside frequent contact with member leaders and organizers. Ideally, this intermittent outreach would connect members across work, ensure they have the leadership support they need, and also serve as general reminders about meetings, work deadlines, and the rest.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with fellow chapter/branch members? *

Yes, two quick things. First, I would approach this role with the motto that "a good organizer's job is to organize themselves out of a job."

Second, I would imagine a lot of members are skeptical about my candidacy because I'm new. I definitely understand. I'd love to talk -- on Slack, on the phone (703-304-5195), on a socially distanced walk, whatever. Frankly, I want to get to know you whether I win or not! Let's build a Hudson County for the working class.

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