

R26-003 -- Savannah DSA Restorative Justice and Membership Standing Policy

Submitted by: George Robles **Endorsed by:** Reed Nowling

Date: April 1, 2026

WHEREAS, the criminal legal system in the United States has functioned historically and continues to function as an instrument of social control, disproportionately surveilling, charging, and incarcerating marginalized communities -- particularly Black and Brown people, those living in poverty, and queer and gender-nonconforming individuals -- a reality extensively documented by scholars, civil rights organizations, and the lived experience of communities we organize alongside; and

WHEREAS, the state has a specific and well-documented history of using criminal charges to disrupt, discredit, and neutralize organizers and activists from marginalized communities, from the COINTELPRO operations targeting the Black Panther Party and civil rights leaders, to the criminalization of queer existence under sodomy and "public decency" statutes, to the selective prosecution of labor organizers and poor people's movements, to the prosecution of Black Lives Matter protesters in the present day; and

WHEREAS, a criminal charge is an accusation made by the state, not a finding of fact, and the gap between charge and conviction can span years during which individuals are presumed innocent under the law but are often treated as guilty by their communities and organizations; and

WHEREAS, as a predominantly white chapter operating in the Deep South, we have a particular obligation to interrogate whether our responses to allegations involving members from marginalized communities reproduce the racial, class, and social biases embedded in the systems we claim to oppose; and

WHEREAS, socialist organizations must reckon with the historical reality that claims of danger or discomfort have been disproportionately weaponized against Black men and other marginalized people, and that uncritical deference to such claims -- absent evidence or process -- reproduces the very dynamics of racial and social control that the carceral system relies upon; and

WHEREAS, the 2021 National DSA Convention adopted Resolution 03, "Empowering DSA's Mass Abolition Work," committing the organization to abolitionist politics and the dismantling of the carceral system, and Resolution 28, "Building Transformative Justice Through A National Committee of Grievance Officers," which created a permanent national committee to train chapter Harassment and Grievance Officers in transformative and restorative justice, conflict resolution, and mediation -- both adopted on the Consent Agenda with supermajority support; and

WHEREAS, the Savannah DSA Members Handbook (Section 3.5.6) already establishes that "the chapter prioritizes restorative and educational approaches to conflict resolution" and that "when possible, conflicts should be addressed through dialogue, mediation, or comradely correction before formal action is considered"; and

WHEREAS, socialist organizations must hold themselves to a higher standard than the carceral state and should ground their internal processes in principles of restorative justice -- which prioritize accountability, community healing, and the dignity of all parties involved -- rather than defaulting to exclusion and punishment; and

WHEREAS, removing or sidelining members based solely on unresolved criminal charges, without independent examination of circumstances, abandons both the principle of presumed innocence and our commitment to building a multiracial, multi-class working-class movement;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Savannah DSA adopt the following as the Savannah DSA Restorative Justice and Membership Standing Policy:

Savannah DSA Restorative Justice and Membership Standing Policy

This policy establishes the chapter's framework for restorative justice and defines protections for membership standing in connection with pending criminal charges, consistent with the chapter's commitment to abolitionist and transformative justice principles as expressed in the Savannah DSA Members Handbook, the 2021 National DSA Convention Resolutions 03 and 28, and the values articulated in the Savannah DSA Bylaws, Article II.

Section 1: Presumption of Membership Standing

(a) No member shall be expelled, suspended, barred from participation, or otherwise removed from good standing solely on the basis of pending criminal charges for which no conviction has been obtained. The existence of criminal charges alone shall not constitute sufficient grounds for disciplinary action under the Savannah DSA Bylaws, Article III, Section 4.

(b) This section does not alter the grounds for removal established in Article III, Section 4 of the Bylaws (substantial disagreement with principles or policies, consistently undemocratic or disruptive behavior, or discipline by a democratic centralist organization), nor the procedural requirements therein (written charges, two-week notice, two-thirds vote). It clarifies that pending criminal charges, standing alone, do not meet those grounds.

Section 2: Restorative Justice Process

When questions arise regarding a member's participation or standing in connection with allegations of harm -- whether or not criminal charges are involved, and where the matter is not governed by the National DSA Harassment and Grievance Policy (Resolution 33) -- the chapter shall pursue the following process before any disciplinary action is considered:

(a) The Steering Committee shall convene a Community Accountability Committee of no fewer than three (3) members, which should reflect the racial, gender, and political diversity of the community and must include at least one member with experience or training in restorative justice, conflict mediation, or transformative justice practices.

(b) The Committee shall, to the extent possible and with respect for all parties' safety and privacy, seek to understand the circumstances of the allegation through direct conversation with involved parties, affected community members, and any available information -- recognizing that the chapter is not a court and does not have subpoena power or access to evidence held by the state.

(c) The Committee shall produce a written recommendation to the Steering Committee within sixty (60) days, which may include but is not limited to: no action, voluntary mediation, a mutual accountability agreement, temporary modification of participation (agreed upon by the member), or referral to external restorative justice resources.

(d) Any recommendation that restricts a member's participation must be approved by a majority vote of the general membership at the next General Meeting, consistent with the due-process requirements of the Bylaws.

Section 3: Relationship to Harassment and Grievance Policy

(a) Nothing in this policy supersedes, replaces, or creates an alternative to the National DSA Harassment and Grievance Policy (Resolution 33) or the role of chapter Harassment and Grievance Officers (HGOs) as defined in Article XII of the Savannah DSA Bylaws and Section 3.5.5 of the Members Handbook.

(b) Where an allegation falls within the scope of the HGP, it shall be processed through the HGO in accordance with national policy. The Community Accountability Committee established under Section 2 addresses only the question of membership standing and chapter participation - - not the investigation or adjudication of the underlying allegation.

(c) In cases where both the HGP and this policy may apply, the Steering Committee shall consult with the HGO to determine the appropriate process and avoid duplication or conflict. The HGP shall take precedence in all matters within its scope.

(d) When a matter is referred to the HGO, the Steering Committee shall communicate this policy and the chapter's commitment to restorative justice as relevant context for the grievance process, consistent with the 2021 National Convention's direction under Resolutions 03 and 28.

Section 4: Safeguards

(a) Nothing in this policy prevents the chapter from taking immediate temporary measures to ensure the physical safety of members at chapter events, provided such measures are narrowly tailored, time-limited, and reviewed by the Steering Committee within fourteen (14) days,

consistent with the emergency powers and limits defined in Section 3.2.3 of the Members Handbook.

(b) This policy does not apply to cases involving a criminal conviction, which may be addressed through existing Bylaws and disciplinary procedures.

(c) This policy does not prevent individual members from making their own personal decisions about participation in events or spaces.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any member who, at the time of this policy's adoption, is subject to formal or informal restrictions on their chapter participation based solely on pending criminal charges for which no conviction has been obtained shall have their standing reviewed under the framework established in Section 2 of this policy within thirty (30) days of adoption. The Steering Committee shall convene a Community Accountability Committee for this purpose in accordance with Section 2(a). Until the Committee delivers its recommendation, the member's prior participation status shall remain unchanged.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this policy shall take effect immediately upon adoption and be maintained as a standalone chapter policy document, filed in the Record of Decisions and the chapter archive. This policy may only be amended or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the membership at a General Meeting, with no less than ten (10) days written notice to the membership of the proposed changes.