



STAR AND SQUARE

THE ORGANZATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
OF THE DENTON LEFT

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INTRODUCTION

Denton is a graveyard for left-wing organizations.

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), both incarnations of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), all three Democratic Socialists of America chapters (DSA); anyone that's lived and organized here has seen the rise and fall of a mutual aid group, revolutionary party, or community project.

Every six months or so a new cluster of radicals pops up and a year later they disintegrate, if they lasted that long. This, in itself, isn't really a bad thing. Sometimes ideas don't pan out like you'd prefer, and groups fall apart. That isn't the issue. The issue comes in when someone is a part of these groups and they get disillusioned with activism and politics. Their dream of storming the palaces shatters in front of them, and it can push them away from ever getting involved again. Couple this with all the resources that went into the organization going down the drain, and you have a massive loss for whatever cause they were fighting for.

These associations also isolate themselves to preserve some sort of ideological purity or safety, cutting themselves off from recruitment. There isn't a healthy flow of new members into the organization, and the old ones end up leaving. This is especially true here in Denton, a college town. Students come into radical groups all the time, but leave in the Summer and Winter, assuming they didn't graduate or transfer. The members don't build connections. They are too busy dealing with low membership numbers, limited resources, and that's not even mentioning their own personal lives. This is also assuming that their ideology has any appeal outside of a small circle. It's these limitations that stifle recruitment and turn what is supposed to be a mass movement, into a collection of antisocial intellectuals.



It's within this environment that the Denton Left was born. Denton may be a graveyard, but out of this graveyard came an organization that wasn't wholly new or a reanimated body either. It was something stitched together with parts of old organizations that came before. The ISO had collapsed from a national scandal and the second Denton DSA disintegrated due to a lack of active members. This left a space for an organization that transcended old grudges and ideological debates. It gathered activists that had no party to call home and brought them into one room. It turns out that what Denton needed in its leftist groups wasn't a Lenin or Debs.

It needed a Frankenstein.



UNIFICATION

Ideological disputes have been a feature of left-wing politics since the French Revolution started eating its own children, and that is reflected in our myriad of communist parties and anarchist affinity groups. Whether it was a high-minded intellectual debate or someone stealing a theory book, our side has had its fair share of splits. As a result, our collective power has taken a hit from all these splinters, Resources, energy, and manpower are expended setting up and maintaining these different organizations and are wasted when they collapse.

Unifying these groups and bringing these resources into a single pool, however, goes much further than dividing them on the basis of ideology or tactics. An anarchist and a Marxist-Leninist have much more in common as side-lined leftist positions in American politics than not, and bringing them both into a single organization would do much more to further both of their goals. In Denton, and the United States as a whole, our separation from each other has only shot ourselves in the foot. Breaking the groups apart and dividing the little we have up will only make sure we never achieve those goals.



DIVERSITY OF LEFTIST IDEOLOGIES

Americans love having their opinions and American leftists are no different. The United States has no shortage of socialist organizations all espousing a special form of socialism, but these organizations have no real foothold in Denton. The Party for Socialism and Liberation, the Democratic Socialists, and even Food Not Bombs all have had trouble establishing themselves in this city. This has led to a lot of socialists and anarchists of different flavors in Denton, but none with the ability to get off the ground with their projects. There are two main reasons why. The first is the obvious ideological differences of these groups.

The ISO, an unorthodox Trotskyist group, and the DSA both professed some sort of bottom-up socialist ideology, but they were separated from each other in their organizing. This is especially true in the second iteration of the Denton ISO. After an exodus of very involved organizers in its first era, the remaining members had little to no interaction with the local DSA. This led to a disconnection not only between the two groups but with activism in Denton at large. Both organizations became isolated and collapsed.

In order to avoid these problems, the Denton Left has adopted the policy of unification but also diversity in ideology. Following the DSA's example, we welcome multiple ideologies, but we don't hinder our members with excessive rules. Following the ISO's example, we have committed organizers but shun dogma. Don't get us wrong, the members can butt heads, but the group has not just survived, but thrived.



The Denton Left holds the following official stances:

- 1** The Denton Left is a revolutionary, anti-capitalist organization.
- 2** The Denton Left believes in extending democracy into the workplace. Workers should be in control of the means of production.
- 3** The Denton Left believes that food, housing, healthcare, and education are human rights.
- 4** The Denton Left is a feminist, anti-racist, pro-immigrant, and pro-LGBTQ+ organization.
- 5** The Denton Left is anti-imperialist, and we believe that US intervention does more harm than good.
- 6** The Denton Left believes workers have the right to self-defense.
- 7** The Denton Left are abolitionists who believe in building strong communities committed to transformative justice instead of relying on the police.
- 8** The Denton Left does not police gender. Gender affirming health care is a right. Trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people deserve full access to society.
- 9** The Denton Left believes in free abortion on demand, free childcare, and the ability for all children to grow up free from the threat of violence.
- 10** The Denton Left believes addiction is a health issue rather than a legal issue. Treatment should be freely available but not forced.



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The Denton Left believes in disability rights. Society should be universally accessible.

12

The Denton Left believes Black lives matter. In addition to abolishing police, we believe in reparations and amplifying Black voices in the community.

13

The Denton Left believes that crossing imagined borders is not a crime. Immigrants deserve full amnesty.

14

The Denton Left believes in the decolonization of the United States. This entails self-determination for Indigenous people as well as a return of land.

As long as a person agrees with these fourteen points and is within the area, the Denton Left has no issue with them. Marxists, anarchists, situationists, and syndicalists all join and all are welcome. Feeding into the policy of unification, the diversity keeps these radicals from forming small, unfocused groups with little resources and brings them into a larger organization where they can more easily achieve their goals. Strength in politics comes from numbers and numbers tend to get smaller when they're divided.



A LOCAL SOCIALIST IDENTITY

The second reason these massive parties fail to resonate with Denton has to do with the lack of a connection to the city. Organizations from other parts of the country set up shop in Denton only to push the group's national agenda without ingratiating themselves into the local culture. A largely ignored problem in leftist organizing is the political dominance of large cities. DSA chapters around Dallas are treated more or less as satellites of DSA North Texas which is based in D-Town proper. It makes sense for a national organization to focus more on the progressive population of a large urban center, but that kind of analysis pushes the less-populous centers into the margins, basically surrendering the rural areas and smaller towns to conservatives, or worse, the fascists.

Southern ISO chapters were separated from the group's headquarters in Chicago by about one thousand miles. This led to chapters that had no oversight from the national apparatus and had to work independently. Much to the chagrin of those at the top of the pyramid, ISO chapters frequently collaborated with local socialist and anarchist groups. Whenever contact with the national administration was made about actions done with these groups, the southern chapters would be criticized for "movementism" and told to focus on recruitment for the ISO. An organization like that, on the other end of the country, can't really relate to the daily lives of those in the South. The people of Denton will only care about socialism when socialism proves that it cares about them. High recruitment numbers don't factor into it.

Becoming a part of Denton, of its history, shows that this isn't



from on high. The Denton Left wasn't created in a lab and unleashed to be the vanguard of some national campaign. The group was created by leftists in Denton to build something that is as unique as the city itself. It was homegrown to breathe life into the words of "Leftist Unity" and to bring together the disparate, isolated ideologies into a single, powerful force. The Star and Square was designed by Dentonite hands, the infrastructure was built by Dentonite organizers, and the officers of the organization are people who have been familiar with the city for years. A leftist group has to be birthed from the people that live in the area, that's how it builds trust in the community.



CONCLUSION

Denton is a graveyard for left-wing organizations. The answer to this problem will never be the resurrection of dead groups or the cloning of already living ones. It won't be the enforcement of ideology or the division of leftist abilities into small camps. Our city needs leftism to be focused, effective, and united. The body parts that litter our graveyard will never become the creation we want it to be as long as they are separated. They must be stitched into a new beast capable of combatting Capital with the collected strength of the left in our city.

When that happens, Denton will stop being a graveyard and will become something living.



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