

Why Young Americans Are Drinking from Broken Cisterns

Young Americans are turning to false solutions for real problems

WRITTEN BY
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A recent CATO Institute poll revealed that 62% of Americans under 30 hold a favorable view of socialism. For those raised on stories of socialism’s failures, this is no doubt alarming. But before we dismiss these young people as naive idealists seduced by radical professors, we need to confront an uncomfortable truth: they’re responding rationally to an economy that has fundamentally broken its promises to them.

I know because I lived it—and I grabbed that socialist rope myself.

When Hard Work and Bootstraps Isn’t Enough

I was raised in California’s agricultural belt with values that mirror what many Montanans still cherish: hard work, personal responsibility, faith, and family. I did everything I was supposed to do. I taught myself programming, moved to San Francisco, and worked for tech startups that promised to change the world. I was skilled, dedicated, and believed that competence and effort would be rewarded.

Instead, I found myself laid off repeatedly as startups collapsed or pivoted. Each time, I’d land another position, only to watch the cycle repeat. It wasn’t that there wasn’t work to be done in tech—there was plenty. But I was increasingly competing with a global workforce of programmers who could be hired for pennies on the dollar compared to American wages. The very tech companies I worked for had lobbied for the H-1B visa programs that flooded the market with foreign workers willing to work for less.

My father experienced this betrayal even more directly. He retrained his replacement from India not once, but twice in different tech jobs. Even after persistent job searching and interviews, the economic reality ultimately pushed him into early retirement—forced out of an economy that views experienced American workers as expensive liabilities rather than valuable assets. COVID only accelerated this trend, making it acceptable—even preferable—for companies to hire remote workers from other countries.

By 2017, I’d had enough. I fled San Francisco for Montana and started freelancing, desperately trying to gain some control over my economic future. But the larger reality remained: where my grandfather’s generation could work for one company their whole lives with a pension, people my age—and even my father’s—face constant job insecurity, wage stagnation, and the need to constantly reinvent ourselves just to survive.

The data bears this out. About seven-in-ten Americans think young adults today have a harder time than their parents’ generation when it comes to saving for the future (72%), paying for college (71%) and buying a home (70%), according to a Pew Research Center survey. Research by Stanford economist Raj Chetty shows that 90% of children born in the 1940s earned more than their parents, while only half of those born in the 1980s have achieved the same. College costs have jumped 153% in 40 years, according to Bankrate. Home prices have gone from about twice the median income in 1960 to 3.5 times median income by 2019. The federal minimum wage has lost 46% of its purchasing power since its peak in 1968, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This isn’t about work ethic or character. This is about a fundamental economic restructuring that has left an entire generation worse off than their parents despite working harder and being more educated.

The Appeal of Surrender

In that context, socialism didn’t look like radical ideology—it looked like relief. As I drifted away from the conservative principles



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of my upbringing and from God himself, embracing atheism, relative truth, and evolutionary materialism, the socialist promise became increasingly attractive. Not because I hated America or resented successful people, but because I was exhausted by the constant struggle against forces beyond my control.

The idea of surrendering, of letting the government direct my path in exchange for security, seemed almost peaceful. Why keep fighting a rigged system when I could just give up and let someone else handle the planning and risks? Socialism promised what life without God had failed to deliver: order, fairness, security. By my thirties, I was all-in on the communist vision.

But ideology, like any false god, eventually reveals its true face.

The Awakening

My breaking point came between 2018 and 2022. First, I encountered Angela Nagle’s “The Left Case against Open Borders”—a piece arguing that open immigration hurts workers by forcing them to compete with global labor. It was essentially the same argument Donald Trump was making, and one the old left once held. But Nagle was promptly canceled by her own side for writing it. When I shared her piece with the cadre of communist teachers and activists I was organizing with in Missoula, they either ignored me or canceled me for my economic critique—apparently for not being sufficiently focused on identity politics. That was my first glimpse behind the curtain: I began to see how both the left and the right had sold out American workers to globalism—from NAFTA onward, through increasingly open borders for workers—while the new left cared more about identity politics than about people like my father and me.

Then came COVID-19, and with it the most chilling display of government overreach I’d ever witnessed. Churches shuttered while liquor stores stayed open. Children masked for hours at school. Vaccine mandates that destroyed careers and friendships. Small businesses crushed while big box stores thrived. All of it cheered on by leftists in the name of “safety” and “science.”

It was a trial run for totalitarianism, and I finally saw socialism for what it truly was: not liberation from economic insecurity, but a different kind of bondage entirely. I became persona non-grata in the leftist circles I had been organizing in and found myself politically homeless with nowhere else to go. A lot of people say the left left them, and I recognize this in my own life. I started knocking on metaphorical doors looking for kindred spirits—people standing up to the COVID authoritarianism—and found Crosspoint Church in Missoula with doors wide open.

The Real Source of Security

So my awakening wasn’t just political—it also became spiritual. Sobriety had already reintroduced me to a “higher power” through a 12-step program while I was living in San Francisco. During COVID, when churches were among the few places offering genuine community and hope, a friend invited me back during an organizing event at Crosspoint. Another friend encouraged me to read Scripture, gifting me an NIV Bible I could understand.

Slowly, I rediscovered faith—not the institutional religion of my youth with its traditions and hierarchies absent from Scripture, but the simple, liberating truth of the Gospel.

That’s when I understood what Charlie Kirk meant when he said, “Once you taste the streams of liberty, you want to know its source.” The source isn’t government programs, union contracts, or even constitutional amendments.

The source is Christ.

Socialism had promised me freedom from economic risk, from personal responsibility, from life’s uncertainties. What it delivered was dependence and fear. Faith delivered something entirely different: freedom from sin, from anxiety, from the crushing weight of trying to control everything myself. Real security comes not from government guarantees, but from trusting in God’s provision and living according to His design. This path away from sin, from anxiety, from willfulness wasn’t something that happened instantaneously—it’s something I work on daily with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, my faith, and my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Why Libertarians Miss It Too

Both socialists and libertarians, in their own ways, confuse liberty with license. Socialists want freedom from consequences—let the government handle the risks. Libertarians want freedom from restraint—do whatever you please as long as you don’t directly harm others.

Both visions cut liberty loose from its moral moorings. Both promise a kind of heaven on earth, a utopia achieved through human effort or market forces rather than divine grace. The socialist’s utopia is managed by bureaucrats; the libertarian’s is governed by market forces and individual whim. But neither acknowledges that true liberty comes from submitting to something higher than ourselves.

True freedom isn’t the absence of authority—it’s living under the right authority. It’s not the freedom to indulge every impulse, but the freedom to live as we were designed to live. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Meeting Them Where They Are

When 62% of young Americans view socialism favorably, we’re looking at a spiritual crisis triggered by very real economic conditions. These young people aren’t primarily motivated by economic theory—they’re searching for belonging, security, meaning, and hope in a culture that has systematically undermined the economic foundation those things traditionally rest on.

Older generations can wag their finger all they want, but they enjoyed an economy where hard work actually paid off, where companies valued loyalty, where a single income could support a family. Today’s young adults face H-1B visa programs that undercut their wages, gig economies that eliminate benefits, and housing costs that make family formation nearly impossible.

This is where Donald Trump’s message of “retribution through American comeback” resonates. He understands that young people aren’t wrong about getting a raw deal—they are. His promise isn’t just political; it’s practical: restore an economy where American workers aren’t competing with the entire world for the right to survive.

But economic policy alone won’t solve this crisis. We must show young Americans that the security they seek in government programs can only truly be found in Christ. That the meaning and peace they’re grasping for in political movements is actually found in living according to and trusting in God’s design. That the community they hope socialism will create already exists in the body of Christ.

I write this not as someone who’s always held the right convictions, but as someone who wandered far from home through economic hardship, ideological confusion, and spiritual emptiness—and found his way back, or rather, is finding his way back. My story isn’t unique. Many are waking up. But if we want to reach the next generation, we must meet them where they are: economically struggling, spiritually hungry, and rationally attracted to false solutions.

The streams of freedom all flow from the same wellspring. Young Americans are thirsty for good reason. The question is whether we’ll guide them to living water—knowing full well why they’re thirsty—or continue scolding them for drinking from broken cisterns that hold no water. 🕊