

*CBS Mornings*

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Rise of Democratic Socialism]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Welcome back to *CBS Mornings*. This morning, we're taking a deeper dive into what appears to be rising support for democratic socialism in this country. That includes the election of politicians like New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who won office convincingly after running on a democratic socialist platform. Mamdani endorsed three candidates in congressional primaries here in New York City, and this week, all three won. So, if you are wondering exactly what the Democratic socialist platform is, our Ed O'Keefe has some answers.

NYC MAYOR ZOHRAN MAMDANI [on 06/23/26]: We are showing there is a new path for politics in our city, and in our country.

ED O'KEEFE: With his allies' primary wins Tuesday, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said a new path is being paved by democratic socialism. It's nothing new, but it's more recent revival is often linked to Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders who framed it this way when he first ran for president.

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS (I-VT) [on 11/24/15]: Democratic socialism means that we must reform a political system, which is corrupt, that we must create an economy that works for all, not just the very wealthy.

O'KEEFE: In New York, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez calls herself a democratic socialist. So do two of the congressional candidates Mamdani supported, Claire Valdez and Darializa Avila Chevalier. There's also Janeese Lewis George, the likely next mayor of Washington D.C. and Nithya Ramen, the Los Angeles Councilwoman running to unseat Democratic Mayor Karen Bass. Other democratic socialist congressional or gubernatorial candidates are on the ballot this year in Colorado, Michigan, and Wisconsin. They broadly support universal health care and greater housing affordability —

D.C. COUNCILWOMAN JANESE LEWIS-GEORGE (D-Ward 4) [on 06/18/26]: We have to have a more affordable city if people are going to stay here

O'KEEFE: — less restrictive immigration controls —

CLAIRE VALDEZ [on 06/23/26]: I will led the fight against ICE's cruelty.

O'KEEFE: — more environmental protections, reduced U.S. military budgets, and support ending military and economic aid to Israel.

CONGRESSWOMAN ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ (D-NY) [on 10/26/25]: That we pay to care for our people instead of the flattening of Palestinians, and oppressed people abroad is not a radical act.

O'KEEFE: For *CBS Mornings*, I'm at O'Keefe.

DUTHIERS: All right, so let's continue the discussion. For more on this, we're joined by Reihan Salam. He's president of the Manhattan Institute. That is a center-right urban policy think tank. He's also a contributor to *The Free Press* and a lifelong New Yorker. Good morning.

REIHAN SALAM: Good morning.

DUTHIERS: Good to see you. So, we just heard from prominent democratic socialists about the issues that they care about. Generally, those issues are around stronger tenant protections, more publicly built housing, higher taxes on top earners, expanded childcare, expanded public transportation. Why do you think that the DSA platform keeps resonating? I mean, Bernie Sanders got millions of votes when he was running for president?

SALAM: Well, look, the really important thing that happened in New York City is that every establishment Democrat who was defeated agreed on the substance of those issues. There was something very different going on, which is that the party itself is very institutionally weak. It's hollowed out. And now you have a movement with a ton of youth, a ton of energy that is using that discipline, that organizational prowess to bring candidates who have those views, but also much more breathtakingly extreme views and bringing them to the fore.

DUTHIERS: Like what? Like what, breath — breath-taking views?

SALAM: Well, for example, if you're looking at foreign policy, these are folks who believe in the abolition of borders. They believe in prison abolition. When you're pressing these candidates, for example, Darializa Avila Chevalier, when you really press her on these issues, she said that, hey, I said a lot of radical things back in 2020, but I talk about things differently now. But when pressed by local journalists, do you believe that anyone ought to go to prison? Is there anyone at all who should be deported? This is someone who is very forthright and saying, no, I really take a firm stance against borders. I take a firm stance against what she sees as U.S. imperialism and against our allies. She took a firm stance against backing Ukraine in its struggle for survival against Russia. That is a very different view for most mainstream Democrats.

GAYLE KING: Let's concentrate on the election that just happened.

SALAM: Of course.

KING: How big is the movement. When — when you talk about the turnout? How big was the turnout? Tell us what's to understand how big this movement is for this last election.

SALAM: That's so important to understand. If you're looking at these congressional districts, for

example, the district in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx, this is a district that has 500,000 registered voters.

KING: How many people voted?

SALAM: Only 70,000 folks voted in this election that will essentially determine who goes to Congress. And of those 7,000 —

KING: So is that a movement, Reihan, if you have that many people and only that small amount voted, is that a movement?

SALAM: Well, here's the thing. If you have a small, disciplined, organized minority that really knows what it wants and is able to apply that energy in those resources, that small, organized minority can seize the larger brand, and that's what we're seeing here.

MATT GUTMAN: Reihan, that seems to be some tension in the Democratic Party. Mainstream Democrats want to be more moderate. And then there is this leftward shift that is galvanizing young people and creating this kind of organization that you're saying we haven't seen in a long time. So, what happens with this tension?

SALAM: It's really challenging. I think part of this is that we have such a polarized national climate. You know, it's no secret that President Trump is not very popular right now, and there are a lot of Democrats who don't share the DSA's views, but who feel as though the Democratic Party is too weak. They're not fighting enough. So, to some extent, it's almost like Trump voters who felt that, hey, I don't agree with him on every issue, but he's showing energy and strength and vitality. What the DSA is doing right now, in its militancy, they're showing strength and vitality, and that's capturing a lot of that resistance energy, which is why some DSA candidates or some candidates aligned with them are doing well in suburbs, not just in deep blue, urban neighborhoods, and those primaries.

DUTHIERS: Reihan, the rhetoric around socialism, it tends to sometimes scare a lot of people. These people who are supporting some of these policies, they're doing it within a democratic, constitutional system. They're not advocating for governments based on one-party rule, or a centralized state ownership of the economy —

SALAM: Absolute yes.

DUTHIERS: — or suppression of political opposition, or even limits on civil liberties. So, could that translate the things that they advocate? Perhaps not what you mentioned earlier, but some of those other things that we talked about, greater public investment, expanded childcare, is that something that could resonate across the country?

SALAM: Well, here's where I would frame things a little differently. The overall mainstream Democratic Party has moved to the left on the welfare state. They've moved to the left on many those issues you've mentioned. The really distinctive thing that's going on here is a very tight

focus on foreign policy, opposition to AIPAC, an organization that is a pro-Israel organization, and frankly, the demonization of a lot of folks who have these more traditional, more mainstream foreign policy views. So, on those issues you're talking about, hey, let's make America a little bit more like Denmark or Sweden. Those are very mainstream views that were held by the opponents of these DSA candidates. The real thing is that energy around so-called U.S. imperialism, backing Cuba, backing the, you know, Maduro government back when it was in power in Venezuela. So, this is a different kind of energy.

GUTMAN: Very interesting. We'll be watching that energy. Reihan Salam, thank you very much.