

CONSTITUTION OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY
USA

**Amended July 8, 2001
27th National Convention
Milwaukee, WI**



CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREAMBLE

The Communist Party USA is the party of and for the U.S. working class, a class which is multiracial, multinational, and unites men and women, young and old, employed and unemployed, organized and unorganized, gay and straight, native-born and immigrant, urban and rural, and composed of workers who perform a large range of physical and mental labor—the vast majority of our society. We are the party of the African American, Mexican American,

Puerto Rican, all other Latino American, Native American, Asian American, and all racially and nationally oppressed peoples, as well as women, youth, and all other working people.

The living standards of workers and the natural environment on which life depends are under constant attack due to the drive for maximum profits inherent in capitalism. Our party fights for jobs and economic security, a decent and rising standard of living, peace, justice, equality, a sustainable environment, gay rights, health care, education, affordable housing, the needs of seniors, democracy, and a fulfilling life for everyone, with socialism as our goal. Only through the abolition of the capitalist system and the socialist reorganization of society can exploitation of human beings by others, and the evils of oppression, war, racism, environmental degradation, and poverty be ended. We seek to build a socialist society which puts people and nature before profits.

Our country's founding Revolution exalted the ideals of equality, justice, and democracy, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all. Marxists have long hailed its progressive significance, while recognizing its historical limitations, chief of which was the failure

to abolish slavery. The Communist Party today upholds the continuing struggle to realize these ideals. The revolutionary democratic traditions of the United States call for radical change when injustice, inequality, and exploitation become unbearably oppressive. This legacy gives us, the working class and its allies, the right and responsibility to build a new society. We advocate an expanded Bill of Rights to guarantee religious, political, and individual freedoms, but also freedom from poverty, hunger, joblessness, and racism.

Racism plays a particularly destructive role in the life of our country, imposing severely impoverished living standards on tens of millions of the specially oppressed, and lowering the quality of life for all workers. Racism harms all workers, obstructing the development of working-class consciousness, driving wedges in class unity to divert attention from class exploitation, and creating extra profits for the capitalist class. The Communist Party is unalterably opposed to all manifestations of racism, national oppression, U.S. national chauvinism, male supremacy, homophobia, and anti-Semitism, which are used by the enemies of progress to divide the working class

and people's forces. The principles of democracy, equality, justice, and class self-interest require a joint fight against all expressions of racism and gender oppression. We fight for full equality for all who suffer from racial, national, and gender oppression as an essential aspect of the unity that is basic to all social progress.

Issues of war and peace, wealth and poverty, ecology and pollution, racial and national division, gender discrimination, and international conflict are all connected to class struggle, and have common features on which to build unity among peoples, organizations, and coalitions. The working class as the necessary leading force along with the other core forces—all racially and nationally oppressed groups, women, and youth—can build a movement that also includes the many streams of our working people—such as family farmers, small business owners, and the self-employed—who united together have the power to make fundamental progressive change.

Peace is essential for the survival of the planet and humanity. The pursuit of world domination to further enrich capitalists has resulted in destructive wars, environmental devastation, and massive poverty. The Communist Party fights for

solidarity among the working class and peoples of all lands and supports their pursuit of self-determination over their own lands and economies. In the spirit of working-class internationalism, the Communist Party builds the closest bonds with Communist and Workers Parties throughout the world.

Founded in Chicago in 1919, the Communist Party of the United States has an outstanding history in the struggles for peace, democratic rights, racial and gender equality, economic justice, union organization, and international solidarity. Our Party is organized on the principle of democratic centralism, combining maximum democratic discussion and decision-making with maximum unity of will and action, ensuring our ability to play a strong organizing role in the class struggle. We focus our efforts on increasing our ability to organize millions into struggle, fighting anti-communism as a divisive weapon of the capitalist class. With Marxism-Leninism guiding our actions, the Communist Party strives to build the broadest unity against global capitalist imperialism now headed by U.S. imperialism, for immediate gains and reforms that benefit working people, and for a progressive

democratization of the government, the economy, and society of our country on the road to and after winning socialism.

With pride in our past and confidence in our future, we hereby establish this Constitution of the Communist Party of the United States America.

ARTICLE I

Name

SECTION 1. The name of this organization shall be the Communist Party of the United States of America.

ARTICLE II

Principles of Organization

SECTION 1. The system of organization of the Communist Party is based upon the principle of democratic centralism, which means that decisions and policies are made through democratic procedures, and that once a final decision is made, all members are obligated to carry it out. Democratic centralism combines the maximum involvement of the membership in determining policy and in the democratic election of leading

committees with responsible direction from one national center coordinating the activity of the entire Party along commonly agreed-upon lines of policy.

Unity is the strongest weapon working people have in the struggle to advance their interests. By making a commitment to unite around a program of action, members strengthen the Party and help unify the working class and peoples' movements.

Collectivity is the basic style of work of the Party. Through group discussion and action, we seek to develop and apply the best possible plans to advance the interests of working people.

SECTION 2. Each Party body is subordinate to the next higher body, with central authority vested in the National Convention, the highest body of the Party, which not only has the authority to act on all aspects of Party policy and activity, but elects the national leadership to carry through its will and decisions between conventions.

SECTION 3. After a thorough discussion in any club, committee or convention, decisions are arrived at by majority vote. All

members, including those who disagree, are duty bound to explain, fight for and carry out such decisions, as long as they do not conflict with national policies and decisions.

Decisions of leading committees on major questions shall be reported to all other Party bodies. Any member, club or committee, disagreeing with a decision, has the right to appeal the decision to the next higher body and request that the decision be reopened. While the appeal is pending, the decision must nevertheless be carried out by all members of the Party.

All appeals of decisions made to the next leading committee shall be heard by the respective body with 90 days or at the next regular meeting of the committee.

Appeals may be made to successive leading committees up to and including the National Convention, provided that the appeals are made at least 30 days before the National Convention. Decisions of the National Convention are final. Once a final decision is made, no member, club, committee or leader has the right to violate the decision or to combine with others to conduct an organized struggle against the decision.

SECTION 4. Policies and decisions established by leading committees are open to review during the pre-convention discussion period set forth in Article V, Section 4, below. Members may express their views through the channels established for that purpose. All previous policies and decisions remain in full force until or unless they are changed by majority vote of the responsible committee or Convention.

SECTION 5. The principle of democratic centralism includes the obligation of all members and leaders to fulfill the decisions arrived at by the majority. Both leaders and members are bound by a common discipline.

Discipline is voluntarily assumed by members upon joining the Party and based on conviction, understanding and devotion to the cause to which the Party dedicates its efforts.

SECTION 6. The election of officers and leading committees at all levels shall be carried out with the fullest participation of the members of the elected Party bodies.

Elections shall be on the basis of a critical review and evaluation of the work of the elected body and of the individuals proposed for office. In elections to all Party

committees, conventions and conferences steps shall be taken to maximize the representation of industrial workers, specially oppressed peoples and women.

Officers and leading committees are responsible both to the bodies which elected them and to the higher leading committees. All officers and members of leading committees may be released or removed from office by majority vote of the committees to which they are responsible.

SECTION 7. The Party as a whole, and each of its bodies including every club, shall plan and work for the mass circulation and use of our press and literature.

ARTICLE III

Membership

SECTION 1. Any person living in the United States, 18 years of age or over, regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, or religious belief, who subscribes to the principles and purposes of the Communist Party shall be eligible for membership. The age requirement for admission to member-

ship may be waived in individual cases by a majority vote of the State or District Committee, when, in its judgment, special circumstances warrant.

SECTION 2. An application for membership may be received by any Party member, club, State (or District), or National body. The member or Party body receiving it shall promptly refer the application to the club (if known) and the State or District Committee where the applicant resides. The club and State or District leadership shall promptly confer about the application, and shall assign one or more members to meet or communicate with the applicant as soon as possible. Unless the club or State or District leadership have information indicating that the application was false, or that admitting the applicant would be harmful to the Party organization and its goals, the applicant shall be promptly notified that he/she has been admitted to Party membership, and he/she and shall be referred to a Party club where possible. In unorganized territory, in the absence of a club, the new member shall be referred to the next leading committee having jurisdiction. It shall be the responsibility of the

club, if any, or the next leading body jurisdiction, to assist the new member in becoming involved in Party education, mass work and other activities.

If an applicant is not admitted to membership, the club and State or District leadership shall notify the club having jurisdiction (if any), the State or District Committee, and National Committee of the reasons why the applicant was not admitted.

SECTION 3. A Party member shall study and accept the Party Constitution and the Party Program as determined by the Convention, belong to a Party club where possible, be willing to carry out its decisions and pay dues. Membership in the Communist Party is a voluntary act of the individual.

SECTION 4. Party members three months in arrears in payment of dues cease to be members in good standing, and shall be so informed by their club (or district) leadership. Members who are six months in arrears shall be dropped from Party membership after effort has been made by the club (or district) leadership, through personal interviews to bring

such members into good standing. They may, however, apply for readmission within six months, and upon approval of the club (or district) be permitted to pay back dues and regain their former standing.

SECTION 5. A member in good standing changing his or her place of residence from one state (or district) to another, shall request the state (or district) of origin to transfer his or her membership to the new state (or district). The request for transfer normally should be made before the member changes his or her place of residence, but in any event, not more than thirty (30) days after moving to the new state (or district). The transfer may be submitted by the state (or district) of origin through the National Committee office to the new state (or district), or it may be submitted simultaneously to the new state (or district) and National Committee.

The National Committee office and the states (or districts) involved shall process the transfer request as quickly as possible, and the new state (or district) shall promptly assist the member in getting situated in the new state (or district).

ARTICLE IV

Club and State (District) Organization

SECTION 1. The basic unit of the Communist Party shall be the club. The two basic forms of the Party club shall be based on: (1) place of work or industry, with shop clubs being the goal; and (2) place of residence, with the neighborhood clubs being the goal.

Each club shall have officers and an executive committee which shall be elected at the time of the annual club conference. Elections shall be by secret ballot if such method is requested by any member of the club.

The purpose of the annual club conference shall be to project the plan of work for the coming year based on: (1) policy as established by the national and state (or district) conventions, and further refined and developed by the National Committee and state (or district) committee; and (2) a thorough and critical examination of the club's work in the previous year.

All clubs should have officers who fulfill the following functions, where possible: chairperson, financial secretary, educational director, labor secretary, press director, literature director, and a secretary who records all

decisions. Two or more functions may be performed by one person. Additional officers and committees may be elected by the club.

Officers and committees are responsible to the club, and shall report on their work to the club from time to time. Financial reports shall be submitted to the club annually. Additional financial reports must be submitted when requested by a majority vote.

SECTION 2. State and district organizations may be established by the National Committee, and may cover one state, part of one state, or more than one state. They shall be known as the “----- State Committee, Communist Party USA”, the “----- District, Communist Party USA”, or the “Communist Party of -----, CPUSA”. Where there is more than one district in a state, the National Committee may establish such forms as are necessary to deal with questions of statewide importance.

The state (or district) organization shall comprise all clubs in one state (or district). The State (District) Committee shall have the power and duty to establish whatever subdivisions best fulfill the needs of Party work, such as state, county, city or section organizations.

The highest body of the state (or district) organization is the State (or District) Convention, which shall meet at least once every four years during the pre-convention discussion period prior to the National Convention. Each club in the state (or district) shall elect delegates to the convention in such number as the State (or District) Committee may determine, provided that the number of delegates to which each club is entitled shall be in proportion to its membership. Where there are members not attached to clubs due to geography, the State (or District) Committee may make special provisions for their representation at the State (or District) Convention. Class and national composition shall be considered in the election of delegates to the State (or District) Convention. To be eligible for election as a delegate, a member shall have been in good standing for at least six (6) months.

Members of the State (or District) Committee shall be elected in such manner and number as the State (or District) Convention may determine. All elections to the State (or District) Committee shall be by democratic process, including secret ballot.

To be eligible for election as a state or dis-

trict officer or member of the State or District Committee, a member shall have been in good standing for at least one year preceding the date of the election.

The State or District Committee shall elect such officers as it deems necessary. Officers so elected shall be members of the State or District Committee by virtue of their offices, and shall be responsible to the State or District Committee. The State or District Committee may elect an executive committee and any other committees it deems necessary.

A vacancy among members of the State or District Committee may be filled until the next Convention by secret ballot and majority vote of the members of the State or District Committee.

Special State or District Conventions shall be called by a majority vote of the State or District Committee or upon the written request of clubs representing one-third of the membership.

The State or District Committee shall name a committee to administer the finances of the organization, which shall be responsible to the State or District Committee. The State or District Committee shall make a financial report to all regular State or District Conventions.

The State or District Committee shall meet at least four times a year. In districts covering large geographic areas, this requirement may be met up to three times per year through teleconferencing. A request by one-third of the members of the State or District Committee, or by one-third of the clubs, for a review of a state or district policy or adoption of a new policy requires that such a discussion be held by the State or District Committee.

ARTICLE V

National Organization

SECTION 1. The highest authority of the Party is the National Convention, which is authorized to make political and organizational decisions binding upon the entire Party and its membership.

Regular National Conventions shall be held every four years. A National Convention may be postponed beyond the four-year limit due to extraordinary circumstances by a three-fourths vote of the National Committee.

SECTION 2. The National Convention shall be composed of delegates elected by each State and District Convention by democratic process,

including secret ballot, and in such number, in approximate proportion to the membership it represents, as the National Committee may determine. To be eligible for election as a delegate, the member shall have been in good standing for at least one year prior to the date of the Convention.

SECTION 3. Special National Conventions shall be called when there is an affirmative vote of 40% of the members of the National Committee or a majority vote of all State and District Committees. The office of the National Committee shall circulate any official request from any State or District Committee for a special National Convention to all other State and District Committees for their action. The time and place of special conventions shall be fixed by the National Committee. The basis for representation shall be determined in the same way as that for regular conventions.

SECTION 4. Prior to regular National Conventions, at least four months shall be provided for a pre-convention discussion period in all Party clubs and leading committees on the problems, reports, resolutions and other

documents coming before the convention. During this discussion all Party members and organizations have the right to express their views and propose changes, including changes to the Party Program and amendments to the Constitution, to adopt resolutions on all questions of policy and tactics and on the work and composition of leading committees for consideration by the Convention. All policies and decisions, however, remain in full force during the pre-convention discussion.

SECTION 5. Each National Convention shall determine the number of members of the National Committee. Election of the National Committee by the National Convention shall be by secret ballot.

In the election of the National Committee, in addition to individual merit, such factors as class and social composition, wide geographic representation and political importance of the state or district organizations shall be considered.

SECTION 6. Vacancies in the National Committee may be filled by majority vote of the National Committee. Members may be released or removed by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the National Committee.

SECTION 7. The National Committee shall elect from its own membership a National Board and such officers as it decides upon. The National Committee shall establish such other committees or commissions as it deems necessary.

All such officers, committees and commissions shall be responsible to the National Committee.

SECTION 8. To be eligible for election as a national officer or member of the National Committee, a member shall have been in good standing for at least the three years preceding the election.

SECTION 9. Between National Conventions, the National Committee is responsible for the enforcement of the Constitution and the execution of the general policies adopted by the National Convention. The decisions of the National Convention shall be binding on all Party organizations and members.

Between National Conventions, the National Committee is the highest authority of the Party, representing the Party as a whole, and as such has the authority to make decisions and take action necessary and inciden-

tal to the good and welfare of the entire Party, and to act upon all problems and developments occurring between conventions. In the fulfillment of its duties, and in the exercise of its responsibilities, the National Committee shall guide and direct all of the political, organizational and educational work of the Party and organize and supervise its various departments and committees. The National Committee shall organize and direct all undertakings of importance to the entire Party, and administer the national treasury. The National Committee shall submit a financial report to each National Convention.

The National Committee and the State and District Committees shall encourage the widest discussion by the membership on all questions of theory and general line of Party policy. The shall provide organs to facilitate such discussions, provided that in the opinion of the National Committee such discussions do not hinder or impede execution of Party policy and decisions or weaken the unity of the Party in action.

The National Committee shall not make any major policy change until it has submitted the proposed change in draft form to the Party organization for debate for specified periods and for recommendations thereon. In an emergency,

which must be affirmed by a two-thirds vote of the National Committee, the National Committee may adopt another procedure for making a major policy change, including a referendum vote of the entire membership or the calling of special enlarged, delegated conferences on a national or regional basis.

In the discussion of such major policy changes, rules for pre-convention discussion shall apply in regard to the proposed policy change only, except that the period of discussion may be determined by the National Committee.

SECTION 10. The National Committee shall meet at least three times per year. The officers or one-third of the members of the National Committee may call additional meetings.

SECTION 11. Summaries and reports of National Committee meetings shall be made available to State and District Committees and shall appear in digest form in publications available to the Party membership. Such reports may be published when the National Committee so determines.

All departments and leading committees shall submit reports regularly to the National Committee.

SECTION 12. The officers of the National Committee shall make known to the members of the National Committee any request of any member of the National Committee for either a review of a policy or the introduction of a new major policy question.

A request by one-third of the members of the National Committee for review of a policy or for adoption of a new policy requires that such a discussion be held by the National Committee.

ARTICLE VI

Rights and Duties of Members

SECTION 1. Every member of the Party who is in good standing has the right and duty to participate in the making of its policies and in their execution, and to participate in the elections of the Party bodies to which he or she belongs.

A member has the right, within the Party organization, to express openly and uphold his or her opinion or differences on any question as long as the Party organization has not adopted

a decision. This may be accomplished in meetings of the Party organizations and in authorized publications. After a decision, a Party member who disagrees has the right to appeal successively to the next higher body, including the National Convention. At the same time every member has the duty to carry out the majority decision.

Members may critically evaluate the work of all leading committees and individual leaders, irrespective of the positions they hold, provided it is done in appropriate Party meetings, conferences, conventions or other Party bodies. No one may interfere with this right of critical evaluation. Any member may address a question or statement to a leading committee at any level. Leading committees must respond as promptly as possible.

During pre-convention discussion members have the right and duty within Party organizations and publications designated for the purpose, to discuss any and all Party policies and tactics, and the right to critically evaluate the work and composition of all leading committees.

SECTION 2. A member shall strive to attend all club meetings. Members shall continually

strive to improve their political knowledge and their understanding of Marxism-Leninism, to take part in the discussion of Party policy, to initiate activities, to work of the aims and policies of the Party, and to seek to win new members to its ranks. They shall also read, circulate and help improve Party publications. All members shall circulate the press and make work with the press central to their mass activity.

Each member shall critically evaluate the work of Party collectives and his/her own activity, with the aim of improving the work of the Party, its bodies, and his or her own activity. The National Committee and leadership at all levels shall take the initiative and give the lead for the development of the fullest critical evaluation and self-evaluation in regard to improving its work.

SECTION 3: It shall be the obligation of all Party members to struggle for the unity of the working class, against all forms of national oppression, national chauvinism, discrimination and segregation, against all racist ideologies and practices, such as white chauvinism and anti-Semitism. It shall be the duty of all Party members to fight for the full

social, political and economic equality of the African-American, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Native American Indians, Asian and Pacific Islanders, other oppressed minorities, immigrants and the foreign born, and to promote the unity of all people as essential to the advancement of their common interests.

It shall be the obligation of all Party members to struggle against all manifestations of male supremacy and discrimination against women, and to fight for the full social, political and economic equality for women.

It shall be the obligation of all Party members to struggle against homophobia and all manifestations of discrimination against gays, lesbians, bisexual and trans-gender people, and to fight for their full social and civil rights.

SECTION 4. All leading committees shall seek a maximum of consultation with other committees, Party clubs and the membership in policy formation, and especially with those comrades directly involved. In the period between conventions, the various Party organizations, from Section Committee to National Committee, may organize delegated

conferences to evaluate Party work in a given field or to develop a position on new issues which may arise.

Other forms of consultation may include membership referendum.

SECTION 5. All Party members who are eligible must belong to their respective labor unions. If no union exists at a Party member's place of employment, he or she shall strive to organize, or help to organize, a labor union whenever possible.

SECTION 6. All Party members working in coalitions and mass organizations (such as labor unions, farm, community, civil rights, fraternal, religious, etc.) shall promote and strengthen the unity and leading role of the working class, and fight for the broadest possible unity of the working class and its allies, in the course of fighting for their needs.

SECTION 7. All members who are eligible shall register and vote in all public elections, wherever possible.

SECTION 8. The Party shall give full aid

in the acquisition of United States citizenship to those of its members who, because of unjust and undemocratic laws and practices, are deprived of this right.

ARTICLE VII

Disciplinary Procedures and Appeals

SECTION 1. Subject to the provisions of this Article, any member or officer of the Party may be reprimanded, put on probation, suspended for a specified period, removed from office, dropped or expelled from the Party for actions detrimental to the interests of the Party and the working class, for factionalism, for making false statements in an application for membership, for financial irregularities, or for advocacy or practice of racial, national or religious discrimination, or discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation.

No action, including dropping, may be taken against a member without notifying him or her of the action and the reason for it. Assistance should be given to help comrades to overcome weaknesses and shortcomings, when possible.

SECTION 2. Subject to the provisions of this Article, any member shall be expelled from the Party who is a strikebreaker, a provocateur, engaged in espionage, an informer, or who advocates force and violence or terrorism, or who participates in the activities of any group which acts to undermine or overthrow any democratic institutions through which the majority of the American people can express their right to determine their destiny.

SECTION 3. Charges against individual members or committees may be made by any member or Party committee to the club of which the accused is a member or to the appropriate higher committee having jurisdiction.

All such charges shall be handled expeditiously by an elected trial committee of the club or appropriate higher body. The trial committee shall hear charges, make recommendations and then disband.

SECTION 4. All accused persons concerned in disciplinary cases, except publicly self-admitted informers and provocateurs, must be notified of the charges against them, shall have

the right to appear, to bring witnesses, including non-members if agreed to by the trial committee, and to testify. The burden of proof shall be on the accusers.

SECTION 5. After hearing the report of the trial committee, the club or leading committee having jurisdiction shall have the right to decide by a two-thirds vote upon any disciplinary measure, including expulsion. Disciplinary measures taken by leading committees shall be reported to the club of each accused member. Higher bodies must be informed of all disciplinary actions above a reprimand. There shall be an automatic review of all expulsions by the next higher body.

SECTION 6. Any member or committee that has been subject to disciplinary action has the right to appeal to the next higher body up to the National Convention, whose decision shall be final. The National, State (or District) or other leading committee shall set a hearing within 60 days from the date of receipt of the appeal and notify the appellant of the hearing date. When, however, the appeal is to a State, District or

National Convention, the appeal shall be acted upon by the Convention following the filing of the appeal, provided that such appeal is made at least 30 days prior to the convention.

ARTICLE VIII

Initiation Fees, Dues and Assessments

SECTION 1. Initiation fees and dues shall be paid according to rates fixed by the National Convention. Between National Conventions, the National Committee may revise the rates of initiation fees and dues by a two-thirds vote of the National Committee.

SECTION 2. The income from dues and initiation fees shall be apportioned among the various subdivisions of the Party as determined by the National Convention, or by a two-thirds vote of the National Committee between conventions.

SECTION 3. Special assessments may be levied by the National Convention or by a two-thirds vote of the National Committee.

All local or state (or district) assessments are prohibited except by special permission of the National Committee.

ARTICLE IX

Amendment

SECTION 1. This Constitution may be amended by a majority vote of any regular or special National Convention, or by membership referendum initiated by the National Committee or one-third of the state and district organizations. It may also be amended by three-fourths vote of the National Committee and a majority vote of the majority of the State and District Committees. This vote must be preceded by a minimum of a two-month discussion period in the Party organization.

ARTICLE X

Authority

SECTION 1. The Communist Party is not responsible for any political document, policy, book, article, or any other statement of political opinion except such as are issued by authority of the National Conventions and the regularly constituted leadership of the Party.

JOIN

THE PARTY THAT UNITES, FIGHTS, & WINS

★ **COMMUNIST PARTY, USA** ★

Date _____ Phone _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ @ _____

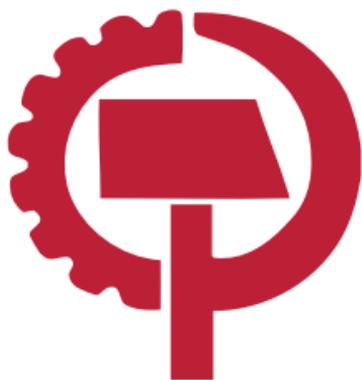
Yes, I want to Join! Please send a membership application.

I'm not ready to join, but send me more information.



WWW.CPUSA.ORG

Mail To: 235 W. 23rd St., New York, NY 10011 | (212) 989-4994 | cpusa@cpusa.org



COMMUNIST PARTY USA

235 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10011
WWW.CPUSA.ORG

