# Steps to Healing Our Community

We find that members of the current leadership in the DxE Global network have demonstrated patterns of abuse in the name of efficiency, and that these behaviors have reached an unacceptable fever pitch. In this document, we present some of the patterns and events we object to, and steps we feel must be taken so that the process of addressing them can begin. The undersigned include current and former members of the DxE Global Steering Committee; current and former consultants to that committee; current and former organizers of core and participating chapters; current and former members of several international working groups, including the Culture and Values Team, which according to DxE's bylaws are responsible for the resolution of conflict; and other concerned members of more than 10 core and participating chapters. We are motivated to draft this document by intense love for all the activists who have been involved on both sides of the recent conflict, a desire to strengthen the network and help it continue to be a powerful force for change, and above all, a resolute commitment to DxE's Organizing Principles, particularly Integrity, Empathy, Emergent Leadership, Community, Truth, Empowerment, and Responsibility.

# Concerns

## 1. Violation of Bylaws and Subsidiary Documents

We find that there are several instances in which the highest members of leadership have acted in complete disregard for both global and local bylaws.

### 1.a. Violations of Global Bylaws

Bylaws relating to the composition of the Steering Committee have been subverted. In particular, Bylaws state that core chapters should have a delegate to the steering committee, but when the New York City chapter was accepted as a core chapter, that chapter's delegate was rejected from steering for frivolous reasons, namely that she had offered constructive criticism of the network.

**Violations of the Conflict Resolution process**

1. Bylaws relating to the authority of the conflict resolution team have been repeatedly flaunted or ignored. In particular, Wayne has unilaterally sidelined conflict proceedings involving him and ignored prescriptions the team has made in these proceedings. On

one occasion, he spoke at a meeting on a subject the team had specifically prohibited him from presenting on due to a conflict proceeding, then later joked about how he had subverted their requirement. On another occasion, he refused to engage in the conflict resolution process when the process was initiated by an activist, stating he was willing to talk "as friends" but not speak as part of the CR process. Other activists have been removed for refusing to participate in this process.

2. Bylaws relating to the entitlements of Core Chapters have been subverted. Namely, Core Chapters are required to operate within the DxE Global bylaws and Conflict Resolution process, however, the leadership of the SF Bay chapter, who is also the international leadership, recently voted on a bill which would exempt that chapter from the process.

## 1.b. Violations of SF Bay Bylaws

1. The SF Bay chapter's bylaws clearly state that any change to the bylaws must be voted on at a chapter meeting, with two weeks notice of the change, and can only pass with two thirds of the vote. A vote which would change these laws was recently called in Berkeley with only one week's notice at a special meeting, not the chapter meeting. When told that this vote was in violation of the bylaws, Wayne asserted that the bylaws don't matter because they are an "informal agreement between individuals." The proposal represented a major change in the leadership structure in that chapter, concentrating power with a single "executive leader." This vote was further de-legitimized by the prior suspension of the Global Team Member application process and, before that, the unreasonable obstruction of qualified applications. If organizers who are entitled to a vote are being denied one, the election cannot be seen as legitimate.

2. The SF Bay chapter bylaws also state that the Core can select approximately 10 members on a rolling basis. The proposal presented during the July 18 vote proposed an executive team of 3, which was then changed to 5, in direct violation of the bylaws. Concerns were presented about the original proposal days before the vote and Paul and others in Core stated it was allowed under the voting process. When it came time for the vote, the role of "lead organizer" only had Wayne as a candidate while the other 4 positions had nearly 10 candidates.

# 2. Violations of Core Values

Leaders have demonstrated a pattern of abusive tactics, including gaslighting and character assassination. These behaviors are in severe conflict with DxE's core values.

## 2.a. Character Assassination

1. Amy Halpern-Laff was the victim of a targeted character assassination which was initiated after she dissented with leadership over an unrelated issue. At a meeting of the SF Bay Core, that body voted to remove her from the network solely on the basis of an error she had made with records relating to her time doing fundraising work. This error had been discovered seven months prior with no action at the time. At a later public meeting, Wayne, representing SF Bay Core, claimed that she had been removed because of suspicions of racism stemming from her involvement with anti-immigration causes more than five years previously, work she had already renounced and apologized for. This accusation was not even mentioned at the time of the vote removing Amy.

2. During conflicts with Zach Groff and Chris Van Breen, among others, Wayne has engaged excessively in character assassination, bringing these parties up in conversations with others who have little to do with the conflict in order to delegitimize them. This has created a culture of fear among many organizers.

## 2.b. Gaslighting

1. Many individuals have found themselves under attack after expressing dissent. These attacks are often coordinated by several core members of leadership, including Wayne and Priya.

2. Zach Groff and other previous leaders have been accused of "talking shit" or "negativity" for bringing concerns to the attention of Core members. Priya Sawhney made a false accusation that as early as January 2017, well before any personal conflict existed, Zach was maliciously attempting to "turn" her against Wayne, when in fact he was speaking with her as a friend about personal matters. Wayne reported similarly false accusations from Priya that Zach was attacking Wayne as a liar to an external consultant, when that external consultant believes Priya misrepresented the conversation, and a false accusation that Zach was attacking Wayne as a liar over a misleading interview, when in fact Almira Tanner, not Zach, was the person questioning Wayne's truthfulness in that context.

3. On multiple occasions, individuals bringing concerns to leadership have been told that nobody shares those concerns and that concerns are entirely in their heads. Naomi Davis, Tiffany Walker, and at least three other current or former leadership members have been cornered by those with more power pressed to confess concerns when not comfortable. Conversations with concerned community members including Brian Burns and Naomi Davis have been misrepresented to make it seem that those community members did not have concerns about leadership.

4. Misrepresentation of conversations, intimidation of concerned community members, and communications creating the appearance of divisions between friends combine to make subjects feel that they are losing sanity. Targets find themselves questioning their positions or beliefs after sustained gaslighting campaigns, despite not having been involved in conversations about the substance of their dissenting opinion.

## 2.c. Psychological Manipulation

"Love-bombing" and other malicious psychological manipulation techniques have been employed, whether consciously or unconsciously, against organizers involved in disputes, some of whom were not even aware that they were involved in disputes. Several of the undersigned have reported experiences in which Wayne is suddenly showering them with praise before asking them to make statements that could be used against them or against other organizers. This was true in Amy Halpern-Laff's case; when she was initially approached by Wayne, he offered excessive praise before saying that he had heard she had concerns with leadership and asking her to share those concerns with him so that he could try to address them. When she later shared a list of her concerns, that list was used to attack her and was used as evidence in the SF Bay Core vote to remove her from the community.

# 3. Concentration of Power

While concentration has become an organizing principle for DxE, the excessive concentration of power in Berkeley has created a climate which is antithetical to DxE's values and goals.

## 3.a. Global Team Members

Global Team Members (GTMs) are the group empowered to vote on decisions when consensus cannot be reached. Currently, GTM status has only been promoted inside the SF Bay chapter, leaving other chapters out of key decision making. Furthermore, applications by organizers from other areas who meet the objective requirements have been hung up by SF Bay leadership indefinitely, and some weeks prior to the recent vote, organizers outside of Berkeley were told that the GTM application was "suspended indefinitely" due to ongoing conflict. If conflict has reached a pitch that disallows eligible organizers to gain voting privileges, it is not an appropriate time to hold major elections.

## 3.b. Steering Committee

For some time, members of the Steering Committee have been even further concentrated to a single house. Current and former members of this committee have observed that this creates an echo chamber, deafening members to the concerns of other community members.

Current and former members of this committee have found that upon departing the house, even temporarily, they lose power and people in the house cease trusting them as much. In general, we find that the Steering Committee has failed in its mission of transparency and inclusivity.

## 3.c. Working Groups

Membership on working groups which make strategic decisions implicating the entire network has likewise been concentrated to the SF Bay. In one case, a campaigns working group which was preparing to make proposals to the entire network was not announced to the international community. When at one point organizers from other chapters were part of a larger discussion about the proposal, Wayne repeatedly subverted the group's decisions and acted unilaterally. Wayne presented as a consensus a campaign that only he had supported and the rest of the team had opposed. Wayne pivoted back and forth between local and global campaigns in such a way as to make it difficult for others to follow or change the proposal, and Paul attempted to remove members of the team who had contributed immensely but disagreed with Wayne's proposal. In another case, members of an international Social Media group were removed after being told that Wayne was taking control of the group. They were lied to about where the power of that group would go after it was dissolved without their consent.

## 3.d. Visibility

As a consequence of concentration of power, chapters other than SF Bay have received almost no visibility on the DxE social media pages. High-profile actions like the disruption of Hillary Clinton in Harrisburg and Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest in New York have been sidelined while most of the protests in the SF Bay, especially those in that Social Media team members take part in, are highlighted.

## 3.e. Disenfranchisement of non-Bay chapters

1. Concentration of power in Berkeley has resulted in the silencing of those outside of the Bay Area, and the inability for small chapters (or even many larger ones) to have any say in decision making. Prior to this week's resignations, the entire Steering Committee was in Berkeley, and 14/20 GTMs were local. This is disproportionate to the spread of activists across the global network.

2. The "Move to Berkeley" campaign has been placed above all other DxE priorities, including the founding of multiple Seed Cities. Berkeley has recruited activists from other chapters at the expense of either the complete shut-down of those chapters, or their

severe debilitation. Manipulative tactics, such as offering to pay activists (with DxE funds) to move, have been employed by Wayne to convince people to move. **Many activists have reported a lack of support in Berkeley after moving upon request and are struggling to meet basic needs such as housing and employment in the Bay.**

# 4. Abuse of Power

Regular abuses of concentrated power have led to a community of control, fear, and scapegoating.

## 4.a. GTM Application Shut Down

In June, after one international organizer, Rachel Hipp, had found her application to be unreasonably obstructed, other applicants were told that the entire application process had been shut down. It is not clear what body decided on this or whether they had the authority to do so, but since then, a large number of organizers who are clearly and objectively qualified for GTM status have been denied voting franchise.

## 4.b. Email censorship

Email communication platforms were unilaterally shut down by Wayne for the apparent purpose of silencing dissenting opinions. It is not clear why he had the singular authority to do this prior to Tuesday's illegitimate election.

## 4.c. Silencing Dissent

1. Organizers have been removed from roles and positions immediately following dissent or disagreement with leadership. The marginalization and disparagement of those organizers has created a culture in which diverse points of view and healthy debate are stifled.

2. A vote was called among SF Bay GTMs as a means to push an organizer and member of the Core out of leadership roles due to existing conflict with leadership.

## 4.d. Intervention in Conflicts

1. Wayne and other core members have intervened in conflicts to exert authority over the conflict resolution team and protect certain activists from accountability. Paul attempted to override conflict's authority out of a view that the conflict team was biased against Wayne.

2. In some cases, the conflict resolution team was forced to speed up the process in order for activists involved to get back to working for DxE. In one sexual assault case, the victim and CR team were pressured to resolve the case quickly. Upset with Wayne's behavior toward the perpetrator and victim during the ordeal, the victim wanted to initiate a Conflict Resolution process with Wayne regarding his actions and Wayne refused to engage in the CR process. A member of the CR team for that conflict has confirmed this incident took place.

# 5. Conflict Resolution Process Shortcomings

## 5.a. Lack of training and capacity

1. Members of the CR team often have received little to no formal conflict resolution training, and are reliant on their own instincts or brief readings on facilitating massively complex interpersonal issues - including violence and abuse. Despite best intentions, CR Team Members are simply not currently equipped to be handling this level of conflict without professionals or adequate training.

2. Additionally, the CR Team is severely understaffed leading to team members handling multiple conflicts essentially non-stop, and even less equipped members of the Culture and Values Team to be invited to join CR in order to alleviate some of the burden. This has led to burnout of multiple CR members, and lack of capacity to properly handle multiple conflicts on a global scale.

3. When members of the CR team asked the Global Steering Committee for funding to attend a conference on Restorative Justice, it was encouraged that only a single person attend and relay the information back to the rest of the team. This clearly would have been inefficient. The CR team wanted this training to be better informed about the process, since only a single member had experience with it. The CR Team requested that at least two of its members attend the conference and were told that it would not be a good use of funds to send more than one person due to the conference cost of approximately $300 per person. No members of the team attended the conference.

## 5.b. Dangerous priorities

1. Due to a combination of lack of capacity and, at times, an uneven application of "call in" culture which forbids individuals from speaking publicly about their concerns just as others involved in conflicts are lionized by leadership aware of the conflict, the CR process has on several occasions been used to silence community members with serious grievances.

2. In at least one instance, a focus on "restorative justice" without proper training on responsible use of this policy has led to a confessed sexual abuser remaining in a leadership position in DxE, without ever having satisfactorily completed a resolution process with their victim. The victim was pressured into accepting apologies, and into staying silent about their concerns, which has resulted in further victimization of additional individuals. DxE is an unsafe place for women in this regard.

## 5.c. Lack of accountability among leadership to Conflict Resolution process

1. Leadership often consider themselves exempt from the CR process, and will choose to not engage in a formal CR process but rather "talk as friends" when a CR process is requested.

2. As a member of leadership and the CR team, Paul has repeatedly allowed conflict processes involving core leadership to lapse or allowed fellow leaders to avoid active participation in conflict processes.

3. Leadership violates the CR agreements blatantly and without recourse, such as the aforementioned case in which Wayne joked about presenting at a chapter meeting on a topic CR had explicitly forbidden him from presenting on.

4. The CR Team has no means with which to enforce its process.

# Steps to Healing

## Immediate Redress

We find that the following steps must be taken immediately in order for the undersigned to acknowledge the authority and legitimacy of the DxE Steering Committee and the SF Bay Core.

1. **Activists who have been removed or stepped down under pressure in violation of DxE's organizing principles shall be reinstated to their prior leadership roles**, on the two conditions that they accept the offer of reinstatement and first submit themselves to a reconciliation process laid out by the Culture and Values team, which will include mediation by professionals external to DxE and any other steps that team finds appropriate, pursuant to DxE's bylaws and core principles. This includes Amy Halpern-Laff (except in he role as legal liaison), Zach Groff, Naomi Davis, Lucas Freitas, Rachel Hipp, and others.

2. **Wayne Hsiung, Priya Sawhney, Paul Darwin Picklesimer, and other organizers who are intimately involved on both sides of this conflict must immediately and temporarily recuse themselves from major leadership positions**, including the Steering Committee and SF Bay Core and submit themselves to a reconciliation process laid out by the Culture and Values team, which will include mediation by professionals external to DxE and any other steps that team finds appropriate, pursuant to DxE's bylaws and core principles. Return to leadership positions shall be contingent on all parties completing this reconciliation process to the satisfaction of the Culture and Values team, which shall select from itself a committee of neutral representatives to handle this process and make relevant decisions. If a neutral committee cannot be formed from within the team, they will turn to mediators outside of the network. Implicated organizers continue, if they desire, to operate on working groups and other autonomous projects, including Open Rescue.

3. **The vote which was held in Berkeley on Tuesday, July 18 shall immediately be recognized as illegitimate and its effects shall be disregarded.**

4. **Suspended GTM and Core Chapter applications shall be processed rapidly and without unreasonable holdups**, and the GTM application process shall be reopened immediately. Core Chapters shall immediately have the delegate of their choice installed on the Global Steering Committee, pursuant to DxE's bylaws. Holding major elections while blocking qualified organizers from getting voting power has further de-legitimized their results, and no major decision making outside of autonomous working groups can proceed until all global organizers entitled to a voice are given one.

5. **Known sexual abusers will remove themselves immediately from DxE Leadership positions, houses, and communities.** Reinstatement into the community is contingent upon approval from 1) their victim(s) and 2) consensus of the Culture and Values Team through a revised CR process (outlined below).

# Further Steps for Healing

Below is a list of proposals that we believe can further move towards a remedy for concerns raised. We offer these proposals in the spirit of constructive discourse. Many other steps will need to be taken, and we hope that we will have the opportunity to deliberate over these proposals with all members of the community in the democratic processes laid out in DxE's bylaws.

1. **Steering Committee**

1. Term limits of 2 years in executive leadership positions, including the Steering Committee or other similar bodies which may be formed, would protect against the calcification and extreme factionalization which has formed around the current membership of the committee. This and similar proposals have been presented by Wayne himself in the past.

2. In addition to all core chapters having representation, a means of representation for participating chapters, possibly divided regionally, might further address the concerns listed above about concentration of power.

2. **The GTM process should be reopened and advertised to all chapters regularly.** Working group members should be notified and encouraged to apply when they become eligible. If this is not already the case, local chapter core organizing teams should qualify as the "working group" GTMs are applying to represent, and the language on the application should be changed to make this clear.

3. **The Friends of DxE board needs to be diversified.** Likely, no more than 25% should be of blood relation and/or primarily associated with any one GTM, to ensure that it is placing meaningful checks on leadership and does not become a rubber stamp.

4. **Control of DxE's Facebook page, the International Organizers group, and mailing lists should be transferred to the appropriate working groups.**

5. **Global working groups should be diversified,** and have a minimum of 6 members whenever possible, and be incentivised to have members from different chapters. We might consider restricting organizers to membership on 3 global working groups, and working groups should only be amended (including adding and removing members, or dissolution) through consensus.

6. **Streamline the process by which activists can be reimbursed for court fines.** Activists outside of the Bay feel ignored after executing protests which have served as major boosts for the network and its goals. We understand there are severe limitations on funding available, but major disruptions are presented as a priority of the network and are not being supported.

7. **The Social Media Team members who were removed should be reinstated if they accept the offer of reinstatement,** or otherwise should have access to shared authority over social media pages if they are to form a new group.

8. **The Global Steering Committee and the SF Bay Core should deeply reflect on issues which can arise from concentrated housing of leaders on the same leadership committees, and consider enacting rules limiting the number of**

**members of the same leadership body who can be living in the same house at any time.**

9. **Conflict Resolution Process Revisions**

   1. The CR Team should be expanded to include at least 12 members from across the network, who have shown restraint and neutrality in current and past conflicts. Effort should be made to include as many women and POC as possible in this group, given the number of conflicts that arise from sexual misconduct and racism.

   2. Funding should be provided to the CR Team to attend formal training on conflict resolution and mediation, as well as education on cultural competency and sexual trauma.

   3. It must be made absolutely clear in any relevant bylaws that no leadership is above the requirements of an initiated CR process. Leadership who refuse to participate in CR processes should face the same sanctions that community members would face.

   4. Current application of DxE values should be reconsidered to better provide justice and accountability to victims and perpetrators of sexual violence, respectively (especially including misrepresentations of the implications of "call in culture" and "restorative justice", and moving towards a more fair, sensible and accurate use of these ideals).

   5. Specific consequences should be enacted for:

      1. Refusal to participate in the CR process
      2. Violation of the CR process guidelines
      3. Violation of the CR process resolution agreement

   6. Effort should be made to provide a method of accountability from CR Team members to the community and those whose conflicts they are handling

   7. A contract should be made with an external provider such as an EAP program to ensure confidentiality and lack of bias. The provider will deal with conflicts where one or more parties involved can demonstrate bias.

# Where We Go Next

All of the undersigned activists still have hope for DxE as a network, and in the principles which guide it. We have a vision for the leadership of this network which lives up to those

principles. Our greatest desire is to bring about healing for our community which allows for all the activists involved in this conflict to be empowered as leaders of the movement for animal liberation. We will do everything in our power to realize this vision within DxE, and the steps we have laid out are the beginning of that process.

However, if it becomes clear that fixing this network is impossible, and if DxE Global continues to act without legitimacy, we are prepared to do so outside of its authority.

| Name | Chapter | Roles |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Shawna Bay | DMV | Local activist, Save Organizer |
| Mansi Bhagwatte | Philadelphia | IO |
| Marlene Blanco | LA | IO |
| Peggy Cassidy | Solano/SF Bay | Former organizer, Animal Care, Short term housing |
| Cheryl Ching | Berkeley | Local Activist |
| Cameron Christensen | Raleigh, NC | Activist |
| Chad Curtis | Philadelphia | Local activist |
| Naomi Davis | Berkeley | (former) IO, SF Bay Core, Outreach, Protest |
| Catherine Deiparine | Austin | IO |
| Liana Eakins | Houston | IO, Legal |
| Mary Kate Fain | Philadelphia | IO, Metrics, Culture & Values |
| Lucas Freitas | Berkeley | (former) IO, Campaigns, Metrics |
| Hogan Ganschow | Santa Barbara | IO, Legal |
| Alex Gleason | Philadelphia | IO, Tech |

| Name | Chapter | Roles |
|---|---|---|
| Barbara Glick | DMV | IO, Save organizer |
| Zach Groff | Berkeley | (former) IO, Steering, Press, Campaigns |
| Billy Hall | Cleveland | IO, Save organizer |
| Amy Halpern-Laff | Berkeley | Campaigns, Local Press |
| Jean Harte | Berkeley | Local Press |
| Alexander Herpst | Connecticut | IO, Metrics |
| Rachel Hipp | Grand Rapids | (former) Animal Care, Blog, Metrics, IO, (current) President of The Microsanctuary Movement |
| Amanda Houdeschell | Cleveland | IO, Blog, Social Media, Students Against Speciesism, co-founder of Species Revolution |
| David Houdeschell | Cleveland | Local activist, minister |
| Erika Jensen | LA | IO, Save organizer |
| Lauren Keough | New York City | IO |
| Adam Kol | Berkeley | IO, (former) Conflict Resolution, DxE Connections, Legal |
| Caetano Laprebendere | New York City | Local activist |
| Audrey Leese | Philadelphia | Local activist |
| Sherry Lifton | Berkeley | IO, Animal Care |
| Hana Low | Colorado | IO, GTM, Culture and Values, Open Rescue |

| Name | Chapter | Roles |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Maggie McMahon | Philadelphia | Local organizer |
| Bre Mease-White | Cleveland | Local organizer |
| Abhijit Muduganti | Cleveland | IO, Metrics, Blog, Instagram, co-founder of Species Revolution |
| Nicole Parr | Philadelphia | Local Activist |
| Star Peterson | Charlottesville | IO |
| Lynn Rage | LA | IO |
| Taylor Reid Holman | LA | IO |
| Araceli Rodriguez | Chicago | IO, Instagram, Twitter |
| Colin Rupprecht | Philadelphia | IO |
| Amy Stewart | Cleveland | IO, Save organizer |
| Charlie Sudlow | Albuquerque/Detroit | IO |
| Tiffany Walker | Berkeley | IO, Steering, Press, Legal, Open Rescue |
| Jack Weber | Pinellas | Local activist |