

# Vote with your Heart: Cast a Ballot for Socialism

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I have debated again and again in my mind who I should vote for. Obama and Romney, the corporate choices handed to me are not of my favor due to the fact that pleasing their overlords is not something I want to do. Instead, I listened to *Democracy Now's* wonderful "[Expand the Debate](#)" where they asked Green Party candidate Jill Stein and Justice Party candidate Rocky Anderson the same general ideas described in the debate (Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate was invited but declined). Still, listening to Stein and Anderson, I found something troubling: there was much in their ideas.

While the ideas were valid, and they were fierce in their criticism, it didn't seem like enough. Just like when I watched the first Presidential debate and saw similarities between Romney and Obama (even though they were false in a sense as Romney was being a con man that night), I worried that I wouldn't be voting for that much of a difference. I know that the Green Party is more environmentally-focused and the Justice Party is more justice-focused, but to me, both of them seemed like social democrats. After reading my favorite book, Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, I knew something more was possible than just a new form of capitalism since Zinn had written a whole chapter about the socialist movement in the early 20th century, including numerous men and women who were socialists including Hellen Keller, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Big Bill Haywood of the IWW, Mother Jones and Eugene Debs. With this rich history, I thought it would be wrong to not vote for what was right, what I felt inside of me.

I was intrigued by the campaign of [Stewart Alexander and Alex Mendoza](#) of the Socialist Party USA, who hadn't been covered on the *Real News Network* or even *Democracy Now!*, two alternative media outlets I respect and love deeply for their dedication to objective journalism. The man was a middle-aged African American who was a bit a mix between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Eugene Debs in my mind. The campaign video they put out was what really turned me. It was short and sweet [YouTube video](#) with soothing music in the background:

"I know what struggle is. I know what it's like to be homeless. I know what it's like to live paycheck to paycheck. I know what it's like to live without healthcare. People everywhere are losing their jobs. People are losing their homes. People are losing their lives in unjust wars. As a country, as a society, we have to stop making excuses for the system that's gotten us into this mess. I want people to realize they have alternatives. They don't have to vote for the lesser of two evils. I want people to know that by voting for socialism, they are voting for people, they are voting from their hearts. That choice, that single elected choice is for real power, real change in lives, together we have the ability to make real change, I'm going to fight as long as it takes, as long as Americans are a paycheck from poverty, as long as Americans are losing their jobs and hopes, as long as Americans are going bankrupt from medical bills, as long as Americans are being discriminated against I'll fight for socialism, I'll fight for you. I'll fight for all of us."

When Alexander said that that people should vote “from their hearts” for socialism which reminded me of Billy Bragg’s song “Socialism of the Heart.” From this I realized that Alexander was my man. His ideas intrigued me. On his homepage, he noted how his campaign allied itself with the Occupy Movement because both Alexander and Mendoza “are truly of the 99%” due to their current occupations and that “the economic system must be pulled out by the root and replaced with another system which seeks to meet the needs of the 99%.” In order to do this, they propose to put in place democratic reforms mirroring what Jack London wrote of in [the San Francisco Examiner](#) in the Christmas of 1895 where he wrote that the ultimate aim of socialism is : “pure democracy...a form of government in which the supreme power rests with and is exercised directly by the people.”

The Alexander-Mendoza campaign would put in place “proportional representation and the single transferrable vote” to make sure there is universal suffrage, not the idea of universal suffrage and limit the amount of money put into the system as a whole. Alexander and Mendoza want an economy be run by “workers and consumers...for themselves and not for their exploitation” not by Wall Street, which they believe would result in a new way of manufacturing goods by making them reusable instead of disposable, ending the need for a mass accumulation of wealth and allowing “workers would reap the fruits of their labor.” Simply enough, the campaign has major policy ideas aimed at different areas: the “Real Deal” to fundamentally reform the country, a more aggressive tax and budget policy, a new democratic model to education similar to the ideas of *Rethinking Schools*, a justice-based foreign policy, a working class jobs program, a plan for expanded rights for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, and Intersex individuals and a stronger social safety net.

The “Real Deal,” based off the FDR’S New Deal in the 1930s goes even further than that program, which in minds of many “saved capitalism.” [The Real Deal](#) has nine major aspects. The first aspect is to nationalize the banks (the bailouts in 2008 were actually the perfect opportunity to do this), insurance and financial companies by creating a framework that would allow the US citizenry to democratically control them. The second aspect follows the famous words of Karl Marx: “Workers of the world, unite!” by offering the framework of nationalization to “other North American countries” so that “working people across borders to work together freely and democratically.”

The third aspect includes investing \$100 billion to develop, manufacture and sell electric cars and half a trillion to create a nationwide “mass transit system.” Both programs will not be corporate subsidies but will rather be a “direct enterprise by the United States government run democratically by the people.” The fourth aspect is a Single Payer healthcare system which seems to have supermajorities of Americans backing it [throughout the years](#) (the last poll was worded in such a way to not have support) which would create a “fully nationalized health care system” which would be “much cheaper and effective” than the current system and have “high quality” healthcare as the “profit motive [would be removed] from the system.” The fifth aspect is in a completely different realm, it’s something that I’ve supported for a while, “free and quality education” going from secondary, all the way up to primary education which would allow the citizenry “to make informed choices.” In this time of economic trouble, those that are unemployed, especially those that have exhausted money from being unemployed for 99 weeks or about two years, will be greatly helped by the sixth plank of the Real Deal, the “indefinite extension of unemployment benefits.” Along this idea, the seventh and eighth parts of the Deal include putting in place community “public work relief programs” and nationalizing the financial sector as a whole so that full employment can be realized. Finally, the Deal’s ninth plank is a

drastic cut of 50% in the national armed forces over a 24-month period to free up “economic resources to work towards productive purposes.”

This real deal is definitely what fellow socialist, Howard Zinn, was writing about in 1999 when he said that “Americans might be ready to demand not just more tinkering, more reform laws, another reshuffling of the same deck, another New Deal, but radical change.” A continuation of this is the Alexander-Mendoza [aggressive tax and budget policy](#) which would be more balanced toward human needs and is based around four principles: a strict “**progressive tax structure**,” increased taxation of the 1%’s financial assets, community-based taxation, and the reversing of state and local bankruptcies.

More specifically this would include “a steeply graduated tax system for personal income, the taxation of capital gains, an estate tax that places limits on the transfer of capital generation to generation, a tax on Wall Street transactions, the assessment and taxation of stocks, bonds and funds held in offshore accounts, the creation of a serious corporate tax structure without loopholes, punitive taxation on multinational corporations and other large employers who seek to [outsource jobs]...taxes on all businesses [that are]...paid into a fund that supports community educational, cultural and development projects, a Federal Fund to bail out bankrupt state and local governments and encouraging state and local governments to adopt similar [successful tax strategies].”

These ideas would allow there to be more money available for social programs and will help to “create a society **in which grassroots democracy plays a role in everyday life**” with the ideas like that participatory budgeting, where “**all community members to have a determining voice in how money is raised and what it is — or isn’t - spent on,**” which has been tried across the world, even in Chicago, Illinois. Such ideas would in the minds of Alexander and Mendoza allow the “**99% to raise their demands for just taxation and to back those demands**” with a desire for a democratic voice in the working of the economy.

What interested me the most about their policies was not the “Real Deal” or their budget/tax policy, but rather [a democratic education model](#) seemingly based on *Rethinking Schools*, which was praised by Howard Zinn. The campaign lays it out in clear words: “the current educational system is failing us” thanks to austerity measures and the high debt of American college students. After dismissing privatization and charter schools as part of the problem, they propose a completely new educational system that would be publically owned, using public money to

“fully fund high-quality education from age 3 through graduate school” by having “full and equal funding of public education...comprehensive Early Childhood Education...an egalitarian educational system that accommodates a wide range of teaching and learning styles...Student, parent, and teacher control of curriculum formation...Vigorous affirmative action programs so that the faculty and student-body of all schools reflect the community at large...Opportunities for lifelong self-education...[and] full funding for Adult Education [which would] keep the GED test under public control and [make it] administered free of charge.”

But this isn’t all, instead education will not use standardized tests which limits educators, but rather have a “democratic classroom that empowers students to think critically, assess problems and develop creative solutions,” while “fully promot[ing]...and support[ing] the

right of teachers to unionize, to collectively bargain and to run classes as they see fit” and eliminating “high-stakes standardized testing.” Such a plan would likely make the “alert and knowledgeable citizenry” that Dwight D. Eisenhower talked about in his famed 1961 farewell address where he warned of the specter of the military-industrial-complex.

In order to control the complex I just talked about, Stewart Alexander and Alex Mendoza plan to dismantle it, not just keep it in place, so that there can be [a more peaceful foreign policy](#). There are multiple steps to this plan. Federal money that goes to the military would be cut by 50% immediately, foreign interventions in the Muslim World would end, troops that remain in Iraq and Afghanistan would be withdrawn and drone wars would cease along with “clandestine (black) operations throughout the region,” all US military bases worldwide would be shut down, and US embassies demilitarized.

This isn’t all. If Alexander had been President, the Libya war would have not happened as it did, because he would end the participation of America in NATO all together. In addition, the CIA would have been abolished, all covert and clandestine (black) operations, “that contravene international law and the domestic laws of nations” would have ended, the use and existence of private mercenary forces would not be possible as all contracts would be canceled, “all international military, police, and security assistance and training programs” would cease. Most importantly, military and civil officials who engaged in war crimes in Guantanamo Bay, starting illegal, unconstitutional wars and violated “international Humanitarian and Human Rights law” among other aspects would be criminally prosecuted. Such steps would help “to combat the culture of militarism...in the US...[and create a] culture of international accountability through democracy.”

Such a peaceful foreign policy would be continued by making the UN more democratic through the US paying off its debt to the UN, ending permanent seats on the UN Security Council including the US veto power in this respect, end all provisions that give war powers not authorized by the Constitution (give Congress back its war powers), support a “Constitutional Amendment [that would] require[e]...a binding vote of the people on all issues of war or military intervention,” provide federal dollars to clean up environmental damage caused by the Pentagon and use it “to retrofit these areas into productive enterprises.” He would also stop injustice by stopping the idea of “Free Speech Zones,” (the U.S. is a huge free speech zone), repeal the Patriot Act along with other egregious violations of civil liberties, and reverse the imprisonment of “people whom speak in favor of groups our government officially opposes. Along with this ideal of justice, Alexander would support a movement that would ban WMDs, “safely dispose of the US stockpile of nuclear weapons,” ratify the treaty banning weapons with depleted uranium while also “ratify[ing] and enforc[ing]...the Land Mine Ban and Cluster Munitions conventions.”

These measures would advance American standing in the world, but human rights would also need to be advanced, which would be assisted by “recognizing that social and economic human rights are as binding as political rights by ratifying and enforcing International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),” enforcing the Geneva Conventions strictly, ratifying the Rome Treaty which established the International Criminal Court “along with the Additional Geneva Protocols protecting civilians in conflict,” and enforce “other international human rights conventions....[which] include those ensuring the rights of the disabled, rights of children, and elimination of discrimination against women.” Such measures would likely put the United States on a firm footing and on the way to what Howard Zinn hoped for in the last chapter of *A People’s History of the United States*, that America would be “a humanitarian superpower, using its wealth to help people in

need.”

Mitt Romney talks about how he'll create all these jobs but cutting spending, President Obama does the same but in a different way. Both seem to forget the struggle people are having in the job market right now. Gallup, in [a post last month](#) gave a sort-of happy jobs report, noting that that “underemployment...was 16.5% in September...the lowest rate Gallup has recorded since it started collecting unemployment data in 2010...[and that] unemployment [was]...at 8.6% in September.”

Shadow Stats, run by a private consulting economist named John Williams tells more of the truth, noting in their [“SGS alternate” rate](#), based on “current unemployment reporting methodology adjusted for SGS-estimated long-term discouraged workers, who were defined out of official existence in 1994” that unemployment in the United States was about 23 percent.

The Alexander-Mendoza campaign realizes this deception, noting problems with the Bureau of Labor Statistics official unemployment rate, noting that “this number fails to account for the larger percentages of people who are underemployed...and those who have given up looking for employment because the opportunities just aren't there.” In order to tackle this, the campaign [calls for a full-employment economy](#) that will consist of four steps: creating “an emergency federal jobs program,” taxing the top 1% of Americans, then directing money to develop new sectors and to rebuild “the manufacturing capacity of the economy,” using public money to “create a worker-owned and worker-managed co-operative sector,” and move to a system that uses “job-sharing and job-splitting” so people can work “few[er] hours for the same amount of pay.”

This system would transform the top-down management system, that social theorist Noam Chomsky has called “fascist,” by instituting a workers’ “bottom-up democracy” that gives workers the ability to have a voice in every aspect of their work, because in the view of the campaign, “democracy doesn't end when we go to work.” The campaign would also build on changes of this form already occurring through co-ops and thinks worksites should operate with these principles in place.

There is another group of people are sort-of accepted in society but still discriminated against. That group is “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, and Intersex [LGBTQI] individuals in our society” as the campaign notes. They want to [help these individuals](#) by accepting the “full and total equality of the LGBTQI community and members from this community” which they believe is “echoed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1.”

In order to put these ideals into practice, the campaign calls for the Defense of Marriage Act to be repealed, and for “full and equal same-sex marriage [to]...be instituted by the federal government [along with] the same rights to visit your spouse while they are in the hospital, inheritance, adoption rights, access to healthcare, and tax benefits should be available to all people regardless of their sexual orientation.”As for job discrimination against these individuals, the campaign calls for protections to stop LGBTQI discrimination which would be enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In addition to this, the campaign recognizes the problems of “transgendered individuals,” noting that “every resource must be made available to these individuals to ensure them a happy and productive life” including the ability to have access to “gender counseling, hormone replacement therapy, and even sexual reassignment surgery free of charge.” Such ideas

would likely help to eliminate discrimination and help to integrate LGBTQI individuals into society instead of having them marginalized.

There is one last area Stewart Alexander touches on, the issue of a crumbling Social Safety Net. One must note certain polls and studies on healthcare issues done by Gallup in the past year. In February of this year, [Gallup noted](#) that despite the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) “fewer Americans got their health insurance from an employer in 2011 (44.6%) than in 2010 (45.8%), continuing the downward trend Gallup and Healthways have documented since 2008” and that “the percentage of Americans who have employer-based health insurance has been declining since 2008 and has dropped to a low of 44.6% this year. At the same time, more Americans are now uninsured and more are insured through a government program.”

In a post a month earlier, [Gallup elaborated](#) how “more American adults lacked health insurance coverage last year [2011] than in any year since Gallup and Healthways started tracking it in 2008. The uninsured rate has been increasing since 2008, climbing to 17.1% in 2011...The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index data reveal that more Americans lack healthcare today than did four years ago.” The campaign [notes problems of the sort](#) and defines the social safety net as including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and the U.S. Postal Service, saying that these programs must be modernized and strengthened. For the Postal Service, the campaign proposes that it remain public, but become more modernized with new technology and “input from the people on ways to make its services more attractive, modern and appealing.”

Furthermore, the campaign puts forward a “social safety net model” that would put in place: a system that honors basic human and economic rights to eliminate suffering; single-payer “comprehensive high-quality healthcare” as the first step onto a “fully socialized medical system;” expanded and increased unemployment benefits that cover 100% of a workers wage or the minimum wage, depending on which is higher; job retraining programs that would be federally funded; having a full-employment economy as noted earlier and providing of a “livable guaranteed annual income,” an idea that is also championed by Cornel West, not the privilege to get a house, but the “right to affordable high-quality housing” including “the expansion of Section 8 housing” that would be “new, fresh and smart;” “the creation of a Federally funded Community Land Trust program” to help homeowners sell their homes; making sure that all have easy access to high-quality organic and locally grown food; and preserving “the right to civil rights and civil liberties” as the Bill of Rights is set out to do.

You still may be wondering why Stewart Alexander is the best, considering the Socialist Party is not on the ballots of all of the fifty states. The Green Party is on the ballots of 32 states (plus DC), the Libertarian Party is on the ballots of 45 states, and the Constitution Party is on the ballots of 37 states. But does that make what these parties stand for right? The capitalist system is crumbling before us.

As Paul Jay of *The Real News Network* [noted](#), there is a unregulated global derivatives market of “about [a] quadrillion [which is] the notional value, not the actual cash involved in these bets” and if one makes a wrong bet, it can be very harmful, possibly causing bankruptcies, and institutions to fail in the system as a whole. The world capitalist system is rotten to the core and must be replaced before it’s too late for society.

David Walker’s Appeal, written 182 years ago, is fitting to this occasion: “Let your motto be

resistance! resistance! resistance!—No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. What kind of resistance you had better make, you must decide by the circumstances that surround you, and according to the suggestion of expediency." That being said, vote for socialism as it will be a vote for resistance and for revolution that will save humanity from the destructive nature of renegade capitalism.

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