

# North NJ DSA Executive Committee Candidate Questionnaire - January 2021

Please use this form to submit your candidacy for one of the positions on our executive committee.

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

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

Full Name \*

Amari Rae Pulido

Position you are running for \*

YDSA Coordinator (must be 25 years old or younger) ▼

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

I used to think I was a liberal or progressive until I realized that the two US major parties are two sides of the same coin. Now I am proud to be a socialist, a leftist. As someone who is nonbinary, first generation Cuban-American on one side, a first generation student, and from low socioeconomic status graduating with college debt, I want people to have the basic human rights they deserve. We deserve a present and future free from capitalism and greed.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

I have been a freshman liaison on my college campus, I have canvassed for candidates door to door, and I truly enjoy reaching out to people in order to get them involved in a cause. I will open lines of communication and hopefully establish new relations with Northern NJ high school and colleges.

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

Many high schools do not have political organizations, and many colleges have political organizations but only for the two US major parties or an additional conservative third party. We need to introduce and expose students to democratic socialism, our mission, values, and goals. There are many people who are aligned with democratic socialism but do not yet know it.

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

Alot of activities tend to focus on more urban areas, which is important, but I think we also need to reach out to suburban and even rural areas because they are not wastes of time.

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

I wouldn't be submitting this application if I wasn't passionate about moving away from the US duopoly. If elected, I would organize strategically for my role as YDSA Coordinator (On 12/2 I will be 21 yrs old)

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Full Name \*

Joshua Eric Rusinov

Position you are running for \*

Secretary

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

I am a first-generation child of two Jewish/Russian immigrants from the USSR. My family lost many close people to the great patriotic war. The horrors they saw and the needless death that they witnessed was an atrocity. Through them, I learned the value of every human life and became dedicated to preserving life. Its not as simple as life and death though. A life that is lost to poverty is just as tragic. Later in my life, I lost a dear friend to a society that drives those who are lost beyond their limits. I made a promise to him to continue my lifelong mission of doing my part to make the world a better place. That combined with the Sanders 2016 campaign, which opened my eyes to a potential of change in electoral politics, I joined the DSA to do my part in working to make the world better for all people

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

I will bring an unyielding desire and dedication to doing the best work I can to bring about positive change in our society. I bring every degree of detail and precision in my work that I do in my artistry/my professional work. I bring a formal education in project management and organizing logistically taxing groups & projects. I also bring a youth/energy which I think is one of the biggest driving forces of the socialist movements in this country.

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

I believe the NNJ DSA should take up the role of a political organization that puts boots on the ground and operates locally with the people to accomplish things outside the political spectrum as well as within it. My vision for DSA and NNJ DSA is very similar. If anything NNJ DSA is in a particularly good position to take up this particular role. The proximity of our chapter to the largest collection of superfund sites, diverse oppressed communities, varied and uniquely positioned unions, corrupt corporate conglomerates, etc. put us in the best situation to engage our members and work with them to organize inside & outside the workplace to demand their rights from within the political system when allowed and outside of it when necessary. I would work with the executive committee and well as other chapters and our members directly to not only encourage growing our membership base (incredibly actively) but also spend more time working with the members we have to help them get more involved within the organization and take up more leadership roles. I want to give people more tools with which to feel as if they are contributing to a better society/world. I want to continue to expand our already easily accessible activities for new members, and further develop every willing member to take on more devoted and significant roles.

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

I would work to bring our chapter more into the spotlight. I believe that running actual DSA candidates at all levels (yes including federal offices) even without a victory, as well as getting out to every working-class & social movement and making ourselves present and helpful are the two main ways in which we become a stronger chapter. As well as a stronger DSA in general. I would work to encourage more members and help more socialists take public office as well as encouraging more union members to express their power as collective labour in conjunction with an electoral strategy. Working with unions directly from both the leadership and the membership to reform weak/corrupt unions and build on the strength of unions already working to build a stronger working class.

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

As someone who has committed to running for federal office at some point, I completely understand the need for an effective electoral strategy. But honestly, as we saw with the overall success of progressive policies and the work of the NEC the DSA already has a working electoral strategy (to obviously be greatly improved). What I think we need right now it an active membership to be working in the streets and directly with communities to build education and show people the truth and effectiveness of how socialism will work to liberate us all from poverty, sickness, death, and a wasted future. People lose their lives to our system every single day. Now is an especially dire time to take up direct and immediate action to build a strong base for the near future!

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Full Name \*

Melody Magly

Position you are running for \*

Membership Coordinator

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

Because it's either this or barbarism.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

I am pretty good at talking to people, I like trying to convince people to join DSA

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

I want us to be the working-New Jerseyan's alternative to corrupt unions and Democratic Party bosses.

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

Make it easier to join! Get us more involved in community projects.

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

I hope my activities in DSA have proven that I'd make a good lead for new members!

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Full Name \*

Ezekiel Tek

Position you are running for \*

Co-Chair

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

I'm a DSA member because I believe democratic socialism is the only way to avert climate catastrophe, a newly emerging far right and the unchecked power of capital. It's also the only path I see to a just and humane society where everyone can flourish and fully develop all of their capacities as individuals.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

Having already served a year as co-chair, I bring my previous experience in leadership to the table. I also have experience from the Bernie campaign in canvassing and phone-banking work as well.

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

I believe our chapter needs to activate more of its +1,000 members and get them regularly involved in organizing. We also need to develop more leaders in our chapter who can spearhead work with confidence and develop others themselves. Every year at our chapter elections, there should be a numerous and diverse number of candidates vying for leadership positions because they want to lead the good work the chapter is doing, and don't feel like it's an obligation to plug an administrative hole. Ideally at least 100 of our members would be at a minimum, attending chapter meetings on a regular basis. Our chapter should also work to build strong connections to labor unions in our area, establish numerous YDSA chapters at the various colleges in North Jersey, and elect our members to office at the local and state level.

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

I support improved structure and centralization of our chapter as a means to improve the effectiveness of our organizing capabilities. I also believe that in order for any political organization to achieve meaningful success, certain work should be prioritized given the fact that we are a volunteer organization with limited finances. This is in no way to say that other work should be forbidden or restricted in any way, just that decisions on the use of chapter resources must always be decided by a vote of the whole chapter and with the mentioned limitations on time and money considered. I would also welcome more political debate within our chapter on the question of how we think the DSA should be organized and what work we think makes the most sense to prioritize.

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

I am a member of Bread & Roses, which is a national caucus working to build a democratic and effective DSA.

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Full Name \*

Katia Oltmann

Position you are running for \*

Treasurer

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

I started becoming more politically radical after the 2016 election, and I wanted to join the DSA so that I could be involved in agitating for socialist political change at the local level.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

I have held the treasurer position for the Mutual Aid Working Group's "Brick City Mutual Aid" Project for the past 7 months, working closely with our current treasurer Ed to collect receipts and pay people who make grocery deliveries. I believe that this kind of work has given me the experience to be an effective treasurer for the entire chapter.

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

I hope we can continue to be active in local struggles against the carceral state. Our Immigrant Justice Working Group has done great work agitating for people detained by ICE in New Jersey and has helped make this an issue that has garnered national coverage. I hope this kind of local activism expands and that we can win concessions in funding affordable housing and defunding police departments

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

I think we can expand on two things 1) holding more protests and rallies. I have been really inspired by Ridgewood for Black Liberation, who have been holding daily rallies at the Bergen County Prison to protest the county's contract with ICE. I think it would help our cause if we could build a stronger street presence 2) more door to door canvassing. I think canvassing is vital for building a broader base of people who can oppose the local status quo

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

I am also active in a leftist Jersey City group called Solidarity and Mutual Aid Jersey City

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Full Name \*

Michelle Zulli

Position you are running for \*

Engagement Coordinator

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

I'm a DSA member because I see tremendous power in being the largest socialist organization in the U.S. I think that the U.S. is poised for a socialist future and organizing with DSA is the most effective way for me to work for socialism.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

I bring my sense of fairness and diplomacy and a strong desire to work for socialism. I bring integrity and knowing that there is always more for me to learn.

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

I would like to see North NJ DSA's growing membership more active in the chapter. I will work towards improving chapter communications and seeking ways to introduce newcomers to socialist organizing.

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

I'd like to see a more diverse active membership.

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

I am truly inspired by the work being done by my comrades in North NJ DSA. Organizing with you has been the highlight of my 2020.

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Full Name \*

Jorge Mauricio Maldonado

Position you are running for \*

YDSA Coordinator (must be 25 years old or younger) ▼

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

I am a member of the DSA because I believe that working people deserve to have power over their own lives. In order to win the kinds of transformative demands that can empower the multi-racial working class, we need to build organizations that train working people to become organizers, provide political education, and generate the leverage for us to win. I see that DSA as not only being capable of accomplishing this, but also serving as a incubator of militant working class activity in all spheres of life-- politically, through the community, within one's home, and in the work place.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

I will bring my experience of building organization. YDSA provides a unique opportunity to steer young, working class students to not only organize in their campuses, but provide political direction and training on how to become life-long organizers. I want to draw on my own experiences labor organizing, but also more relevantly/recently, my experiences chairing the local DSA chapter. my experience has challenged me in several ways. chairing a chapter of over 1000 members has meant figuring out how to simultaneously support ongoing work/projects, training new and existing members, and using my position to build structures that collectively enhance our work. both feelings of success in areas where I felt I positively contributed to our chapter and when I felt I made mistakes has allowed me to reflect on how to improve going forward.

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

I think I answered part of this above already, but my vision for North NJ DSA is one where our organization is recognized and trusted by working people. I want working people from the community to have confidence in the dsa that it can be a source of training, guidance, and organization that will win demands that affect them and their families. to get to this place, our org needs to have victories that are deeply and widely felt, and structures that are welcoming and engaging for members to feel like they can grow their capacity to lead.

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

I would like to increase the amount of resources we can provide members to not only situate themselves within the chapter, but provide guidance on how they can quickly contribute to our campaigns, as well as train their own skills as leaders that can produce even more leaders. I don't mean that this something we're not doing, but I think is something that can always be improved that yields incredibly potential and extends capacity considerably.

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

I thank everyone for an incredible year, but I will continue to look to everyone guidance in the new year for us to win socialism! si se puede!

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Full Name \*

Jodie Trzaska

Position you are running for \*

Co-Chair

Why are you a member of DSA? \*

I joined DSA as one of the 2016 Bernie Babies, when I discovered I was a socialist. But the truth is, I was a socialist well before I knew what it was. Raised by a queer mother on welfare, I was privy to all the demoralizing degradation that comes with being a part of the working and marginalized poor. Becoming a member of the DSA wasn't really a choice, but an imperative to fight for a better world. I am here because all we have is each other.

What will you bring to this Executive Committee position? \*

Currently I am serving on the EC as the Engagement Coordinator. Some of the work I accomplished with many other incredible comrades this year (outside of engagement work) include: organizing and systematizing our chapter's google drive and resources to ensure posterity and retain institutional knowledge for future leaders, creating and managing our chapter google calendar, assisting in the creation of the Poli-Ed Committee and creating it's first curriculum, assisting in the creation of the Media Comms Committee to expand on our general media/info/propaganda abilities and create new leadership positions. Currently, I am assisting in the creation of our chapter's very first podcast. In addition, I've attended both the 2017 and 2019 National Conventions where I was able to gain a broader understanding of our big-tent org and how best to navigate our special landscape.

With these collaborative accomplishments in mind, I hope to bring to the position of Co-Chair both real world and organizational experience and a desire to move our chapter in the direction of greater equity, inclusion, transparency, and democracy. I believe each one of our members has a right to be here and to fully participate and pursue the kind of organizing that they are passionate about, regardless of their political tendency or given privileges. I'd like to work on making the EC decision making process more collaborative with the general membership and to support the amazing work that has been done over the past year, which I am so very proud to have been a part of. In my role of Co-Chair specifically, I hope to utilize my skills as a former high school biology teacher to enhance our chapter and EC meetings to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and engagement.

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

A growing org, and a growing chapter, contain as many challenges as it does joys. Over the past year I have learned that we still have some unanswered questions: How do we activate and engage a greater percentage of our "paper members"? How do we clear a path to becoming a "socialist organizer" for our new members, and keep them on that path? How do we become a multi-racial org not just for the working class, but of the working class? How do we make our organizing spaces accessible and equitable for all of our members? How do we harness the inherent capabilities of our existing members to be socialist organizers in their own communities and workplaces, and not just at our meetings? How can we reduce a sort of tyranny of the time privileged, by making access to organizing work more equitable for workers, parents/caretakers, and the disabled?

My vision for North Jersey DSA is to engage in the process of seeking out these answers together, while continuing to support the phenomenal organizing of our working groups and administrative committees. Our good work already speaks for itself.

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

We talk a lot about visions for our chapter and for the better world that is possible. These visions are bound to look different for each of us. Something I would change about our chapter is the willingness at the leadership level to make space for these various visions to all have a seat at the table. We don't have to agree, but we have to maintain good faith and a comradely environment if we are to survive. Every one of us deserves to be here, and has something special to offer. Part of making space for ideological diversity means allowing for more transparency in decision making processes. Too often as an EC we made decisions in in private settings, or by reaching a quorum without full EC attendance. In my commitment to radical democracy, the foundation on which our org stands, I intend to ensure our membership has clear access to, and participation in, leadership decisionmaking.

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

I've had a couple of careers that help season my particular perspective. Spent time as an urban environmental planner (2006-2010), sex worker (2010-2014), teacher (2014-2017), and flight attendant (2018-now). Did a small documentary that appeared in some festivals, including the 2018 Anarchist Film Festival. Happy to talk about chapter stuff, movies, music, or etc with you any time:  
jodie.trzaska@gmail.com.

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