

Ruthless Criticism, But Keep It to Yourself: Concealment and Corruption in the Party for Socialism and Liberation's Philadelphia Branch

An addendum to this document has been released since its original publication. It addresses the party's response. It can be read here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dzh2ATsPUvkYWLd0vTppViuNxb-GZsboj8OhF3JWVhY/edit?usp=sharing>

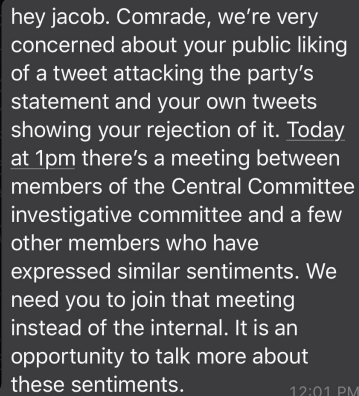
Background and Aftermath

This document was presented internally to National PSL leadership and circulated (strictly internally) among some rank-and-file PSL members on December 17, 2020. As it originally appeared, the document also contained a list of endorsers. That list has been removed, as some endorsers are still active in the Party and did not provide consent for their signatures to appear on this final document.

As you read this document, please keep in mind it was prepared for an internal audience and addresses the PSL leadership's arguments. The focus is not on the author's personal feelings about the result of the investigation in Philadelphia.

When this document was initially published, two of its endorsers were directly contacted by their local Steering Committees. One of the endorsers was told that she would immediately be expelled from the Party unless she removed her name from the document. She refused to do so, asking instead for a conversation on the matter. The Steering Committee member hung up on her. Some endorsers in other branches were falsely told that other endorsers, who had all been current PSL members as of December 15 (a number of endorsers chose to resign afterwards, and another endorser had her membership terminated for raising these criticisms in an internal Party chat on December 16), were comprised of people who had left the Party months or years ago. Some endorsers were told that no one had been retaliated against for endorsing the document, but that their names still needed to be removed—clear fabrications, or as some might call it, lies, from National leadership to rank-and-file members.

Concurrently, Ben Becker of the PSL's Central Committee contacted this document's primary author by phone to discuss the "intentions" of the document. The author asserted that they did not trust local leadership to appropriately respond to concerns from rank-and-file members over the PSL's response statement regarding their Philadelphia case, based on the pattern of retaliation for raising criticisms where other members could see them, as illustrated above. They explained that the end goal of the document was an open, democratic discussion between the Central Committee and rank-and-file membership nationally about issues generated by the Philadelphia case; National's response statement; and broader criticisms of organizational structure and processes that had led up to this point. A meeting was scheduled and took place on December 20. The meeting was attended by five endorsers of the document and three members of the Central Committee, including Ben Becker and Gloria La Riva.



hey jacob. Comrade, we're very concerned about your public liking of a tweet attacking the party's statement and your own tweets showing your rejection of it. Today at 1pm there's a meeting between members of the Central Committee investigative committee and a few other members who have expressed similar sentiments. We need you to join that meeting instead of the internal. It is an opportunity to talk more about these sentiments.

12:01 PM

Ben Becker began the call by appealing to the endorsers' emotions. He expressed how hurt he and the other members of the Central Committee were that anyone would accuse them of covering up a sexual assault. By means of a bizarre reference to Mao Zedong opposing guerrilla warfare in cities, Ben explained that he thought this meeting had to take place face-to-face and not as a "literary struggle" (in writing) because comrades should be able to speak openly to one another. This preamble served to evoke guilt over both the endorsers bringing concerns to the Central Committee and suggesting they be addressed in a systematic way through writing.

The Central Committee members then read their full report of the National investigation into allegations against Steven P. of the PSL Philadelphia branch. The investigative committee reviewed a very large amount of evidence and dealt with much hostility and erratic behavior from Steven P.'s accuser during this period, which certainly hampered the investigation. This author wishes to recognize these efforts. Although the endorsers of this document did not share the investigative committee's emphatic belief that the accuser lied about the allegations, they realized there was enough conflicting evidence that could introduce *reasonable doubt* about Steven P.'s guilt. **(This is not intended as a value judgment by the authors on the supposed innocence of Steven P., merely as a demonstration that here again the CC attempted to relitigate the original investigation, although the issue at hand was mishandling/malfeasance by PSL leadership.)** The endorsers did not challenge the investigative committee's findings, but rather reiterated their position that they were instead criticizing the Party's conduct throughout the investigation, up to and including their December 14 statement.

The Central Committee member who read the evidence was understandably emotional given the subject matter. She divulged that she has known many survivors of sexual assault, and issued trigger warnings throughout her reading. This was appropriate, as several of the endorsers present were also survivors of sexual assault. As soon as the reading of the investigation was over, Ben Becker asked the endorsers point-blank: "What would you have voted?" He expected endorsers to immediately issue their opinion on whether the accuser's account of sexual assault was true. **Three endorsers concluded that the accuser's account of sexual assault was true, disagreeing with the opinions of National. Two endorsers abstained from issuing an opinion, and one of these criticized the question.**

The endorsers repeatedly stressed that they had written their concerns in detail in the document, and that their concerns could be addressed through direct reference to the document. This would have circumvented the ad hoc attacks, appeals to emotion, and shouting matches that ensued. When one endorser complained that the Central Committee members were not actually addressing the contents of

the document, and that it might be better addressed in writing, they were told: "When you tell me you want things in writing, it makes it sound like you don't trust me."

Following three hours of emotional appeals by the Central Committee, circular rhetoric which refused to engage the document's criticisms, browbeating and baseless accusations of racism (including PSL presidential candidate Gloria La Riva yelling that a trans woman referring to her as a cis woman was a manifestation of racism), the endorsers on the call tendered their resignations. Due to this treatment, we no longer feel compelled to keep these criticisms internal, as it has become obvious that Party leadership at both local and national levels rejects any criticism from below—an unscientific and undemocratic dogma that will only harm the Party.

The statement that circulated internally on December 17 appears below in slightly edited form.

Statement of Criticism Regarding Serious Errors in the Handling of the Philadelphia Branch Situation

At the beginning of the Chicago branch's internal meetings, the chair always reads a statement which includes the line "We are building a party of calm, bold, and self-sacrificing revolutionaries." It is in this spirit of calm, boldness, and self-sacrifice that this document is presented to the Party for Socialism and Liberation's membership and leadership.

Over the summer of 2020, during a historic uprising against racism and police violence that saw the Party for Socialism and Liberation thrust into the national spotlight, the Philadelphia branch was struck with an internal scandal involving a member, Steven P., who was accused both of having an inappropriate sexual relationship with a younger candidate, "Maya" (name changed in case of future developments), and of abusing his partner of six years, Griselda Aclarado (who will be referred to by her chosen alias). The situation unfolded chaotically, as the aggrieved ex-partner was suffering an acute manic episode of her bipolar disorder, making her emotional responses and communication with the local Steering Committee erratic and unpredictable during crucial first steps of the investigation against the accused member.

A then-member of the Philadelphia branch, Dakota, had been in contact with Griselda on a personal basis during this period and had been relaying information about her condition to the Philly Steering Committee, and had in turn shared information with Griselda about the Steering Committee's responses. Citing suspicions that Dakota had shared information which had eroded Griselda's trust in the investigative process, the Steering Committee then accused him of factionalism, violating democratic centralism, and violating a clause of the Party Constitution on sharing disciplinary information. Dakota challenged the charges and submitted to a trial and investigation. The trial took place on August 14. Dakota waited for three weeks after his trial to hear the outcome of the investigation. He contacted the Central Committee by email to follow up and ask when he would be contacted about the results of his trial with no response. Dakota then resigned and publicly posted a letter detailing the reasons for his resignation on social media.

In his public resignation letter, Dakota characterized the Steering Committee's charges as retaliatory. He outlined several criticisms of the Steering Committee's handling of the investigation, including: disregard for Griselda's manic episode as a factor in her decision-making and behavior; lack of communication and transparency about the investigation and disciplinary process with the people directly involved, including the alleged victim, Griselda; and a focus on the ethics of Steven P.'s alleged romantic relationship with

Maya, to the detriment of serious allegations about violence from Steven P. toward his ex-partner, which included a threat to kick down her front door after she barred him from their previously-shared living space.

Several PSL members from different branches across the country also resigned in the period shortly following Dakota's public resignation letter. Griselda submitted a written deposition but refused to be interviewed via phone or video by any PSL investigators. Months later, she established a Twitter account under the aforementioned alias, with which she regularly accused the Philly Steering Committee and the PSL broadly of "covering up" the alleged abuse. She began networking with and amplifying long-standing critics of the PSL. She also used this Twitter account to directly antagonize Maya in a racist and misogynistic fashion, a continued pattern of behavior from when she had sent harassing messages to Maya in the past—as Maya, in her view, had knowingly helped Steven P. cheat on her. Steven P. was and has been suspended from the Party for a period of months. According to the PSL's response statement to Griselda, Steven P. will be allowed to return to Party membership and work so long as he fulfills the terms of the suspension.

This is the most dispassionate and objective retelling of the facts as this author is capable of writing.

Here is the (since-rescinded) public statement by the ex-partner, Griselda:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-AWB065HkBTNOuFVugFvcxXqZaCPlr-eK2fYm2bL9ew/>

Here is an (archived) copy of the public resignation letter from the Philadelphia PSL member, Dakota:

<https://archive.is/yT5vp>

From the period between roughly October and early December, there were no new developments in the situation. Then, on or about December 12, Griselda, using her Twitter account, began to directly antagonize several PSL members about the situation. On December 14, the PSL published a public response to Griselda's accusations in the form of two connected statements—one from Maya, and another from "elected women leaders of the PSL," which included several Central Committee members. Below is a reproduction of the PSL statements, with names changed for public release. No other edits have been made.

December 14, 2020

A response to the accusations

Statement by Maya

Starting July of this summer, a slew of defamatory accusations have been made by Griselda Aclarado, the ex-partner of Steven P., about myself and our developing relationship. Since the initial contact from Griselda after their separation, her harassment and accusations against me have lasted for the past five months and I feel the need to dispel some of the blatant lies that are being said about me on social media. The following accusations are some of the more offensive claims but to be honest the majority of what Griselda has said about me has been horrific.

These last few months I have been called out of my name on almost every major social media platform. Since these accusations were made Griselda has spared no anti-Black, whorephobic or classist insult, ranging from "broad street girl", "commie c*m slut", "bitch" calling other Black comrades as "pick-Me's", etc. There are tweets with detailed (fictional) descriptions of my body; the status and details of my romantic life has been the topic of gossip. I've been both publicly slut-shamed and infantilized and disrespected beyond any "tolerable" amount. I've been bombarded with detailed erotic descriptions of Griselda and Steven's sex life. Griselda's behavior online is reprehensible and disgusting towards me, and I think it's amazing that she calls this "feminist Marxism," and even posted "protect Black women" hashtags one day and then later that day called me a "tokenized Psl fuck mascot."

Griselda's main claim that still is being spouted today is that I was being "groomed" by Steven as an older "superior" in the party during recruitment in order to manipulate me into a romantic partnership.

This is the first amongst the long list of false accusations made considering I am a 23-year-old adult woman (a number that Griselda has changed intermittently throughout her defamation campaign against me) fully capable of making decisions regarding who I date. Not to mention that I was 22 when we became friends.

The second accusation is that Steven and I engaged in unprotected sex while he was still in a relationship with **Griselda**, exposing her to STI's. This is also untrue. **Griselda** claims to have seen the both of us engaging in some sort of sexual activity while looking through the window of my second-floor apartment. The accusation again is untrue and a vulgar invasion of my privacy.

Griselda also states that I was coached and/or implanted into the Philly activist community when in reality I've been politically involved since I was about 15, years before I've ever met Steven, years before my first PSL meeting.

Griselda has also stated that I was "moved" into my apartment by Steven after he moved out and that we are currently living together and have been since my lease started in August. That accusation was made after **Griselda** spoke to a neighbor on her old block (a white woman) that reported back to **Griselda** saying that she have seen Steven over at "his" house.

I do not nor have I ever lived with Steven. In fact, I share my apartment with another comrade, also a Black woman, who has also been accused, harassed and threatened by **Griselda**. I've also never been financially supported by anyone who wasn't my parent.

Griselda has accused me of publicly "mocking" her on social media -- again, untrue. I was engaging in pop culture discourse on my personal twitter account that **Griselda** watches and regularly responds to posts that she feels are directed towards her.

I have never and will never support or enable abuse, I would never be involved with people or organizations who enable abuse. I have never felt uncomfortable or unsafe around anyone in PSL.

A response to false charges against a PSL member and our Philadelphia branch

The following statement is issued unanimously by the women members of the PSL Central Committee, representing five different cities, as well as Black women leaders in New York City, Philadelphia, and South Carolina.

Summary

The PSL has a proud history of dealing firmly, fairly and decisively with allegations of misconduct in our ranks, including expulsions of those with violations of a serious nature. This has allowed us to cultivate strong women's leadership at all levels, including many survivors of prior abuse themselves, alongside rigorous investigative, disciplinary and accountability processes. Without such processes, any organization will ultimately be undone.

While we rarely comment publicly on disciplinary matters in the PSL, we have an obligation to respond to a dishonest social media campaign related to a disciplinary issue in Philadelphia.

The person now waging this public campaign -- ^[accuser's government name], who is not a PSL member and who goes under the pseudonym Griselda Aclarado online -- has publicly accused her ex-boyfriend Steven P of sexual abuse at the time of their break-up and says the PSL is covering up abuse in our ranks.

Griselda has made a series of statements that are not only demonstrably false, but highly dangerous, and we believe it is in the best interests of the movement to be aware.

Almost immediately after bringing her charges to us, **Griselda** threatened that if we did not meet her demands, she would call the Department of Homeland Security to report the PSL, inventing an extremely dangerous and wholly false narrative about the activities of our organization as a form of blackmail. This was the first of many times she either issued threats related to the police or made fraudulent allegations of crimes committed by the PSL.

Griselda has completely distorted our response to her accusations. There was no "cover up." Steven was suspended as is customary pending an internal investigation in July, and has not been politically active since.

Based on her statements and text messages, we conducted interviews, parsed through approximately full 100 pages of text messages between half a dozen individuals, and reviewed hers and others' communications and testimony. The evidence was collected and reviewed by several leading members including a Black woman and a Latina woman in the Central Committee. They were chosen initially at **Griselda**'s own request.

Despite **Griselda**'s threatening actions, her constant antagonism, her repeated cancelation of any meeting about her charges, and her swearing off of future participation, we followed our process and norms nonetheless to look thoroughly into her underlying accusations.

We found that **Griselda**'s initial two charges against Steven did not amount to sexual abuse -- as we will explain below. The charges were ultimately premised on disbelieving, infantilizing, sexualizing and discrediting a Black woman member of the PSL, named **Maya**, who was developing a relationship with Steven.

Once **Griselda** began asserting fraudulent criminal conspiracies involving the PSL, threatening to involve state agencies and publicly attacking us, we limited our communications with her. During this period she then changed her narrative to say that her last sexual encounter with Steven, the night before she saw him with another woman, had been overt sexual abuse.

We investigated this too. We found compelling evidence from **Griselda** herself that disproved the accusations of sexual abuse and rape.

According to **Griselda**'s most detailed descriptions given at the time, Steven had in fact respected her desire to not have sex on the afternoon in question. Hours later, she consented to sex, intentionally using sex with Steven "for escape," before saying she "fell asleep calm". In graphic messages **Griselda** sent the next day to multiple people, which we are not sharing publicly in this statement, she established that she was consenting and in command of her own actions during this sexual encounter, which she recounted very positively and in fact bragged about in a message meant to harass .

Griselda's own descriptions of the events in question, from that time, fundamentally contradict the changed charges and the language she now uses online. Based on the evidence, we did not find Steven guilty of the more serious allegations against him.

We found that Steven showed poor judgment during their breakup, handling it with disregard for political implications. Pending the completion of the terms of his suspension, Steven will resume political activity.

Initial charges

In July, **Griselda** initially leveled a charge of abuse (not rape) against Steven on the following basis:

1. her suspicion that he was having a relationship with another woman during the time **Griselda** and Steven were broken up but still living together and occasionally having sex together. **Griselda** based this on being outside the other woman's home and looking in her second floor apartment window. Although she did not see them having sex, she asserted that he and the other woman were having unprotected sex and **Griselda** now came to see her prior consent in a different light. While Steven freely admits he had become "romantically involved" with **Maya**, both he and she deny their relationship had become sexually intimate.
2. that any such romantic relationship between Steven and **Maya** would be inherently abusive because she is younger than him and a more recent member of the PSL. **Griselda** presented **Maya** as a victim of Steven. People on Twitter are now calling this a case of "pedophilia", calling for Steven to be beaten and killed, and **Griselda** has liked and promoted these Twitter accounts.

To begin, **Maya** is no minor, but actually 23 years old -- as **Griselda** knows. To call this pedophilia is absolutely unconscionable. **Maya** also denies all of **Griselda**'s allegations, and denies she has ever been victimized at all.

Griselda's two core allegations are advanced by trying to strip this woman member of her own agency and to make assumptions about her private life for which there is no basis, and which no one has the right to do. To validate **Griselda**'s charges would require that the Party infantilize an adult Black woman member. These charges are not about "believing women"; it's about letting a non-Black woman define a Black woman and make assumptions and assertions about her relationships, and to reduce her to a sexual object. **Griselda** has no right to do this, no matter how much she dislikes their potential relationship.

Maya -- who **Griselda** characterized as a victim in her initial charges -- is now being trolled by **Griselda** on a regular basis on Twitter in the most offensive and disgusting manner. To hold a banner of feminist justice and simultaneously erase and slander Black women is the antithesis of a revolutionary feminist.

Changing the narrative

While we were already taking up these initial claims, **Griselda** began publicly attacking the Party and lying about our process and response to her. By this time we learned she had made repeated threats to file false reports with law enforcement and had circulated a false rumor that Steven was behind, or a "person of interest" in the burning of Philadelphia police cars in her neighborhood, and that the police were looking for him -- an incident for which another local activist has now been falsely charged. Consequently, we limited our communications with her. During this period the state was announcing crackdown operations on left-wing and Black Lives Matter groups, and this was just weeks after the PSL led an anti-racist protest of 100,000 people in Philadelphia.

Then in early August, she pivoted and changed the emphasis of her initial charges, sending us a lengthy document that substantially changed her initial narrative. She was now asserting that the sex she had with Steven had been overt sexual abuse the night before she looked through the window of **Maya's** house. The alleged abuse that night was no longer grounded in her not knowing about another alleged sexual partner. As we said in the first section of this document, we have a series of explicit text messages from **Griselda** herself that directly contradict this allegation.

The months since

Griselda has since falsely claimed our organization has been involved in crimes in the Philadelphia area and nationwide. Most recently, she has made statements about a coming police crackdown on the Philly PSL where "the charges will be 100x worse" than Denver.

She claims to have fled Philadelphia from the PSL when in fact one of our leading Black members assisted her in receiving thousands of dollars from Steven so she could move as she planned and wanted.

She tweeted out that she had fled Texas too with the false allegation the PSL was stalking and following her -- a complete fabrication, as no PSL members were anywhere near her or in contact with her during this time.

She then texted us out of the blue on the night of our Denver members' arrests to tell us she too was now in Denver. She again threatened to call the police if we were to tell anyone (despite the fact that she had already set up a public social media profile that showed her to be in Denver). Then, just hours after texting a PSL leader where she was, bizarrely she went on Twitter to again say she was "in hiding" from the PSL.

As we were planning the first protests demanding our arrested members be released, she contacted co-sponsoring groups in Denver to be on the look-out for Steven showing up there, circulating his photo and portraying him as a predator. Steven was not anywhere near Denver. This can only be read as an attempt to suppress support in Denver for the PSL and anti-racist organizers who are being targeted by the state, and face decades in prison on trumped up charges. That she would do this speaks volumes.

Conclusion

Griselda has spent months expanding her threats and enlarging her claims in ever-more inflammatory terms. She has created a new online identity under a pseudonym **Griselda Aclarado** devoted to "exposing" left-wing organizations, encouraging people to send her internal information privately so she can collect it for her next writings.

As **Maya's** statement above shows, **Griselda** has the whole time been smearing Black women members of the Philadelphia branch in the most vile, dehumanizing and derogatory ways on the Internet -- while falsely upholding a banner of feminist justice. Several Black women members in Philadelphia have personally attested to **Griselda's** patterns of anti-Black verbal abuse, lies, harassment and threats of violence in the past few months.

Moreover, the Black woman leader who in the beginning provided extensive personal time, support, financial retrieval to **Griselda**, and who was part of this disciplinary process, has been completely erased by her in pursuit of a false narrative of a "white male" "coverup."

No one should be fooled by **Griselda**; we would not be where we are today if our organization operated the way she falsely portrays it.

For months we have thought it most prudent, for the protection of our members, to say nothing, rather than communicate at all or respond to someone consistently making serious threats on false premises and who is clearly capable of inventing allegations. We believe that the whole movement should be aware of her dangerous behavior and manipulation of women's oppression. We have now shared the essentials of this case and while there is much more that could be said, we will leave it there.

Signed,

Adiah H.

Angel N.

Elizabeth B.

Gloria L.

Jane C.

Karina G.

Karla R.

Kerbie J.

Kym S.

Nathalie H.

Marissa S.

Monica C.

Sheila X.

Here begins the purpose of this document: ruthless criticism of this latter statement, in the spirit of Karl Marx's maxim. This document argues that the PSL's statement was not only a tactical error, but also speaks to deeper issues of political line and deficiencies in the Party's organizational structure. These must be corrected immediately if the PSL is to take and maintain a leading role in the coming period of increased struggle due to the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, heightening contradictions in capitalism and imperialism, and environmental collapse.

First, this document will address the tactical errors of this statement, which can largely be summarized as a lack of political instincts around a sense of "optics," or how our statements and actions as a party will be viewed by unaffiliated members of our class. Public perception of the PSL during a period when we are engaged in high-profile propaganda and recruitment campaigns such as the La Riva 2020 presidential campaign is of particular importance to meet recruitment goals—and, more broadly, have the necessary credibility with the masses to meet a strategic goal of developing socialist consciousness in the United States.

The most egregious of these tactical errors was the decision to use the full name of Steven P.'s accuser in the public statement, which was swiftly denounced on social media platforms as doxxing. Regardless of any personal feelings on the matter, at best this shows an extreme lack of insight into how this action would be perceived, which was as the worst case scenario: the PSL doxxing a victim of abuse by a

member in retaliation for public criticism. The drafters of the PSL statement will likely protest that they felt releasing Griselda's full government name was necessary to “protect the movement” from her “dangerous behavior and manipulation of women’s oppression.” If so, they failed to prove in their statement that this response was warranted, as the reaction clearly shows.

The second tactical error was in not providing any evidence for the assertions made in the statement about Griselda, many of which are true. Griselda has engaged frequently in anti-Black racism against PSL members in vitriolic attacks on Twitter, which we strongly condemn. She has also repeatedly threatened to call the Department of Homeland Security or the Philadelphia Police on members of the PSL, despite her denials—a legitimate security concern. She was largely antagonistic and uncooperative with the Party’s attempts to involve her in their investigation, and she did make many competing claims in the immediate aftermath of the night in question that made an evaluation of the facts extremely difficult.

Anyone who was not a direct body to the investigation would not know that, however, as the PSL produced no texts, emails, or screenshots that illustrated these facts, leaving those reading the statement to simply take the Party at its word. Perhaps the authors of this statement overestimate the PSL’s reputation among the working class. The findings of their investigation were not even shared with their own membership, and thus PSL members were not informed of a situation which had reached national significance.

After Griselda used her Twitter account to amplify and criticize the response statement from the PSL, it was removed from Medium.com for investigation of potential rule violations. Speculation as to how and why this happened is not particularly illuminating, as satisfying as it might be.

Hours later, the PSL reposted their statement on Twitter with a direct link to its new location on the Party’s own web domain. The statement was reposted with no edits, which seems to indicate an inability or unwillingness from Party leadership to engage in evaluation and self-criticism of its decisions, which brings us to the deeper issues in this document.

The first of the deeper issues is the statement’s ableism, reflecting ableism more broadly in the Philly Steering Committee’s handling of the case and a lack of attention to disability issues in certain sectors of the PSL. The members of the Central Committee are not so politically underdeveloped as to be explicitly bigoted in their handling of mental illness, and one must therefore be aware of indicators—but a subtle undercurrent remains throughout the statement. Griselda’s behavior is repeatedly portrayed as extreme and bizarre, without any disclosure of the Party’s knowledge of her bipolar disorder. This is addressed both by Griselda herself repeatedly on Twitter and in her own public statement, and by Dakota in his resignation statement. The best reading of this use of the stigma associated with symptoms of mental illness is that it was an unconscious bias, while the worst is that it was a cynical and deliberate tactic. This author chooses to believe the first interpretation and pleads with the authors of the Central Committee statement to consider why they went out of their way to play up the “hysterical woman” stereotype in their portrayal of a woman who is quite open about living with bipolar disorder. The Philly Steering Committee handled this in an ableist manner by scrutinizing all of Griselda’s statements for their veracity, *except* for threats to call law enforcement made during an acute episode, which they took at face value (as Dakota describes in his letter).

This is emblematic of a larger pattern of disregard for, and at times seeming aversion to, discussion of issues surrounding accessibility and disability as an issue for marginalized people in the PSL that this author has personally witnessed. The Chicago branch, for example, has not had a wheelchair-accessible office for at least four years—in one memorable incident in 2017, a comrade had to be physically carried

upstairs in his wheelchair, carrying a dangerous risk of injury for both the comrade in the wheelchair and the members who helped carry him. This problem has been verbally acknowledged at meetings, repeatedly, but there has never been any deeper discussion or plans to remedy the issue, citing the expense associated with securing a ground floor office space. This author has no idea why an upper-floor office in a building with an elevator would not suffice. In another instance, the Chicago representative of the National Organizing Department (NOD) and a then-member of the Chicago branch Steering Committee worked together to bury an at-large candidate's criticism regarding alleged deficiencies in the Party's political line around disability. They assured this member that the only appropriate way to raise this criticism would be as a proposal to the Party Congress, which at that time was scheduled to take place in ten months. The candidate's criticism and proposals were never presented at the Party Congress in question. It should be noted that both the Chicago NOD lead and the Chicago Steering Committee member were long-time members of the PSL (one a founding member).

More than a quarter of adults in the United States have some type of disability, and disabled people are overwhelmingly members of the working class. Disability is a labor rights issue due to workplace injuries and accommodations. Deficiencies in the PSL's line on and understanding of ableism are a serious detriment to our mission of organizing our class. To deny this is to believe that disabled people have nothing to contribute to the revolution, itself a serious error in thinking.

The Central Committee statement's omission of important context regarding Griselda's bipolar disorder extends to more serious matters as well, especially concerning Steven P.'s behavior toward Griselda. A casual reader of the Central Committee's statement would probably come to the conclusion that Steven P. exhibited poor judgment during a break-up with a volatile, hysterical woman who became obsessed with destroying the PSL as an organization as a result of being jilted through no fault of anyone in PSL leadership, but that he was otherwise the complete opposite of the violent chauvinist he was accused of being—if they were the most credulous person on Earth. Most observers will see there are glaring holes in this narrative.

The statement makes no mention of the threat to kick down Griselda's door, which is a serious instance of violent behavior toward an intimate partner, by a man, victimizing a woman. The open question of whether the accused member *intended* to use misogynist violence in this instance has no bearing on the fact of its *impact* as misogynist violence. This incident was directly named by both Griselda and Dakota in public statements. If this incident didn't happen, why did the Central Committee ignore it as one of the charges against the accused member that were supposedly debunked?

Which brings this document to one of its deepest concerns: the treatment of the allegation of sexual abuse. The seriousness of the allegation lends itself to careful examination of the question and all available evidence. The specific allegation in the ex-partner's public statement is that the accused member "aggressively coerced me into non-consensual unprotected sex". Dakota referenced Griselda being "coerced into unprotected sex" twice in the letter and once to "sexual abuse," as visible in screenshots of his conversation with the Philly Steering Committee included in the letter. On Twitter, Griselda has alternately referred to Steven P. as an abuser and a rapist.

The Central Committee's narrative of the night of the sexual abuse allegation, as displayed in the statement, is this: The day before Griselda discovered Steven P.'s (we are by this point to assume totally sanctioned by the Steering Committee and Central Committee) romantic relationship with Maya, she had consensual sex with Steven P. "for escape" (escape from what, as she had no knowledge of Steven P. and Maya's relationship at this time, is not speculated) after he so nobly respected her desire not to have sex earlier that afternoon. Then, she discovered Steven P. and Maya's relationship, and invented an

allegation of sexual abuse as revenge, as her own words (which the Central Committee has elected not to show anyone else outside of contextless quotes) show. [*Here the author begs forgiveness for the contrived use of parentheses.*]

Again, an element of Steven P.'s behavior that was explicitly brought up by two different people is not addressed by the Central Committee, in a rhetorical sleight of hand. This begs the question of what coercion, if any, took place. The PSL statement seems to imply there was no coercion by its assertion that Griselda "was consenting and in command of her own actions." Yet it does not directly refute the question of coercion, although anyone with a basic understanding of sexual assault realizes that consent can be coerced. During a personal phone conversation with Dakota after his resignation, Dakota disclosed a specific allegation to this author: that Steven P., though indeed respecting Griselda's "no" at first, repeatedly asked her for sex throughout the evening and she eventually relented.

Most observers would understand this added context as an example of "date rape." Date rape is an instance of sexual assault or coercion wherein tactics such as repeated badgering and pleading are used as psychological attrition by a perpetrator against a victim who they have some type of intimate relationship with. This particular form of sexual abuse has been recognized in mainstream media since the late 1980s. That just over a dozen women in the PSL would be willing to sign their first names and last initials (while Griselda is fully named) on to a statement that asserts, in context, that date rape isn't real, is concerning enough—never mind that many of those women are branch Steering Committee and Central Committee members.

This shows a serious deficiency in understanding patriarchy, misogyny, and women's oppression—a deficiency which decimates the PSL's credibility as a source of serious analysis when it publishes a supposedly feminist magazine whose editors unanimously signed on to this abysmal statement in defense of a single white man.

Additionally, the rhetoric employed in the statement—that of a jilted woman changing her story to smear an innocent man with whom she engaged in consensual sex—is outright offensive to anyone with an ounce of consciousness and awareness about sexual assault. It is ripped straight from the script of a daytime courtroom procedural drama, only now the Party has cast thirteen women in the part of the sleazy defense lawyer. There is an abundance of literature about how victims of date rape frequently take some time to recognize the harm done to them and may initially view the coerced consent as unproblematic, and this author finds it difficult to believe that all of the signatories to the Central Committee statement are unaware of this common experience among survivors of sexual assault. This prompts the question of whether they are asserting Griselda's case is different, and if so, why? One hopes the answer would be more substantial than "because the accused is a PSL member and Griselda is not."

We must, at this point, ask: how many principles and principled rank-and-file members are the elected women leaders of the PSL willing to sacrifice to retain one white man who is not even a currently active member?

Though there is no doubt Steven P. has been a dedicated PSL member and made many valuable contributions, it would be unscientific to assert that a revolution in the United States would be impossible without his contributions. This author must confess that after reading the Central Committee statement I nearly resigned right then in disgust. How could my Party, that I have believed in and poured work into for years, be going so wrong? How could I, in good conscience, work under that Party's banner and recruit people to the Party without struggling internally against what I see so obviously as an error? How could I

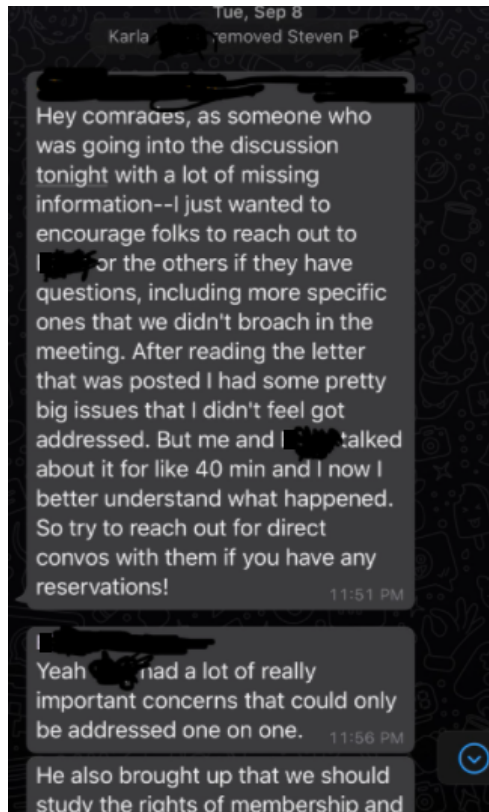
not reach out to my fellow trusted comrades in the Party outside leadership when this mandate appeared to come from leadership down?

This brings our document to its final point: the deeper criticism of structural problems in the PSL which the Philadelphia case has brought to light. The Philly Steering Committee mishandled this situation and investigation, yet there has been no criticism from the PSL about how the Party, as represented by the Philly Steering Committee, behaved. It can be easily argued that had the Philly Steering Committee handled this issue better from the beginning, there would be no need to address the debacle of this Central Committee statement now. A detailed analysis of the Philly Steering Committee's missteps and failures is warranted here. The following section was written by a member of the Philadelphia PSL branch.

Unethical handling of Steven P.'s and Dakota's charges by the Philadelphia Steering Committee

1. On Tuesday, September 8th, Steering Committee members Walter S. and Angel N. attended the North Philly East unit meeting to give a partial but authoritative account of Steven P.'s and Dakota's cases. At this time, both investigations were still ongoing, being undertaken by a committee at the national level that did not include the Philadelphia Steering Committee. Walter S. took it upon himself to call Dakota's resignation statement "a bunch of lies" without clear qualification. During that week, Steering Committee members attended all unit meetings to share a partial narrative with the intention of discounting accusations against themselves and Steven P., despite the fact that the investigation had not concluded. Only a fraction of the evidence available to them at the time was shared, making for a biased narrative. They claimed that no evidence could be found that Steven had committed sexual assault or abuse, despite the fact that the investigating committee had collected far more evidence than the Steering Committee had at the time authority was transferred. They emphasized that Griselda was being anti-Black (which was true), a clear effort to preemptively erode sympathy for a woman claiming that one of our members had raped her. Their narrative served as the main influence on most members' understandings of the situation.
2. When Dakota's charges were brought against him, he was immediately removed from all branch group chats. Steven P. remained in all branch group chats of which he was a member until after Walter S. and Angel N. attended the North Philly E unit meeting on Tuesday, September 8th. They removed Steven P. as a result of concerns raised at the meeting. Their rationale was that Dakota's charges were security-related. The Steering Committee knew of the accusations of misogyny and sexual assault and abuse against Steven P., which implied that they did not see such charges as security concerns. Walter S. asked the unit if they would be "comfortable" with Steven P. returning, implying that whether the membership was "comfortable" with Steven P. would be a factor in the outcome, before knowing the results of his sexual abuse investigation.
3. Immediately following the North Philly E unit meeting, "Isaiah," a friend of Steven P., offered and was allowed to speak personally with candidates about his opinions on the ongoing investigation. He influenced the opinions of several candidates with his account of Steven P.'s and Griselda's "toxic relationship." The following weekend, he led a study group of the clauses of the Party Constitution relating to discipline at the North Philly East unit picnic. While it was appropriate to take this opportunity to teach candidates about the disciplinary process, it was done under the de facto

authority of a friend of the accused. To allow a (non-leadership) friend of the accused this authority was flagrantly irresponsible.



4. When a candidate spoke with Walter S. to follow up with concerns about the September 8th meeting, Walter S. attacked Dakota's character, calling him a "shit-stirrer." He divulged that Dakota had not paid into the 2020 National Fund Drive (Dakota had made clear to Walter that he had become unemployed due to the pandemic, had not yet received unemployment, and was living off the funds he had saved for gender-confirming surgery). He claimed that Dakota was motivated by the fact that he had not been elected to the Steering Committee, as well as the fact that a previous unit of which Dakota was a lead had been dissolved—because, according to Walter, Dakota "was doing a poor job." Dakota had never been told that the Steering Committee was critical of his performance. Walter S. asserted in a text message that "the defining thing about Dakota's personality is ego," and speculated that "this was motivated by [Dakota] wanting to oust the current leadership because he feels like he was denied the authority he feels entitled to." While it was practically necessary to respond in some way to Dakota's accusations before the results of the investigations were announced,

Walter S.'s statements are wildly outside the scope of opinions a member of leadership, much less one who is not part of the investigating committee, should be allowed to share on the subject of an ongoing investigation.

5. The Steering Committee assumed control of Steven P.'s investigation immediately upon receiving the accusations and for at least a week after, despite the fact that Timour K., a close friend of Steven P., is a member of the Steering Committee. Timour K. was a member of the investigating committee that charged and suspended Dakota. When texting Dakota on July 25th to ask for screenshots of Dakota's conversations with Griselda, Timour was quick to assert his authority: "You are not a member of the body conducting the investigation. [...] Like any other member of the branch, you can find out the results of the investigation at its conclusion."
6. The Steering Committee knew that friends of Griselda within the party were speaking to her throughout the week, but took no initiative in coordinating communication with those members. Jacob B., who was in consistent communication with Griselda throughout the week, exchanged only a handful of very brief text exchanges with Angel N. and Timour K.—which Jacob B. initiated—and had a very brief phone call with Timour K. in response to his messages. It should have been obvious to the Steering Committee that close contact with Griselda's confidants was crucial in mitigating this volatile situation. During the September 24th meeting to announce the results of the investigation, Kerbie J. noted that uncoordinated communication with other members of the party impeded her

ability to placate Griselda during her manic episode—a serious consequence of the Philadelphia Steering Committee’s failure. The Steering Committee offered no self-criticism in this regard when swiftly bringing charges against Dakota.

7. Timour K. was seen by a reliable witness (who has asked not to be named) hanging out with Steven P., Isaiah, and Maya in an informal capacity near Norris Square Park on August 22nd. It was known to the Steering Committee that Steven P. was not to be in this kind of casual contact with Party members during this time. According to the witness, Timour K. became defensive when confronted about this malfeasance, making sarcastic remarks including something to the effect of “Why don’t you go write a statement about it?” (This, of course, alludes to Griselda’s public statement disclosing accusations of sexual assault). When Walter and Angel attended the unit meeting of North Philly E, of which Timour is a member, on September 8th, they were asked by a candidate whether this incident had in fact happened. Timour remained silent and other members of the Steering Committee denied knowing anything about it.¹
8. Despite that Griselda’s threats to call the DHS on Steven P. were included in the Steering Committee’s accounts in unit meetings on September 8th, none of the context was shared: that Steven P. had been ordering military training manuals in bulk on Griselda’s Amazon account during a violent uprising.² He had also had suspicious visits to his home from individuals offering to install security systems, which he documented in Facebook posts. This threw fuel on the fire of Griselda’s manic episode—which was obvious, well-documented, and recognized by the Steering Committee—causing her to do something that was wildly outside her character up to this point. Griselda had always been as firmly anti-police as Steven and had a history of dealing with violent conflict near her home directly rather than by calling the police. According to her, he had told her of a secret, militant “security” program he was starting with a handful of other members. He had been leaving their home in the middle of the night, claiming he was on a security-related duty. Griselda’s rash threats were based on manic paranoia, in part motivated by a reasonable fear of being stalked and becoming a target of the state thanks to Steven P.’s irresponsible actions. This context has been underemphasized and often omitted in the interest of pinning grave transgressions onto Griselda’s character and possibly of avoiding embarrassment on behalf of Steering Committee members who were aware of this “security” program. If the “security” program were a lie or delusion, it could have been dispelled as such, and an explanation provided as to why Steven was ordering these goods in bulk. While this critique applies generally to National, it is especially flagrant on the part of the Philadelphia Steering Committee, particularly before the results of the investigation had been released. This is only one instance of the Steering Committee selectively omitting or emphasizing evidence, the entirety of which the membership has no ability to review.

¹ It was clarified in the December 20th meeting of the endorsers with the Central Committee that it may not have been forbidden for members to be together in an informal social capacity. If so, I am happy to hear that Timour did not violate a rule in this regard. He should still be held accountable for his flippant remarks and answer for why he would not admit to having been hanging out with Steven.

² Receipts can be provided.

We have still been having sex. Unprotected. Steven cannot stay hard with a condom on. Never has, not since I deflowered him when I was 18. I had to turn him down at least 6 times for sex yesterday. Each time I had to tell him NO 10x until he would stop rubbing his boner all over me.

I have to get an STD test.

Yesterday he crossed the line between asking for sex and coercion. And I let it fly because I said to myself, "I know him. This is how he grieves". Because this isn't the first time.

He did not succeed in his coercion.

I have been gaslit so much the last two years idk even know what is or isn't anymore

He talks to me like a fucking lawyer

Like he's in a Villanova philosophy seminar— he is never not correct in any situations

Turns my head around in circles with semantics and language, deflection, etc. He knows how my racing thoughts work

He knows how to manipulate my chemical imbalances

Every apology except the last time he cheated before this— I have had to pull out of him like a stuck tooth. Forreal.

Every apology I've ever gotten from him except for the last time he cheated before this****

So Friday, when he was being overly coercive to get me to have unprotected sex—I was patient with him. I said no 10 times before I would literally move away from him—and that happened like 5 separate times on Friday. Pushing his boner into me, putting my hand on his cock. Because I thought that this is just how he grieves, and that he needs to feel connected to me this way and he needs this escapism. But I told him many times that this cannot be escapism for me, cause that makes me feel cheap like I could be anyone screwing him and it wouldn't matter.

And he said yeah, I understand sex means different things to us. And I told him I haven't totally taken breakup sex off the table but I didn't want it like this. He understood and seemed a bit less emotional/ more comforted by that. Eventually he started up again before we fell asleep and I

And he said yeah, I understand sex means different things to us. And I told him I haven't totally taken breakup sex off the table but I didn't want it like this. He understood and seemed a bit less emotional/ more comforted by that. Eventually he started up again before we fell asleep and I consented. Said fuck it, I'm stressed and I'm gonna use him the way he uses women, for escape. And I pulled out the vibrator to make him feel emasculated. Fell asleep calm.

9. Members of the steering committee claimed throughout the disciplinary process that Griselda did not allege “overt sexual abuse” until early August. This is a factual error. Griselda told friends within the party of sexual assault the same night she claims to have caught Steven and Maya together. On July 22nd, Jacob B. sent Timour K. screenshots of Instagram DMs from the night of July 18th/early morning of July 19th that described her being date raped by Steven on Friday the 17th: “Yesterday, [Steven] crossed the line between asking for sex and coercion. And I let it fly because I said to myself, ‘I know him. This is how he grieves’. [...] I said no 10 times before I would literally move away from him—and that happened like 5 separate times on Friday [July 17th]. Pushing his boner into me, putting my hand on his cock.” The screenshots were included in the evidence reviewed by the Central Committee. The Steering Committee may have forgotten the content of these messages, as they were no longer reviewing them, but this error unfortunately made its way into the December 14th response to the accusations: “in early August, [Griselda] pivoted and changed the emphasis of her initial charges [...] She was now asserting that the sex she had with Steven had been overt sexual abuse.” Griselda, now awake past 4 AM on July 19th, did state that eventually she “consented” after Steven “started up again” and she “said fuck it, I’m stressed and I’m gonna use him the way he uses women, for escape. And I pulled out the vibrator to make him feel emasculated. Fell asleep calm.” The December 14th statement considers these text exchanges to be “compelling evidence from Griselda herself that disproved the accusations of sexual abuse and rape.” It describes the incident this way: “Steven had in fact respected her desire to not have sex on the afternoon in question. Hours later, she consented to sex.” **The most generous reading of this interpretation is as an embarrassing lack of understanding of date rape and how survivors cope in the days following. In effect, though, it warps a disclosure of rape into an admission of consent.**³
10. Throughout the process, the Steering Committee failed to mention another woman’s accusation of sexual assault included in the deposition Griselda had submitted to the Central Committee on August 10th. An email from a woman named “Emma” describes her allowing Steven to sleep over at her house after a night of partying in 2015 or 2016, beside a woman friend of hers, head-to-toe, in Emma’s living room. She claims that her friend told her that “during the night, she woke up with Steven’s face between her butt cheeks.” Steven allegedly claimed that he was “‘in a sleep state’ and not [...] in control of his actions.” According to Emma, her friend did not wish to comment because she did not want to revisit the memory. It is not clear whether the Steering Committee had seen Griselda’s deposition or heard of this accusation, but they were still willing to make dismissive claims about the sexual assault-related contents of the evidence collected in the investigation. This accusation was also excluded from the reading of the results of the investigation given by leading PSL member Eugene Puryear at the September 24th meeting. In that meeting, Jacob B. and a candidate both asked if the Central Committee could comment on the accusation of sexual assault that had come from another woman. Eugene Puryear responded by mentioning a Facebook exchange he had seen between Griselda and a woman Steven had previously cheated with—by the woman’s own admission—wherein Griselda asks “Did you fuck my boyfriend?” (Eugene made sure to directly quote Griselda’s unbecoming language). This message exchange was a completely separate exchange from Emma’s email; if there was a connection between the two, Eugene did not elaborate. As with all

³ It is the view of the Central Committee, as outlined in the December 20 meeting, that the incidents of coercive behavior Griselda outlined in these texts never occurred at all. This raises the question of why, if they believe Griselda’s account of coercion is untrue, they believe her accounts in the exact same messages about “falling asleep calm” are factual.

accusations, it is possible that there was absolutely no credence to Emma's claim. Nonetheless, this evidence went unaddressed in the authoritative summary of Steven's and Dakota's investigations, even after two people had asked about accusations of sexual assault coming from another woman.

Most of the above concerns were sent to PSL national staff in a September 9th email from Jacob B. per an invitation from members of the Central Committee to send more evidence if any was found. Point 7 was included.

It must be understood that Steven P. has been a huge asset to the Philadelphia branch. He organized tirelessly, day in and day out, before his suspension. His skills with outreach have been essential to the success of the branch's outreach efforts. He has spearheaded the creation of mass orgs such as the People Power Gym and Norris Square Community Action Network. He was heavily involved in organizing with incarcerated people. Moreover, he is a charismatic person. It was a shock to hear of Griselda's accusations and face the possibility of him being permanently expelled from the party.

While the Philadelphia branch touts an impressive "mass ethic"—an understanding that the Party exists for the sake of the masses and not for the sake of its reputation or that of its members—it is not immune to egoism. Because many members of the Steering Committee view Party activity as the main purpose in their lives, it is inevitable that their egos will become bound up in the Party's success and reputation. We here face a contradiction, whereby a selfless organization becomes instrumental to the self. It is crucial that we understand how the threat of losing one of the branch's most talented organizers may have motivated the Steering Committee's handling of this situation (to say nothing of Steven's preexisting friendships with male leaders).

We must consider, for example, that Walter S. has been a member of the Party for over a decade. Almost all of his life's activities are in service to the Party. The job he worked for the past several years was on a radio show with PSL co-founder Brian Becker. His long-term partner is a fellow member of the Philadelphia Steering Committee.

It is not an exaggeration to say that any member of the Philadelphia branch would consider Walter S. extremely influential—perhaps the most influential person in the branch. He individually proposes the responses to many situations and is seldom contradicted. When he is contradicted, he usually convinces the membership that his position is correct. He is looked to as a decisive authority.

This is far from saying that Walter S.'s dedication is not noble or his authority unwarranted. It is just an example that illustrates the plausibility of egoistic motivations. Consider his gossipy attacks on Dakota's character and the double standard which allowed the accused rapist to remain in branch group chats. Similar concerns can be raised of other members of the Steering Committee, as well as National leadership.

Hundreds of pages of evidence were presented to National in Steven P.'s and Dakota's investigations. Among them are screenshots of text exchanges that display the Steering Committee's arrogance. The Steering Committee was quick to reprimand Dakota for his communications with Griselda and any follow-up messages he sent to them, while also telling him that he was not entitled to any information about the investigation. They enjoyed the authority to scold or deny information and seemed to give no thought to the necessity of inviting Griselda's confidants into communication. It is natural for a position of power to foster

arrogance, and our self-critique must involve an examination of the motives and biases that come into play in situations such as these.

The Philadelphia Steering Committee made fatal errors in its handling of this case and has not been subject to any accountability, consequences, or thorough critique. Walter S. listed a few painless self-critiques at the September 24th meeting, but addressed none of the above problems, except for a vague admission that the Steering Committee could have communicated better.

During this meeting, it was repeatedly emphasized how Dakota fundamentally failed as a communist by breaking discipline and publicly sharing his critiques in an unprincipled manner. It was not considered that Dakota may have reasoned that the PSL's party discipline was not worth his effort as a communist. Neither the Steering Committee nor the Central Committee shared any reflection on leadership's duty to earn the good will of membership.

Comrades have been consistently reminded throughout this period of our democratic centralist framework. It has been explained that it is necessary to accept the authority of the Philadelphia Steering Committee and National bodies in handling this situation. Because these leaders were elected democratically, we are duty-bound to accept their decisions. In such a volatile situation, the merits of this system go without saying. However, invoking their authority throughout this process has allowed the Steering Committee the power to shape the narrative however they wish and at whichever point they wish, within certain bounds.

People who had witnessed evidence that might support Griselda's claims were afraid of sharing information or opinions they had about the investigation, while people such as Isaiah were allowed to engage in personal conferences with candidates to share a friend's perspective on the accused rapist. One Steering Committee member pointedly tweeted "All my homies love democratic centralism." At the September 24th meeting, several Philadelphia branch members joined stack simply to make self-congratulatory comments to the effect of "I think this instance shows the value of having a disciplinary process like ours." Near the end of the meeting, Eugene Puryear opined that everyone involved in the investigation had participated in good faith. Most comrades, who are uninformed on many details of the situation, see this issue through the lens that is most convenient to the Steering Committee, and thus will be unable to take their failures into account at the next Steering Committee election.

Regardless of the results of these investigations, the Philadelphia Steering Committee have conducted themselves in a way that has seriously harmed the Party's reputation and morale.

PSL Leadership's behavior in response to the above statement

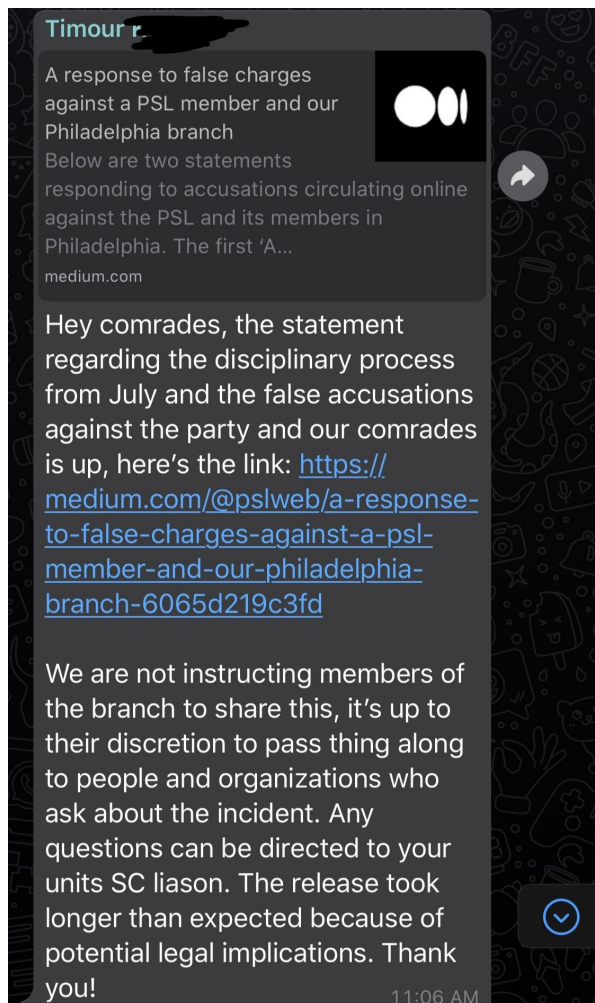
This document was shared with certain members of PSL on December 17th and inevitably was handed to national leadership. On December 18th, Walter S. texted Bobbi K., a signatory of the Statement of Criticism Regarding Serious Errors in the Handling of the Philadelphia Branch Situation:

"There are key pieces of information here that you're missing that I think will fundamentally changes [sic] your understanding of this situation. I know that you're a committed revolutionary and you want to act in accordance with communist principles. But I think you've come to a

mistaken conclusion on this based on a distorted presentation of what happened. Can we set up a time to talk before you make any final decisions?”

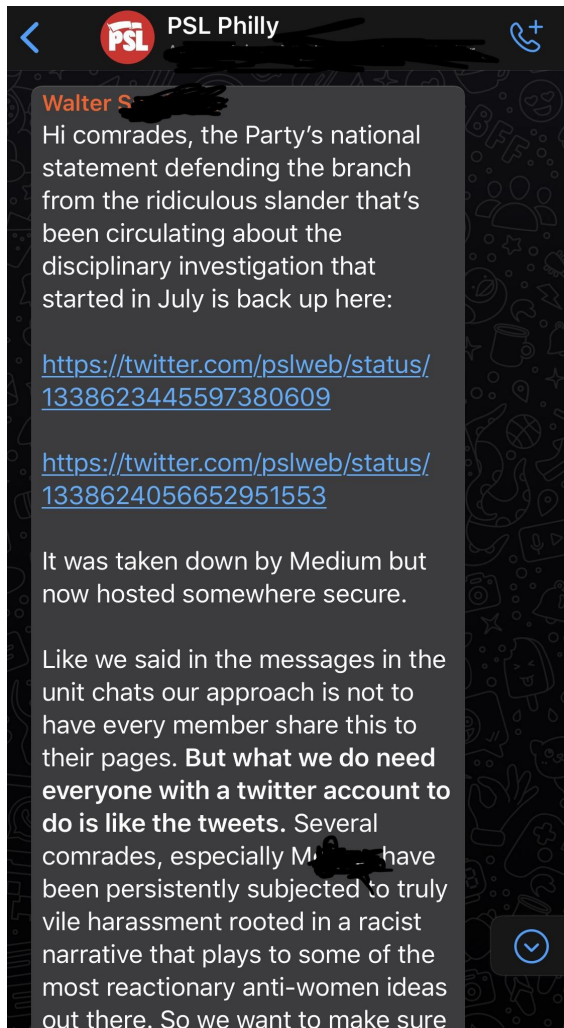
The following should be noted:

1. These “key pieces of information” must not have been included in the December 14th public statement that acted as the official public response to Griselda’s allegations, nor in the September 24th reading of the results of the investigation. If they had been, Bobbi would have been aware of them. Several of the concerns in the Statement of Criticism were raised at the September 24th meeting. Seven of the ten points on the section on unethical handling of Steven P’s and Dakota’s cases by the Philadelphia Steering Committee were emailed to the Central Committee by Jacob B. on September 9th. These complaints and their supporting evidence have been open matters of discussion and have been brought directly to leadership. Unless Walter planned to remind Bobbi of information that had already been released internally, it follows that in this message Walter admitted to having withheld key information on these open, substantiated complaints until they were extensively documented and circulated among rank-and-file members.
2. On December 14th, Steering Committee member Timour K. shared a link in the North Philly E unit chat to the first tweet PSL sent linking the December 14th statement:



“Hey comrades if you use Twitter please go like this tweet from the party with the statements linked! We want to have a big show of support especially for comrade Maya who has been the subject of constant racist attacks and harassment throughout this period”

Later that day, after the Medium link was taken down presumably due to an investigation based on their doxing policy, Walter S. sent the link hosted on PSL’s site to the PSL Philly general chat:



“Hi comrades, the Party’s national statement defending the branch from the ridiculous slander that’s been circulating about the disciplinary investigation that started in July is back up here:

[link]

It was taken down by Medium but now hosted somewhere secure.

Like we said in the messages in the unit chats our approach is not to have every member share this to their pages. **But what we do need everyone with a twitter account to do is like the tweets.** Several comrades, especially Maya, have been persistently subjected to truly vile harassment rooted in a racist narrative that plays to some of the most reactionary anti-women ideas out there. So we want to make sure people who come across this see a strong showing of support for the statement that sets the record straight about what really happened. And as always please reach out to your unit leads or an SC member if you have questions.”

In the days following the Philadelphia Steering Committee's order to like the tweets containing the December 14th statement, several PSL members across branches were allowed to engage in public arguments with Griselda, some with a vitriolic tone, echoing the points made in the statement and responding to critics with their own defenses. Even more members posted their own tweets in defense of the Party and the statement, engaging users who criticized their own opinions. One Steering Committee member publicly likened Griselda's actions to the murder of Emmett Till, a framing that was later repeated by a Central Committee member. (It is worth pointing out here that Steven P. is a white man and Griselda is Xicana.)

On December 17th, Griselda tweeted at the Party begging them to take the statement down, noting that it was on the second page of results when one Googled her name. "I am suicidal, I am relapsing, I am begging." Thankfully, the Party had the humanity to take the statement down.

PSL members were urged to take part in what can only be described as a harassment campaign based on a justification that, Walter admits, omits key information. As of December 19th, Walter did not clarify whether this information had been available to any rank-and-file members before or, if not, why.

Conclusions

We must ask why the Philadelphia Steering Committee has been allowed to make so many errors without even a modicum of criticism from National leadership. The fact is that this is emblematic of a deeper problem in the Party's very structure: the strong disconnect between National leadership and its body of rank-and-file Party membership. Although on paper, per the Party Constitution, local branch Steering Committees are required to provide a channel through which rank-and-file members can contact the Central Committee, in practice this is rarely enforced and virtually all communication to the Central Committee is centralized through the local Steering Committee, whose members frequently serve on national bodies like the NOD.

This creates a structure in which the Central Committee, unless a broad and comprehensive investigation into specific allegations (as was done in this situation) is conducted, only knows what the local Steering Committee wants it to know. The pitfalls of this in terms of the opportunity for fractures and tactical errors around egotism, opportunism, and careerism should be obvious. This situation is not limited to the Philadelphia branch, and has serious implications for our organizing, recruitment, and retainment—and should be dealt with swiftly and decisively.

Although behind closed doors PSL leadership (including several of the signatories to the Central Committee statement) openly deride identity politics as a method of analysis, they are quick to deploy the special oppressions faced by certain Party members and spokespeople as a rhetorical shield when facing public criticism. Although this document has been prepared solely for internal review, it seems remiss not to address the question of what, specifically, entitles this author, a white transmasculine individual, to contradict the analysis of several Black women leaders and other women of color and white women in the PSL on this issue.

Here this author must once again beg for indulgence. Though I am white and am seen in the world by most as a man, I spent the first 21 years of my life living as a girl and then a woman. I myself have been a

victim of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse by a variety of people in my life, including romantic partners. I have been raped twice. The second time I was raped was during a tumultuous breakup with a romantic partner of two years. Shortly after they had finished raping me on the night in question, they became agitated and began hitting themselves, screaming that they had raped me and that they were a monster and that I should call the police. I was hurt, confused, traumatized, scared, and extremely averse to the idea of dealing with police presence in such a situation as an (at the time) gender non-conforming lesbian, so I immediately began to soothe my rapist by saying "It's okay, you didn't hurt me." It is chilling to think that, had this situation occurred between me and another Party member, the women of the Central Committee and other leadership bodies would use these words in the immediate aftermath of an emotionally taxing and traumatizing event to declare that I had not been raped.

As a principled communist and as a survivor but also as a person with simple human compassion, I cannot and will not defend that Central Committee statement—even though I am expected to, due to the Party's warped view of democratic centralism, in which actions that have not been democratically decided upon are sprung upon the rank-and-file members by National leadership and expected to be defended with no prior discussion or notice.

I believe in the mission of the Party, I believe in its program, and I believe in the comrades that make up its membership. That is why I am attempting to address these grievous errors internally rather than giving up and resigning. As a reader of this document, you have the choice to act in a way to help restore my and others' faith in the Party and its leadership—or to double down.

I would ask you to remember, should anyone reading wish to chide me for discussing my feelings and criticisms of this event with comrades informally, that even if I acted improperly in not addressing this directly with leadership, the Party has allowed its channels through which my criticism could be efficiently addressed to degrade. Compliance with the Party's policy and structure is ultimately based on trust and belief in the Party. When Party leaders make such serious errors as they have here, who could possibly expect anyone to trust those same leaders to respond appropriately to criticism of their errors?

The sheer brazenness of the Philadelphia Steering Committee's conduct in this matter, facilitated (knowingly or otherwise) by National leadership, suggests that this is not the first time an incident like this has been mishandled. How many women and other survivors have been sacrificed to avoid public scandal? Such a situation cannot be allowed to continue and must be rooted out and corrected at every level of the Party.

The authors of this document have every hope that its criticisms will be honestly considered and weighed by the Party, although we are prepared to be accused of violating democratic centralism, factionalism, horizontalism, and other infractions for assembling it. If we must sacrifice our standing within the Party to advance what is right—morally, politically, and tactically—in service to this organization and our comrades to which we have dedicated so much labor and love, then so be it.

Billie K.

Jacob B.