

College Students Love Socialism... But Don't Have a Clue What it Means

In [an article](#) written last month for the *New York Times*, 29-year-old Sarah Leonard suggested that millennials are turning to socialism in droves. The reason, she opined, is that capitalism has let them down:

"Across Europe and the United States, millennials are [worse off](#) than their parents were and are [too poor](#) to start new families. In the United States, they are [loaded with](#) college debt (or [far less likely](#) to be employed without a college degree) and are engaged in [precarious and non-unionized labor](#). Also the earth is [melting](#)."

To advance her point, Leonard goes on to say that a recent Harvard survey found about a third of the U.S. population says it supports socialism. Nowhere is this support more apparent than in a recent YouTube clip from Campus Reform.

The video shows a number of interviews conducted with students in the D.C. area. When asked if they support socialism, students agreed overwhelmingly.

The video gets more interesting, however, when students are asked to define the political ideology which they support.

Reporter: "How would you define socialism?"

Student: "Um, it's definitely more of an open-form of government, and it feels like a lot more accessible to a lot more people. And that's kind of how I see it, like, being more accessible and more, kind of like equal ground. Yeah."

Reporter: "What does that mean necessarily though?"

Student: "To be quite honest, I don't know!"

To flesh out their knowledge of this political ideology, these students might do well to take a quick read of Alexis de Tocqueville's [*Critique on Socialism*](#). In a nutshell, Tocqueville suggests that socialism denies the individual the right to think and to act for himself:

*"Now, a third and final trait, one which, in my eyes, best describes socialists of all schools and shades, is a profound opposition to personal liberty and scorn for individual reason, a complete contempt for the individual. They unceasingly attempt to mutilate, to curtail, to obstruct personal freedom in any and all ways. They hold that the State must not only act as the director of society, but must further be master of each man, and not only master, but keeper and trainer. ... For fear of allowing him to err, the State must place itself forever by his side, above him, around him, better to guide him, to maintain him, in a word, to confine him. They call, in fact, for the forfeiture, to a greater or less degree, of human liberty, ... to the point where, **were I to attempt to sum up what socialism is, I would say that it was simply a new system of serfdom.**"*

Tocqueville concludes by saying:

"Democracy and socialism have but one thing in common—equality. But note well the difference. Democracy aims at equality in liberty. Socialism desires equality in constraint and in servitude."

Although Tocqueville's words are strong, they happen to resonate with the [definition](#) which Vladimir Lenin advanced for socialism. According to him, socialism brings everything in society under the control of the government and runs it for

the “interests of the whole people.”

If American young people were truly educated and knowledgeable on the meaning of socialism, does it seem likely that far fewer would be supporting it?