

## Rapid Response Do's and Don'ts

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### Why Should We Respond to Crises?

Crises are one of capitalism's hallmark consequences, but also one of its greatest tools. Any catastrophic event can be turned into a boon for the billionaire class. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant record profits for Big Pharma companies like Moderna and Abbott. Struggling, intentionally defunded public education is used as evidence for the necessity of privatized charter schools. Electric vehicle production has rapidly expanded under the guise of "fixing" one of the key drivers of the climate crisis. The worse things get, the deeper capitalism tries to embed itself.

#### **We fight false narratives by speaking truth to the people.**

Doing so not only helps raise people's consciousness about the reality and causes of their struggles, but weakens capitalism's ability to prescribe the "cure" to the problems it created. **When** and **how** we speak about crises matters. Below, you'll see some of the common pitfalls organizers might face when releasing statements or organizing rapid responses to crises, and best practices for avoiding them.

### To Release, or Not to Release

It's tempting to release statements whenever a crisis begins to take shape. However, sometimes *what* we say and *when* we say it does more harm than good for our short-term organizing and our long-term goal of winning socialism in our lifetime. Before releasing a statement, chapters should always consider the following:

## To Release, or Not to Release

- **Will it help or hurt the situation by adding to the public discourse?** Consider if releasing a statement may draw out the time the crisis stays in the media spotlight. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it's important to be prepared in other organizational ways if this occurs.
- **Can it move members or the public towards our goals?** Statements can be powerful tools to get our organizing work in front of new members and potential supporters we haven't reached yet. However, if we don't have much to organize people around as a chapter, it's helpful to consider how impactful a statement may actually be. Like a strong seasoning, our statements can overwhelm if we're always releasing them but not growing the organization or moving the chapter toward your goal.
- **Do we need to say something?** This is likely the hardest consideration. There are many intersecting issues that we care about and are working on. However, it takes capacity for your chapter's comms team (if you even have one!) to craft statements that are relevant *and* build power. It's crucial to weigh what could happen if your chapter does *or* doesn't release a statement and how you could be perceived and by whom. Is it deeply and widely felt? Is it something that needs more attention or different framing? Does your chapter or national need to articulate a clear vision on this issue before you weigh in with a take?

If it feels right to make a statement, your chapter should consider next ***who it's for, why it's needed, and what it accomplishes.***

### 1. Who Is This For?

Different crises call for different types of statements—or multiple types. You may want to get out in front of the press, communicate key ideas to your membership, or build a narrative for the public on social media. Before you put pen to paper, ask: if only ONE person could read this, who

would it be? When a statement tries to appeal to everyone, it feels confused and falls flat.

- If it's for the **press**, it must be timely and spicy enough to attract attention.
- If it's for our **base**, include a clear call to action and skip any "socialism 101" explainers.
- If it's for a **general audience**, offer a compelling vision that no one else is articulating; don't use jargon.

Regardless of audience:

- **Can you name a *specific* target or enemy in the statement?**
- **What emotions or reactions do you want readers to have?**
- **What key takeaways or actions do you want them to have or do?**

## 2. What Do We Want Out of It?

Statements are organizing tools. Consider how they fit into our overall organizing strategy, both for a particular campaign and for the broader goals of DSA. When your audience reads your statement, they should be able to pick up on:

- **What is it that *needs* to happen in this situation? What can we win?**  
Draw a direct connection between the crisis event and your main organization goals. If you cannot make the connection, it's OK to hold off on a statement.
- **What actions are you calling on them to take? What do you want them to do to win?**  
Explain what you are asking for in a way that connects the issues together. How can people help our movement?
- **Who do we consider the real enemy or target?**  
Targets are people with *names* and *faces*. Blaming "capitalism" for a crisis is too vague on its own. Your statement can be an opportunity

to educate the public on *who* is behind the crises.

### 3. How Does it Advance Our Goals?

Any good statement clearly, concisely, and confidently articulates our vision of the kind of world the working class deserves and how we get there. Good statements should speak to our vision by:

- **Stating clearly how we see the issue and its structural causes**
- **Pointing out who the culprits are in our collective suffering**
- **Empowering our audience to see how and where they have a part to play in transforming our lives and world**

### WARNING: KEY PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Avoid tones that are defensive of your chapter's stance or condescending to your audience or potential supporters. Being overly defensive is a demonstration of weakness to our opposition and is off-putting to potential supporters, as is condescension. These are people we *need* if we're going to win. Know who your actual enemies are!
- Don't assume your audience knows every detail of the issue at hand. Explain what you need to and never be vague. State clearly what must be done and why.
- Don't "kitchen sink" the issue. Your statement does not need to address everything that's wrong with capitalism. Keep it to one key takeaway.
- Do not make public statements that illuminate or target factional differences within the organization. Highlighting internal strife

makes infiltration and exploitation by bad actors easier.

- Avoid contradicting the key organizing principles we take on as the Democratic Socialists of America. We are stronger when we articulate theories of change and [political visions](#) that are not wildly different and counter to each other.

## Examples

A gas plant in your city blew up and injured three workers. Meanwhile, your chapter is organizing a campaign to raise taxes on commercial fossil fuel sales to fund public transit via legislation.

### ✗ **Bad Statement**

*This explosion was inevitable under capitalism so long as profit is more important than people or the environment. As socialists, we know that capitalism will never solve climate change. But the climate cannot wait. Millions of people are suffering under capitalism and will continue to suffer. The crony governor should pass SB2384 now and tax fossil fuel capitalists! We need publicly funded clean transit now!*

- Blames "capitalism" and not a specific person or group on the cause of the explosion
- Asks the governor to do something but unclear if the governor will read this
- No call to action for the base (or prospective members)
- Does not draw a clear connection between the gas plant and SB2384 or DSA

### ✓ **Good Statement**

*This explosion is the direct result of GasCo's profiteering. Last year, at the behest of their CEO John J. Capitalism, GasCo spent \$2.4M in profits on lobbyists to deregulate safety standards—regulations that could have protected the injured workers and prevented this explosion.*

*We cannot let dark money stand in the way of public safety and public*

goods.

*The Mytown chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America's state bill, the Fund Transit Act (SB2384), will tax GasCo's profits on fossil fuel sales to fund public transit \$3M a year. Call the governor at 555-5555 and demand he sign the bill before the budget deadline April 9th!*

- Provides a clear action for the base to take
- Does not assume the governor will ever read this
- Connects GasCo's profits to where they are going now (lobbying for deregulation) and where they should be going (public services)
- Names DSA as a political force; prospective members can look the chapter up



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