

Title: Socialism: an American Story

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Logline: Rampant inequality. Entrenched racism and sexism. A rapidly warming planet. For a growing number of people in America today, there is one answer to the biggest problems that face our country: SOCIALISM. *Socialism: An American Story* uncovers the rich history of American socialism and goes beyond the headlines to tell the stories of the people striving to build a socialist future.

Synopsis: *Socialism: an American Story* features the stories of ordinary Americans across the United States. From a Marine veteran turned socialist legislator in Virginia, to a teacher on strike in Oklahoma, to the son of Cuban immigrants, today's surging interest in socialism can be seen across demographics. Through their personal stories and a historical road trip through the old socialist hub of Wisconsin, we learn what a uniquely American form of socialism might look like. The film juxtaposes democracy and capitalism. The Trump presidency and the extreme state of wealth inequality in our country have made it clear to the majority that our purported democracy is devastatingly undemocratic in practice. *Socialism: an American Story* examines the tenets of socialism for ways to realize the democratic principles the nation aspires to.

Contextualizing and grounding the verité footage of our subjects' journeys we hear testimony from today's leading thinkers and socialists: Bernie Sanders, Naomi Klein, Eric Foner, Cornel West and others. Surprising and momentous current events are underpinned with archival material and walking tours that delve into the socialist history of our country, focusing on the state of Wisconsin. Weaving together hidden episodes of history, verité footage, and lively animated sequences, our film shows where American socialism has been, explores why and how it was suppressed, and imagines what a renewed American socialism might look like.

Treatment: Two years ago, Bernie Sanders' presidential primary campaign unleashed a wave of interest in socialism in the US. Since then, 60,000 people have joined the Democratic Socialists of America and millions more Americans have voted for socialist politicians. But socialism is plagued by conflicting definitions. Is socialism dictatorship or democracy? Norway or Venezuela? Reform or revolution? There is an urgent need for an honest, accessible exploration of today's socialist movement, its ideas, and their historical precedents.

Four cinematic languages tell the story. Foremost, the film is rooted in character-driven cinema verité filmmaking, with intimate access to the private moments of our subjects as they struggle to get by. We center their experiences of democracy and justice, or lack thereof, to immerse audiences in socialist principles in action. Secondly, we contextualize the observational footage of our subjects' journeys with interviews from the leading thinkers of socialism today to flesh out vocabularies and generalize ideas of socialism for all audiences. The speakers are put in conversation with each other to represent alternative approaches to tackling problems in different economic sectors such as housing, healthcare and education. Thirdly, we underpin the surprising and momentous current events our film documents with archival material and walking tours that delve into the socialist history of our country, centering around the state of Wisconsin. Lastly, animated material will graphically illustrate the theoretical underpinnings of socialism.