

From 'Obama Will Pay My Mortgage' to 'Bernie Will Pay My Tuition'

Do you remember Peggy Joseph? She was the young voter who heard candidate Barack Obama speak in 2008 then said on camera, "I won't have to worry about puttin' gas in my car; I won't have to worry about payin' my mortgage."

By 2013, Joseph's tone had turned dramatically.

She was asked by filmmaker Joel Gilbert, "Did Obama pay for your mortgage and did he pay for your gas?"

She responded with a laugh: "Absolutely not! Mortgage got worse and gas prices got higher ... At that time, we needed a change but a change for the better, not the worse."

In her mind, President Obama was similar to the Wizard of Oz. Said Joseph, "I started getting a little more educated about politics, I started reading more. I learned never to trust the Wizard; it's within ourselves."

Of course, Barack Obama never promised to pay our mortgage and put gas in our tanks. It was just the feeling you could get when he painted a picture of how America would look under his leadership.

On the other hand, he did promise universal health care.

And there were the "free cell phone" claims that added to some of the mythology.

And Obama's policies did trigger numerous articles over the years, with titles such as:

- "Is President Obama Really A Socialist? Let's Analyze

Obamanomics," Peter Ferrara, *Forbes*, December 2012.

- "'We are all socialists now,' nine years later," David Weigel, *The Washington Post*, February 2018.
- "Is Obama a Socialist?," Associated Press, June 2012.

Other articles, however, strongly dismissed such accusations, mocking the idea that Obama was anything close to a socialist (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

In fact, Rich Rubino, writing in The Huffington Post in April, 2013 in an article titled, "Barack Obama: A Socialist He Is Definitely Not," said this: "Critics of Barack Obama often label him as a socialist, a term of derision in American politics. Socialism is viewed by many Americans as an extreme brand of liberalism. Accordingly, as a political tactic, Republicans try to tether Democrats to this label, just as Democrats try their best, equally unfairly, to tether Republicans to the most extreme forms of conservatism."

But today, "socialist" is not a term of derision used only by enemies of the Democratic party. It is a term of honor used by the Democratic presidential frontrunner, Bernie Sanders.

It is a term of pride. A calling card. A foundational campaign philosophy.

Bernie Sanders is an out and proud socialist.

As Michael Kruse explained in Politico in 2015, Sanders, then 73, "has been preaching socialism for nearly half a century, and he cites Eugene Debs, the five-time presidential candidate of the Socialist Party of America, as his hero. But he hasn't always embraced the label."

Back in 1976, Sanders said, "I myself don't use the word 'socialism,' because people have been brainwashed into thinking socialism automatically means slave-labor camps, dictatorship and lack of freedom of speech."

And he reiterated that position in different forms in the years following. But by 1989, Sanders said, "In Vermont, everybody knows that I am a socialist and that many people in our movement, not all, are socialists."

Today, this Sanders quote sums things up well: "I am a socialist; of course I am a socialist. To hold a vision that society can be fundamentally different, to believe that all people can be equal—that is not a new idea."

It is certainly not a new idea.

But it is a failed idea—that is, as far as the socialist method of making everyone equal.

Of course, the concept sounds grand and wonderful. As one professor described the Sanders' vision, "What being a socialist means is ... that you hold out ... a vision of society where poverty is absolutely unnecessary, where international relations are not based on greed ... but on cooperation ... where human beings can own the means of production and work together rather than having to work as semi-slaves to other people who can hire and fire."

And this is the concept that has gripped many of his devoted followers: Together, we can make the world a better place for everyone.

But let's not fool ourselves. It is not so much a glorious, altruistic vision of equality that fuels the fire of many a Sanders voter. It is the promise of free college tuition. It is the prospect of taking money from the very rich and distributing it to the hardworking poor.

It is the idea that the custodian should sit on the board of the company that owns his building, lecturing the fat cats on the plight of the average Joe and Jane.

It is the lure of the free handout.

Free health care.

Free advanced education.

Maybe even your mortgage paid and gas in your car.

And who, pray tell, will pay for it? "They will!"

Unfortunately, "they" sounds great until you realize that "they" is me. And that's where the rubber meets the road. That's where the "Bern" becomes the "burn." And that's where we must learn the lesson of history, even recent history.

In short, we do well to remember the story of Peggy Joseph.

A word to the wise is sufficient.