

# DSA-LA COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

We often, and enthusiastically, organize and discuss topics in large groups of people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints. Learning to do this without reproducing the oppressive ideologies we've inherited from a dysfunctional society can be daunting and uncomfortable, but it is essential. Conversing with one another constructively, especially when we have political disagreements, is a skill we all must practice. If we are going to build a society that prefers equality to oppression, we must build it first in the spaces we organize. The following are not only useful guidelines for respectful discussion, they are also fundamental building blocks for creating a social movement capable of broad and meaningful solidarity.

## **PROGRESSIVE STACK**

Progressive Stack is a form of facilitation meant to uplift marginalized voices and allow for a diverse range of viewpoints. The stack taker keeps a list of those people who wish to speak, calling on them in turn. If someone wishes to speak, they indicate so to the stack taker, who may shift the order to prioritize voices from marginalized groups or those who have yet to speak.

## **MAKE SPACE, TAKE SPACE**

When you speak, after you make your point, let others speak. Please respect others by recognizing how often, much, and loudly you're speaking and whether or not you're dominating the conversation. Make space for others to voice their opinions and viewpoints. If the facilitator of the meeting asks you to wrap up, recognize that you should make space for others. This especially applies to participants from privileged backgrounds. On the other hand, if you don't often speak up, try to make an attempt to participate. In many respects the discussion would greatly benefit from your point of view.

## **MUTUAL RESPECT**

Mutual respect invites us to see each other from a wider perspective, even when someone says something we disagree with or that offends us. We all come from different backgrounds which inform our mannerisms and communication. Honor the space with constructive questioning and dialogue that progresses the conversation. Assume good faith in each other. One person speaks at a time. If you are challenging someone's ideas or behavior, do it respectfully, and if you are being challenged, receive it respectfully.

**MORE ON REVERSE**

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**MORE ON REVERSE**

**WHY AM I TALKING?**

When in discussion, please ask yourself “Why am I talking?” We have a limited amount of time for discussion and often limited time to accomplish the tasks before us. Consider whether what you want to say has already been said, whether what you want to say is on topic, and if there’s a better time and place to say it. Consider using alternative methods for showing your approval of other comments or speakers (nodding your head, snapping your fingers, giving a thumbs up, etc.).

**RESPECT THE WORK**

Organizers put a great deal of free time and emotional work into organizing for socialism. We should acknowledge and respect these efforts from our comrades. Organizers should always understand that chapter projects are collective projects operating with limited resources, and should seek to learn about prior work or background before making suggestions or criticisms. As comrades, when making suggestions or criticisms, we should be respectful of groundwork that has already been done, recognize the tradeoffs that adjusting priorities might necessitate, and offer our labor where possible to achieve proposed goals.

**USE “I” STATEMENTS**

Speak from your perspective, rather than assuming those of other people. Your experiences are valuable but the conclusions drawn from them or even the experiences themselves are not necessarily universal. We don’t want to assume that everyone agrees with everything we are saying.

**LISTEN ACTIVELY**

Genuinely pay attention to what others say. Actively listen to others. If it is necessary to clarify someone’s point, repeat what you heard them say and summarize.

**OOPS, OUCH**

Acknowledge when you make a mistake. Remember, mistakes will be made – nobody is perfect. Recognize opportunities to forgive others for their mistakes.



**Democratic Socialists of America**  
**Los Angeles**

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