

I voted for Trump as soon as I became a citizen. Here's why I'm doing it again.

Yuri Perez

I came to the United States in 2009 at the age of 27 from an island where the last free and fair elections happened 72 years ago — Cuba. There, violent communist rule is not some "red scare" tactic or a concern of generations past but the insufferable reality for more than 11 million people, including many family members I was forced to leave behind when I received asylum here. There, growing up under the privations of a communist regime, I learned — despite the best efforts of my teachers and the government's propaganda — to admire the United States of America, and I dreamed about one day having the God-given rights, like freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the right to elect my own leaders, enshrined in and guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

These dreams came true in 2016 when I was able to swear allegiance to the U.S. Constitution and become a United States citizen. That same year, for the first time, I cast my first free and fair ballot for the potential new leader of the country of which I was a citizen. It felt amazing to have a voice, to freely make a choice and to take on such a responsibility. I felt very privileged and appreciative of my adoptive homeland. That ballot I cast was for Donald J. Trump.



Image: Yuri Perez (Courtesy Yuri Perez)

Then, as now, I didn't care about so-called political correctness when choosing a candidate; I realize many other Latinos favor more government involvement in our lives and young Latinos trend more liberal, but I'd had quite enough of groupthink in Cuba. I looked for a good manager and administrator to lead a government, and I felt and I now think that President Trump is the right person for the job.

Beyond that, Trump delivered on the 2016 campaign promises that were important to me then: He lowered taxes; he appointed judges to the federal bench who hew strictly to the Constitution; he has, at every turn, pushed for **merit-based immigration**; and he has rescinded a whole host of unnecessary regulations. His agenda was, and continues to be, pro-business, pro-family and pro-life. But beyond all of that, as a relatively new U.S. citizen committed to our Constitution, I am determined to help build that more perfect union we have promised one another. And so, I feel it is my duty to warn my fellow Americans about the dangerous ideologies I see at play in our country and which continue to push me to vote for our president.

Yuri Perez (Courtesy Yuri Perez)

Younger Americans — millennials like me — are becoming increasingly sympathetic to the very ideologies that forced me to seek asylum in America. According to the fourth Annual Report on U.S. Attitudes Toward Socialism, Communism and Collectivism of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, "70 percent of millennials say they are likely to vote socialist," and communism is viewed favorably by more than 1 in 3 millennials (36 percent). I have to believe that, if all Americans knew the true human cost of living under a socialist, communist regime, they would have a different attitude.



We've seen the results of a blasé attitude toward socialism before: 20 years ago, many Cubans who were exiled in Venezuela warned the locals about socialism, but Venezuelans thought it could not happen to them, because they believed that Venezuela was a stable democracy. But after many people then **voted for a socialist regime, believing its leaders' false promises of easy prosperity, the once-prosperous country has become a ruin, and the naysayers are now learning the hard way that,** as Ronald Reagan first said in 1961, "freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction."

So I was glad Joe Biden "beat the socialist" Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., who has praised a number of socialists and communist regimes, in the primaries; however, that win **does not appear to have stopped the increasing influence of Sanders, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., and the other self-identified democratic socialists within the Democratic Party.** The willingness of the Democratic Party to not just accept self-identified democratic socialists but also to allow them power within the party harms both the Democrats and the U.S. bipartisan consensus against communism. **Both communism and its intrinsic predecessor, socialism, cannot be seen as acceptable parts of any coalition for otherwise good policies, or else that coalition is inherently tainted.** For instance, though there is no question that America's racist past and present are at odds with the ideals to which I so recently pledged allegiance, the fact that the Democratic Party chooses to express its opposition to racism by aligning with the people behind the organization Black Lives Matter is problematic for me and many others. **Those in the BLM leadership have self-identified as trained Marxists, openly professed their devotion to the ideals embodied by violent, anti-democratic former Cuban dictator, Fidel Castro and honored violent Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro.**

The Democrats' embrace of leaders like those, even when the organizations they purport to represent are more noble in purpose than their leaders, are often deal breakers for newly minted citizens who come from socialist regimes, like me. (Additionally, I was disappointed by then-President Barack Obama's and now Biden's policies toward Cuba and Venezuela.) **In contrast, Trump expresses strong anti-socialist stances; just last Wednesday, he said, "Today, we proclaim that America will never be a socialist country,"** at an event honoring U.S. veterans involved in the unfortunately ineffective Bay of Pigs operation. It is a comforting message to someone who gave up everything he once knew to live in a nonsocialist country — and a statement that has been also backed with sanctions against the Cuban and Venezuelan regimes. Thus, **I am voting for him again this November — and invite others to do the same.**