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Stigmatization of Socialism

In the United States, socialism as a political and economic concept is heavily stigmatized. Although some parts of the country don't think as lowly if at all about socialism and socialist policies, there is still a negative connotation that comes with the word "socialism" on both sides of the isle. While most of the spite against socialism is held in the conservative side of the political spectrum, socialism is still not widely respected within the leftist community either. Conservatives, though, have a history of utilizing socialism in a negative way to attack liberal policies.

During one of the 2020 presidential debates, President Donald Trump brought to the national stage the conservative rhetoric against socialism by attacking Joe Biden for being a "socialist" and forcing Biden to have to repeatedly defend himself against being labelled a socialist. Biden is clearly putting so much effort into defending himself because he feels being called a socialist is something worth defending against. This is our future Democratic president doing this. This rhetoric being expressed by Trump is reflected in conservative media outlets' coverage of politics in general. Oftentimes, these outlets will compare liberal policies, whether or not they relate to socialism, to communism. The audience this is being shown to could have family members impacted by communism in other countries, making them fear anyone labeled as a socialist or communist by the media. They could also just be your average White American who becomes scared through hours of watching Fox News that Joe Biden is going to turn the United States into socialist Venezuela. Regardless, these outlets are dividing the country by making one side think that the other side wants to take over the government and then destroy the country through scary policies, when in in reality, these are policies that could be helping a lot of people.

The media's stigmatization of socialism is having real-life consequences, specifically in our political process. In Miami-Dade County, where [the Miami Herald reports](https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article247001412.html) "exaggerated fears of Democrats ushering in a leftist dictatorship," the vote swung in Trump's favor in 2020 to the tune of a more-than 370,000-vote win. Just because Trump didn't win the election' though, does not mean that this rhetoric will just go away. Certain media outlets will continue to spew their stigmatization of socialism through mostly irrational criticism of liberal policies, and it is up to us as media scholars to consume our media wisely!