

Candidate Statement, Ali Cleveland

Hi, I'm Ali Cleveland and have been a member of DSA since January. I'm the chair of the Young Democratic Socialists at Point Loma Nazarene University here in San Diego as well. After years of frustration with organizing for the Democratic party through electoral campaigns, I joined the organization. As a queer non-binary individual, I care deeply about socialist feminist issues. Often underrepresented in leftist spaces, I believe it's important that people of color, non-binary/trans folk, femmes, and women are at the forefront of the revolution. Moreover, I've been active in LGBTQ and feminist activism on my campus for the past two years and having been organizing students since early high school.

After attending the DSA convention in August, I arrived back to San Diego with lots of ideas and strategies to increase our organizing efforts. I care deeply about creating a new member orientation process as well as creating sustainable infrastructure for the needs of our chapter. When we are creating our structure, it's important there is representation for YDSA members and their continual efforts organizing around our city. Young Democratic Socialists is considered a branch of DSA that works in coalition with greater organizing efforts, however that communication between multiple groups needs to exist. I want to bring my skills of student organizing, and being a younger voice to the San Diego DSA Steering Committee.

DSA San Diego Steering Committee Candidate Questionnaire, Ali Cleveland

Democratic Socialists believe that both the economy and society should be run democratically to meet human needs, not to make profits for a few. We are a political and activist organization, not a party; through campus and community-based chapters DSA members use a variety of tactics, from legislative to direct action, to fight for reforms that empower working people. Do you agree? If no, explain.

Yes, I agree. I stand firm as an anti-capitalist and organize for socialism.

Will you have the time and energy to make a significant commitment to the Steering Committee given the other commitments in your life?

Yes, I am committed to building up YDSA chapters and YDSA members within San Diego DSA and working on projects that build our ranks and coalitions. As a student and working class person, I believe it is important we have a voice within San Diego DSA.

Why did you join DSA?

I joined DSA after years of frustrations with the Democratic party and the search for something that was different than the establishment. I stayed in DSA because it's a multi tendency organization that has room for everyone on the left. In a world where the right has so much power, its inspiring to be surrounded by people dedicated to building a better world.

What other organizations do you belong to or have belonged to that influence your identity as an activist/organizer? Do you currently hold office within any other organization(s)? If yes, which organization(s)?

I have not been part of any other organizations that have shaped me as an organizer. As a college student, YDSA has been a main contributor to my political ideology.

If elected to Steering Committee, what are some areas upon which you'd like to focus?

The main area I want to focus on is building up YDSA chapters and membership within San Diego. By having a student's schedule, I understand the work it takes to organize students rather than organizing people with typical 9-5 jobs. I have been working with students from PLNU and SDSU over the past year and recently have begun building

relationships with UCSD and USD folks. All San Diego universities are currently working on a YDSA project, which is the organizing I want to continue on Steering Committee.

What ideas do you have to ensure that Steering Committee decisions are made democratically?

I believe it's extremely important that the Steering Committee creates its own structure with designated roles. Everyone has different skills they bring to the table, which are most efficiently used when understood and defined clearly. Having a framework for how/when meeting will be run and voting on all decisions will lead to a more democratic action. More importantly, the elected Steering Committee will be able to create proposals and synthesize ideas from general meetings that can be voted on from the general membership. DSA is a grassroots organizing, the power comes from the bottom, not the top. This means that all members of the Steering Committee and general membership are valued and listened to.