

Young people embrace an ideology that goes against everything they actually believe.

Socialism and the Dumbest Generation

By Mark Penn And Andrew Stein

Say socialism and college-educated young people start to dance and cheer. But when you ask them about the specifics of what it would mean, they quickly sour on it as shown in a recent Harvard Caps/Harris poll.

Karl Marx promised a utopia governed by the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." The Democratic Socialists of America has called for an "adequate income for all" and a guaranteed federal job paying a "living wage" to anyone who wants one. But the poll finds that 77% of registered voters under 25 believe their paycheck should be based on the "merit and value of their work." That belief is even more prevalent among older voters.

Sixty-eight percent of young voters say they want to own their own home. Meanwhile Cea Weaver, Zohran Mamdani's director of the New York City Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants, has declared that "private property and . . . especially home ownership is a weapon of white supremacy" and that housing should be regarded as a collective good.

Mr. Mamdani and the DSA platform have also called for "seizing the means of production" and nationalizing all large corporations and essential industries. Claire Valdez, Democratic nominee for New York's Seventh Congressional District, would "nationalize the airlines." The mayor plans to establish city-owned grocery stores that he says would "pay no rent and no taxes," giving them a competitive advantage over ordinary privately owned shops.

All this is out of touch with young voters and how they see their future. Seventy percent of them want to own their own business and 63% see America as the land of opportunity.

Today's young adults must be the most entrepreneurial socialists in history. What accounts for the divergence between their stated views and the ideology they claim to endorse? Another result may provide a clue. The same poll asked Americans if they have a favorable view of America. For all age groups, 74% answered yes. Only 52% of those under 25 did. Nearly 40% liked China.

It isn't unusual for college students to be rebellious and then change when they get older. In the late 1960s and early '70s, Daniel Yankelovich asked people under 25 about their attitudes toward patriotism. He found a major intragenerational gap: In 1969, only 35% of college students said patriotism was an important value, compared with 60% of noncollege young people.

The share of 18- to 24-year-olds who attend college has increased by roughly half since 1969. It seems our institutions of higher learning are busy producing the dumbest generation—one that succumbs easily to the social-media sirens championing socialism while in reality they yearn for the same old elements of the American Dream their parents wanted—owning a home, getting paid well for good work and maybe starting a business.

Mr. Penn was a pollster and adviser to Bill and Hillary Clinton, 1995-2008. He is chairman of the Harris Poll and CEO of Stagwell Inc. Mr. Stein served as New York City Council president, 1986-93.

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