

A Beginner's Guide to American Communist Parties

Trevor Loudon

2019



Part 1

Democrat friendly counterparts of American communist groups.



Democrats Alexandria Ocasio Cortez (L) and Rashida Tlaib in Washington on Jan. 16, 2019. (Nicholas Kamm/AFP/Getty Images)

It's been this author's experience that most U.S. journalists, politicians, police officers, and even intelligence officers have minimal understanding of America's contemporary communist movement.

The average American voter, naturally, has very few outlets available that acknowledge the continued existence and influence of contemporary communism. Yet communism is currently the most important political and cultural influence in the country. Therefore, thumbnail sketches are provided here that outline significant domestic communist organizations currently undermining the Constitution and imposing socialism on the American people.

A word on communism versus socialism: Socialism is a euphemism for communism. They are two peas in the same pod and all lead to tyranny. Communism is socialism, and those who want you to believe otherwise are attempting to indoctrinate you. Period.

There are two American "lefts": Communists willing to work with and inside the Democratic Party to achieve their goals; and communists who regard the Democrats as a hopelessly "bourgeois" capitalist party.

The first group is more organized, realistic, and dangerous. The second group, like the first, often work with foreign communists and are more likely to engage in street-level violence.

Part 1 of this article will deal with the communists who work with the Democratic party, as a matter of policy. These organizations are the most subversive and dangerous in America.

Democratic Socialists of America

Despite its regular public protestations, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is a communist organization. Many of its 55,000-plus members are indoctrinated college students, but most of its leaders are hard-core Marxist revolutionaries.

Currently the United States' largest Marxist organization, the DSA was formed in 1982 out of two similar groups. The larger "[Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee](#)" mainly consisted of older activists from the rapidly imploding Socialist Party USA. The smaller "[New American Movement](#)" consisted of young Vietnam War-era "Students for a Democratic Society" members and a group of older radicals who split from the Communist Party after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The most enduring influence in the [DSA](#) is Antonio Gramsci. An Italian communist theoretician, Gramsci believed in promoting socialism through patient infiltration of all political and cultural institutions before resorting to revolutionary violence.

Americans of all political persuasions may be surprised to learn that the DSA was initially very influential in the Democratic Party. The DSA helped establish the [Congressional Progressive Caucus](#) in 1991 with longtime ally Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and successfully elected hundreds of Democratic Party officials, many local politicians, and several Congress members.

Currently serving Reps. [Jan Schakowsky](#) (D-Ill.), [Danny Davis](#) (D-Ill.), and [Jerry Nadler](#) (D-N.Y.) have all been dues-paying DSA comrades at some point. In the last election, the DSA assisted the election of more than 20 local and state officials and two additional Congress members, Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.).

DSA influence waned through the early 2000s, and by 2015, the organization was down to about 6,000 members, only about a third of whom were active.

Sanders changed all that. The DSA has backed Sanders since at least 1990. When he ran for president, the DSA became the backbone of his team. As Sanders took off, so did the DSA. When President Donald Trump was elected, DSA membership exploded, and is only now starting to slow, and in some places reverse.

The DSA now has more than 200 chapters in all 50 states. DSA strongholds are Boston, New York, Washington, Chicago, Detroit, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, the Bay Area, and Southern California, but almost every significant city in America—and many small

towns—now have DSA chapters. New York City’s DSA branch boasts more than 3,000 dues-paying members; Austin, Texas, claims 700, and Portland, Oregon, has 800. These numbers have given the DSA the ability to penetrate the Democratic Party in almost every state.

The DSA also controls “Our Revolution,” which backs hard-left candidates and boasts 100,000 members working vigilantly to carry on the Sanders movement. Our Revolution’s door-knockers and phone-bankers give the DSA the ability to elect comrades to Democratic committees and leadership posts all over the country. In July 2018, the [Washington Post](#) reported that the DSA “has never had more adherents or more clout.”

The DSA has a religious commission that features many pastors, church officials, theologians, and religious academics who vigilantly indoctrinate malleable minds that Christianity and socialism go hand-in-hand.

The DSA is also huge in colleges. In the early days, nearly a third of DSA members were academics. Today, the youth-wing of the DSA is known as the YDSA and is featured on campuses across America.

For most of its existence, the DSA was formally affiliated with the Socialist International (SI), an alliance of more than 100 socialist and social democratic political parties. At its annual conference in Chicago in 2017, the DSA officially pulled out of the SI because it was too moderate. The DSA allied instead with several European communist-oriented parties. The DSA is particularly close to [Die Linke](#) (The Left), which is the direct ancestor of the old Stalinist East German Communist Party.

In the 1980s, the DSA worked closely with Luis Inacio [Lula da Silva](#), who eventually became the socialist president of Brazil. “Lula” then worked with Cuban President Fidel Castro to elect socialist governments across most of Latin America, known broadly as the “Red Tide.”

Prominent DSA members have included theologian professor [Cornel West](#); the late father of the socialized healthcare movement and former Obama family doctor [Quentin Young](#); Obama immigration adviser [Eliseo Medina](#); actor [Ed Asner](#); feminist [Gloria Steinem](#); Muslim activist [Linda Sarsour](#); and convicted East German spy [Kurt Stand](#).

Communist Party USA

The Communist Party USA (CPUSA) was started in 1919 in Chicago, where it’s headquartered today. In the 1940s, the CPUSA had more than 100,000 members. With only 5,000 comrades, the CPUSA isn’t as large as it once was, but is still a political force with clout.

While the CPUSA has comrades in every state, it’s strongest in Boston, New York, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Missouri, Chicago, Detroit, Northern and Central Texas, Arizona, and California. The party has considerable influence in organizations such as the

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the U.S. Peace Council, Jobs with Justice, Alliance for Retired Americans, and dozens of smaller local front groups. The CPUSA is very active in the labor, environmental, and “racial justice” movements. The CPUSA has systemically worked to recruit black pastors to cement its influence over the Democratic-voting black population.

The Democratic Party has long-since stopped expelling communists from their ranks. Consequently, in some parts of the country—Connecticut; West and South Chicago; Northeast Ohio; St. Louis, Missouri; Tucson, Arizona; Houston, Texas—the CPUSA controls some Democratic precincts.

In Connecticut, the CPUSA has relationships with the governor, both senators, all five Congress members, and multiple state, county, and city elected officials. In Texas, CPUSA member [Sema Hernandez](#) ran on the [Democratic ticket](#) for the U.S. Senate and got 250,000 votes.

For decades, the CPUSA was a wholly-owned and subsidized Moscow franchise. Today, the CPUSA owes allegiance to China, but also maintains close ties to the communist parties of Russia, Vietnam, Cuba, Great Britain, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, Canada, and Brazil.

The party still participates in the still-existing Soviet-era international communist front organizations: World Peace Council, World Federation of Trade Unions, Women’s International Democratic Federation, and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). In 2017, the CPUSA sent a youth delegation to a [WFDY festival](#) in Sochi, Russia, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Russian President Vladimir Putin personally secured the venue and [addressed](#) the estimated 30,000 attendees.

Prominent modern CPUSA members include party chairman [John Bachtell](#) (precinct captain for then-Senate candidate Barack Obama), [Judith LeBlanc](#), a Native-American activist who trained the protesters at the 2015 Dakota Access Pipeline standoff, and perennial Cleveland Democratic Party candidate [Rick Nagin](#).

The CPUSA also has some cross-membership with the DSA.

Committees of Correspondence

The CCDS began in 1991 when approximately one-third of the CPUSA’s then 3,000 members split from the party to form a new organization. The ex-communists were quickly joined by dissident Maoists, Trotskyists, anarchists, and “democratic socialists.”

In 2000, the Committees of Correspondence (CoC or CofC) became the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS).

The organization quickly grew to 2,000 members and was poised to become what the DSA is today—a mass-based, multi-tendency socialist organization. However, in recent years, the CCDS has dwindled to about 400 mainly older members.

The CCDS is headquartered in the Bay Area, and is strongest in Chicago, New York, Boston, Western Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, Mississippi, and Louisville, Kentucky. The organization has some electoral influence through its close work with the DSA.

Prominent members include state Rep. [Kathy Sykes](#) (D-Miss.) and South Carolina labor leader [Donna Dewitt](#). Iconic communist [Angela Davis](#) and folk musician [Pete Seeger](#) were early members, as was current Rep. [Barbara Lee](#) (D-Calif.).

The CCDS very strongly supports China and Vietnam, as well as Cuba and Venezuela. It also has some cross-membership with both the DSA and CPUSA.

Freedom Road Socialist Organization/LeftRoots

The Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) grew out of the Maoist student movements of the 1960s, '70s, and early '80s.

Formed in 1985, the FRSO [drew together](#) the Proletarian Unity League and the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters, and later the Organization for Revolutionary Unity, Amilcar Cabral-Paul Robeson Collective, and the Socialist Organizing Network. In 2000, the anarchist group Fire by Night joined. The FRSO also picked up members from the long-defunct Communist Workers' Party, League of Revolutionary Struggle, Line of March, and Communist Party USA (Marxist-Leninist).

In 1999, the [FRSO](#) split in large part because of the main faction's willingness to work with the Democratic Party. The group that broke away—the Freedom Road Socialist Organization and its Fight Back! division will be covered in part 2 of this series.

The FRSO doesn't openly affiliate with China any longer, but many members work or live in China, or do solidarity work with Chinese organizations. Some members also work with pro-North Korea groups, or support Cuba, Venezuela, officially designated terrorist groups, the Communist Party of the Philippines, or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The FRSO is extremely secretive about membership, but this author estimates that it has 2,000 to 3,000 active members. The FRSO is concentrated in the Bay Area and New York City, with significant centers in Los Angeles; Portland, Oregon; Seattle; Boston; Philadelphia; Ohio; Missouri; Tennessee; North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; New Orleans; Southern Florida; and New Mexico.

The FRSO has some cross-membership with the DSA and CCDS.

Like all Maoist-derived groups, the FRSO delves heavily into racial and gender politics. The organization is comprised predominantly of “people of color,” at least 50 percent female, heavily gay, and comparatively young.

[Black Lives Matter](#) and the Marxist concept of “white privilege” comes from the FRSO orbit, along with the leftist fetish for using gender “neutral” pronouns.

Unlike most older Maoist groups, the FRSO is actively involved in electoral politics. The FRSO controls several voter-registration and electoral front groups including the [New Virginia Majority](#), the [New Florida Majority](#), [Memphis For All](#) and [Stand Up Nashville](#) (both Tennessee), [Durham For All](#) (North Carolina), [Lancaster Stands Up](#), and 215 People’s Alliance (both Pennsylvania), which have been pivotal in the elections of many local and national politicians.

The FRSO has deliberately targeted Southern states and areas with high black and Latino populations.

The FRSO also runs a plethora of well-funded front groups around the country, including the [Chinese Progressive Association](#) (San Francisco), [Chinese Progressive Association](#) (Boston), [Highlander Research and Education Center](#) (Tennessee), [Miami Workers Center](#), [Right to the City](#) (New York City, with affiliates nationwide), [Showing Up for Racial Justice](#) (chapters nationwide), [Southerners On New Ground](#) (Atlanta and Birmingham), Asian Pacific Environmental Network, [Causa Justa: Just Cause](#) (Bay Area), and [Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education](#) (Los Angeles).

[LeftRoots](#) was formed in 2014 by [Steve Williams](#), a former member of Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM), and [N’Tanya Lee](#), an FRSO affiliate. In essence, LeftRoots is an adjunct to the FRSO with a little bit of DSA input.

LeftRoots has about 500 members with branches in Miami, Philadelphia, the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Boston, and New York.

Left Inside/Outside Project

All of the above groups work together in the Left Inside/Outside Project, which was established in early 2017 to coordinate infiltration and eventual [takeover](#) of the Democratic Party.

Many of these groups receive significant funding from the Ford Foundation, Open Societies Foundations, Tides Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and similar groups. Taxpayer funding additionally is often given to the front groups of socialist organizations in the form of grants and tax-exempt status. Unions often prop up front groups financially, and with logistics and training.

Part 2

American communist groups that organize outside of the Democratic Party.



A Socialist Party supporter holds a protest sign at a rally to urge Congress to vote against a limited military strike. Photo by David McNew/Getty Images

Broadly speaking, there are two categories of hard-left organizations in the United States: those who organize within the Democrat Party and those who don't. Those who generally stay away from the Democratic Party include dedicated ideologues who are more likely to engage in street violence and—like their Democrat friendly counterparts—work with foreign communist regimes and groups.

While hardened communists represent a small fraction of the population, they have a surprisingly powerful impact but receive little scrutiny from the establishment media. The Revolutionary Communist Party's flag-burning activities, for example, resulted in a Supreme Court decision that continues to reverberate.

The Revolutionary Communist Party's front group, Refuse Fascism, placed a [full-page ad](#) in The New York Times that was signed by former Weather Underground terrorist, communist, and friend of former President Barack Obama, Bill Ayers; professor of theology and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member Cornel West; and militant anti-Israel activist Marc Lamont Hill, to name a few.

The hardcore Marxist Workers World Party was behind the headline-grabbing push to demolish confederate-era statues. The Freedom Road Socialist Organization/FightBack! fought to keep terrorist murderer Rasmia Odeh in the United States.

Communists of all stripes descended upon Ferguson, Missouri, in the wake of the shooting of Michael Brown; they were behind the Standing Rock standoff over the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota; they flooded to the border to support the Honduras Caravan at the end of 2018; they descended upon Charlottesville, North Carolina, in August 2017 to protest the so-called “Unite the Right” white supremacist rally; they were behind numerous violent anti-Trump protests of 2016 and 2017.

Communists agitate their way into headlines on a regular basis; yet many Americans believe communists somehow evaporated when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down in 1989.

This two-part series offers a birds-eye view of the U.S.-based organizations, and hopefully plants the seed for readers to understand that these subversive organizations exist, and they seek to hurt America.

Socialist Party USA (SPUSA)

In the early 20th century, the [Socialist Party USA](#) (SPUSA) was the largest Marxist group on the U.S. left with 100,000 members and boasted numerous elected officials, mainly in the Midwest. The SPUSA lost many members to the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) in the 1920s, and much of the remaining remnant to the Democratic Socialists Organizing Committee in the 1970s.

Today’s SPUSA overlaps with the Green Party in some areas, with the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) in Memphis, Tennessee, and with DSA nationally.

In Memphis, the SPUSA controls the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center and interacts with local Democrats such as Rep. [Steve Cohen](#) (D-Tenn.).

The SPUSA is probably less than 1,000 members in total, but has a presence in almost every state.

The party is extremely militant, and is effective in some areas on local issues, but is ultimately a fringe player on the U.S. left.

Socialist Workers Party

In the 1970s, the [Socialist Workers Party](#) (SWP) was a leading force in the anti-Vietnam War movement. Its newspaper, The Militant, was widely read on the U.S. left. The SWP began as a pro-Leon Trotsky split from the CPUSA in the 1920s, and for many years was the country’s second-largest communist party. Currently, the SWP is a shadow of its former self.

The SWP abandoned Trotskyism in the 1980s, and now orientates its international activities around Cuba and the old Soviet front the World Federation of Democratic Youth. The SWP has tiny sister groups in Canada, Iceland, the UK, New Zealand, and Australia.

In the United States, the SWP is now little more than a Marxist cult. Their tactic is to recruit bright young college students then put them to work for decades in meat-packing plants in Iowa or Nebraska to connect with the “working class.” This talent-wasting exercise has been applied since the 1970s with minimal results.

But they keep trying.

The once-dynamic SWP retains maybe 500 members nationwide.

Freedom Socialist Party

The [Freedom Socialist Party](#) (FSP) began in 1966 as a split from the SWP in Seattle. It is militantly feminist, “anti-racist,” and pro-Cuba. Today, the FSP has branches in Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, and Melbourne, Australia. It probably has less than 200 members in total.

The FSP is big on “abortion clinic defense,” usually through their front-group Radical Women.

Workers World Party

The [Workers World Party](#) (WWP) is one of the most hardcore Marxist organizations of any consequence in the United States. It was founded in 1959 as a pro-China split from the SWP. The banner line for its newspaper, *The Workers World*, is “Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World Unite.”

They incorporate elements of Stalin, Mao, and Trotsky into their revolutionary philosophy.

The WWP is a serious communist party, very active in street protests and often prone to violence. When you see Confederate statues being toppled in North Carolina or Louisiana—that’s the WWP.

The WWP has close ties to Russia, North Korea, and Cuba. These people are one of the most dangerous communist parties in the country.

The WWP has 400–600 members in about 30 branches, mainly in the New York, Boston, Chicago, and the West Coast.

The WWP runs its own candidates, but the Durham, North Carolina, branch does work with Democrats.

In 2018, the WWP's very strong Detroit branch split from the organization to form a new group, the [Communist Workers League](#).

Party for Socialism and Liberation

The [Party for Socialism and Liberation](#) (PSL) was originally created in 2006, as the result of a split in the WWP, although their "political line" is almost identical. The San Francisco branch, as well as several other members, left the WWP in 2004. The PSL has since established two national branches in Washington and in San Francisco, as well as more than 20 smaller branches throughout the United States, from Sarasota, Florida, to West Virginia to Portland, Oregon.

The PSL is a dynamic and growing party but suffers a high burnout rate of cadre. It is probably 500–800 members strong.

The PSL is very close to Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Cuba, even the ruling Communist Party of Nepal. PSL leader [Brian Becker](#) is a regular on Russian propaganda channel Russia Today and has his own show on Russian channel Sputnik.

These people are serious communists.

Becker and the PSL have ties to several Muslim groups, including the Nation of Islam and the pro-Hamas Muslim American Society.

The PSL controls the nationwide anti-U.S. military organization the ANSWER Coalition.

Freedom Road Socialist Organization-Fight Back!

The Freedom Road Socialist Organization-Fight Back! ([FRSO-FB](#)) split from the Freedom Road Socialist Organization in 1998 but kept the same name. FRSO-FB is centered in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Wisconsin, with some strength in New York, North Carolina, northern Florida, eastern Texas, Arizona, Utah, and California. It's probably around 500 members strong, more if you count its youth wing, Students for a Democratic Society.

The FRSO-FB is hard-core Maoist. It supports China, and three officially designated terrorist organizations: the Communist Party of the Philippines, Colombia's FARC guerrillas, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Because of these connections, the FBI raided the homes of several FRSO-FB members in September 2010 and issued subpoenas in a search for evidence related to material support of terrorist groups. No charges were ever made.

FRSO-FB works closely with the WWP and together have built ties to pro-Putin elements in Russia. The FRSO-FB also has close ties to Venezuela.

Solidarity

Headquartered in Detroit, Michigan, [Solidarity](#) is feminist, green, and socialist. Originally formed by ex-SWP members in 1986, Solidarity is affiliated to the Fourth International, a worldwide alliance of Trotskyist parties. Only about 200 members strong, Solidarity has most presence in New York City and California.

Solidarity comrades mainly support the Green Party and have some overlap with the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (not the FightBack! group) and with the DSA.

League of Revolutionaries for a New America

[League of Revolutionaries for a New America](#) (LRNA) morphed out of the old Communist Labor Party (CLP), a Maoist grouping that originated out of a pro-China split in the CPUSA in 1958. The early CLP was predominately black and Puerto Rican, and today's LRNA is largely comprised of "people of color." The LRNA is extremely secretive about membership, which probably stands at about 300.

People's Tribune was the newspaper of the LRNA, with Rally Comrades! now its official publication. Its best-known affiliate now is probably [Caleb Maupin](#), a convert from the WWP. He is a regular guest on Russia Today and a correspondent for Iran's PressTV.

International Socialist Organization

Founded in 1977, the [International Socialist Organization](#) (ISO) is now America's largest Trotskyist organization. It was aligned for years with the British Socialist Workers Party, but now has relations with several foreign Trotskyist groupings in Canada, Australia, and Europe. The ISO has 1,500 to 2,000 members and is present in most northern and western U.S. cities and Texas.

The ISO is very active on campuses and in the anti-war movement. It works with and inside the Green Party. Many ISO leaders have stood for office on the Green ticket, especially in California.

The ISO publishes a daily online and monthly print newspaper, Socialist Worker. ISO also distributes the International Socialist Review and titles from the publishing house Haymarket Books, both of which are run by the nonprofit Center for Economic Research and Social Change.

Every year, the ISO hosts a well-attended "Socialism" conference in Chicago.

Socialist Alternative

[Socialist Alternative](#) (SA) is in political solidarity with the Committee for a Workers' International, a worldwide Trotskyist alliance working in more than 30 countries. SA is the

second-largest U.S. Trotskyist grouping after ISO, with probably 600 to 800 members active in most states.

SA first emerged as “Labor Militant” in 1986, inspired by the example of the UK socialist group Militant Tendency, which sought to infiltrate the British Labour Party. SA advocates for electoral opposition to the Democratic Party and concentrates on running its own candidates. After many electoral campaigns—often on the Green Party ticket—SA’s biggest success to date was electing their comrade [Kshama Sawant](#) to Seattle City Council in 2013.

Party of Communists, USA

The [Party of Communists, USA](#) (PCUSA) split from the CPUSA in 2014, mainly because they thought their party was becoming indistinguishable from the Democratic Party.

Though probably less than 200 members, the diehard Stalinist PCUSA sees itself as the true leader of American communism and has reached out to more “mainstream” communist parties in Mexico, Cuba, Europe, Russia, and Canada.

The PCUSA is strongest in Los Angeles and New York City, where it has some influence in the Transit Workers Union. The PCUSA publishes a magazine, Ideological Fightback!, and runs a front group called the [U.S. Friends of the Soviet People](#).

Revolutionary Communist Party

[Revolutionary Communist Party](#) (Revcom) is the most cult-like group on the U.S. left. These people worship their great leader Bob Avakian and hang onto his every word.

Revcom has roots in the Maoist student movement of the Vietnam War era of the 1960s and 1970s. It has active chapters in at least 15 population centers, mainly centered around their Revolution bookshops. Once boasting several thousand members, Revcom today is probably around 500 to 800 members, centered largely in Chicago and the Bay Area.

Revcom supports only the most extreme foreign Maoists, such as Peru’s notorious Sendero Luminoso guerrillas.

Revcom leaders believe “elections are not the arena where decisions are made about the future direction of the society” and do not participate in them.

Their newsletter, Revolution, is published weekly in print and online. The Antifa-like “Refuse Fascism” protest group is a front group for Revcom.

Revcom’s trademark is burning U.S. flags. If you see protesters in black T-shirts gleefully immolating Old Glory, it’s almost certainly Revcom.

The Nature of Communist Organizations

Keep in mind that leftist groups often overlap, morph, and split. Like their principles, these groups are forever changing, which adds to the complexity in researching them. One thing that does not change, however, is the goal of all these organizations: global communism, which they believe can only be achieved through revolution.

The biggest debate within leftist groups is how to best achieve “revolution.” Is it through the constant chaos of violent protest, as advised by Leon Trotsky? Is it through the “march through the institutions” as directed by Antonio Gramsci? Or perhaps through race-baiting tactics, turning people against one another, as preferred by Mao Zedong?

No matter how this revolution is achieved, the United States is the biggest obstacle in their path. Once the United States succumbs to communism, these activists believe they will directly oversee a new world order.



***Trevor Loudon** is an author, filmmaker, and public speaker from New Zealand. For more than 30 years, he has researched radical left, Marxist, and terrorist movements and their covert influence on mainstream politics.*