

Democratic Socialism in America

Background - Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a Democratic Socialist and congresswoman for the 14th District of New York. She was elected to Congress on November 6, 2018 at age 29 and she is the youngest woman to be elected to congress after her win against Joseph Crowley. Her win in 2018 came as a surprise to most people, since she was a political newcomer. Her opponent, Joseph Crowley had served that had served that position for 10 years and was not challenged by anyone in the primary election since 2004.



Before running for congress in 2018, Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez was a political activist and worked as a waitress/bartender. She graduated from Boston University in 2011 where she majored in international relations and economics. In 2016 she worked as an organizer for Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign. She began her campaign in April of 2017 and undertook grassroots mobilization.

Beliefs and Sphere of Influence – Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez is very much known for her way with words and what she believes is best for the citizens of New York and America as a whole. From her debate against Crowley, her powerful approach to every criticism she receives, and her unrelenting push for a better tomorrow, it is hard not to see how she has influenced, and keeps influencing this country, whether it be for better or worse. One particular incident that shows her push back towards other members of congress was when she addressed Ted Yoho's rude behavior towards her. Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez goes into details about one day while she was walking up the steps of the capitol, just minding her own business when representative Yoho accosted her. She mentioned that he put his finger in her face and called her

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disgusting, crazy, and a few other mean words. She goes into great detail of this encounter, explaining the experience and why she feels the need to acknowledge the confrontation. Another noteworthy event that took place is her response to a Tweet from Donald Trump telling her and a few other women of congress to, “go back and fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came.”-Donald Trump. Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez and the three other congresswomen, all responded to this tweet. Both of Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez’s responses to these incidents are in the links below for a more in-depth description.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LI4ueUtkRQ0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFwfqgPtaAA>

Democratic Socialism – Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez is often defined as a Socialist and a radical leader, but one thing that I came across was this idea about how socialism is close to Marxism, which is not exactly a complement. Some basic similarities between the two are that they are both economic philosophies that support public ownership, and that this idea is mostly shown through the production and distribution of goods. Another important detail is that they both seem to try and counteract any problems that capitalism creates. It seems that the problems they both really focus on are the exploitation of workers, which also sparks the other problem where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Even though people tend to put socialism and Marxism in the same general area of beliefs, there are some very important differences between the two and why they should not always be compared. Socialism was created in response to the Industrial Revolution, which did create many new and important jobs, but also helped certain people prosper, while others barely made enough to get by. Karl Marx himself actually used the idea of socialism to create the idea of Marxism, later called communism. One thing I did find though, is that Karl Marx said that “socialism was the first, necessary phase on the way from capitalism to communism.” This is a key reason as to why they are always closely related to each

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other, though they are not the same. First off, communism is more extreme, even to the point where no one has any private property whatsoever. All property is owned by the community, not an individual person. From this, each person receives a portion of the goods/property based on their need. With socialism, individuals can still own property. The largest similarity to communism is the making of goods. Private property exists and the products that are manufactured are managed by the community or a democratically elected government. There is also a major difference that makes socialism a lot less extreme than communism. With communism, it seeks to have a sort of violent revolution like method where the workers rise against the middle and upper classes, whereas with socialism, there is a less strict system. Socialism strives for change and restructuring of certain flaws in capitalism within the political structure, instead of just getting rid of the structure that is currently in place. A major positive detail with regards to socialism is that socialism rewards people for their individual endeavors. The most common form of socialism in today's society is social democracy which strives to achieve redistribution of wealth through democratic processes, and unlike communism, it can co-exist with a free-market capitalist economy. Lastly, I would also like to point out the fact that a socialist or party socialist government can very much thrive. One country that is very successful and has a socialist democracy is Canada, which I feel helps show that a socialist, or at least a democratic socialist government can work, especially since Canada currently has a better economy than the United States.

Quotes- I think it is important to see and examine quotes from someone to get our own interpretation of who this person is and what they are like. These can be interpreted in many different ways, I will just be giving my own, but everyone is entitled to their own opinion and

understanding of these quotes. I will try to put them in a reasonable perspective and give more context to the situation that caused her to mention these ideas.

1. **“If I was a rational person, then I would have dropped out of this race a long time ago.”**

Congressman Cortez mentioned this during her campaign for congress. She mentions this to give perspective on how hard and important it is for her to run for congress. Even though her run for office is hard and seems pointless at times, she still pushed forward because she felt she had responsibility to her team, supporters, and herself, to at least try and make a difference.

2. **They call it working class for a reason. Because you are working non-stop.”**

She uses this quote describe why she felt prepared for congress. She was already dealing with hard work and people trying to put her down at her waitressing job. This campaign was just a different kind of work with different people fighting against her.

3. **“Americans are not asking for a lot-they’re just asking for politicians to be brave enough to help them get by.”**

This quote is used to describe one of the reasons why she felt that it was important for her to run for congress. She feels that most politicians are not helping the people, or at least not helping people in the right or important ways.

4. **“This is not just about Democrat versus Republican, in fact, it’s so far away from that. It’s not left or right, it’s up and down. We’re up against an opponent, he’s taken three million dollars per cycle from Wall Street, real estate, and**

pharmaceutical companies. We need to have courage to stand up for working people and stand up against corporate interests.”

This quote helps to better understand why she felt the need to go into politics, because she wants to get rid of or fix the idea that politicians are always corrupt and stand up for the people who are struggling. She also points out that she does not care what party you are apart of or support, we should all be trying to help this country be better together.

5. “We have to have the courage to say, ‘We can do Better.’”

Used to explain how we should not stop pushing to do better. Just because someone does something good, does not mean their job is finished. We need to try and do better, to stop saying someone or something is good enough, instead try and see how something can be improved and speak up about it.

6. “I never saw myself going into politics.”

This small quote just helps to show that congresswoman Cortez did not always saw herself running for office. Helps to show how someone’s path can change because of certain situations.

7. “We can only accomplish great things together.”

This quote relates to quote number 4 above. The idea again is unification, not just unification of one class, race, gender, or political party, but everyone. It also helps to show that no one person can accomplish these changes, showing that it is not just about her or someone else making a difference. She can only accomplish great things with her supporters or other members of congress.

8. **“I do not need representative Yoho to apologize to me. Clearly, he does not want to. Clearly, when given the opportunity, he will not.”**

This quote was in response to representative Yoho publicly apologizing to her, in an attempt to have sympathy or to keep a good reputation for the public eye. She uses this apology as a way to help put light on the idea that Yoho does not actually want to apologize and that we should not just let people off the hook just because they publicly apologize.

9. **“What I do have issue with is using women, our wives and daughters as shields and excuses, for poor behavior. Mr. Yoho has a wife and two daughters. Having a daughter does not make a decent man, having a wife does not make a man decent. Treating people with dignity, and respect makes a decent man.”**

Another quote from congresswoman Cortez in response to Yoho’s apology. She is acknowledging that people should not use woman, or anyone, as a mean to look decent. Someone who is actually decent, treats everyone with respect and dignity all the time, not just in public were everyone can see them.

10. **“When I was a little girl, my father took me to the reflecting pool here (Washington DC). We were on a road trip from New York to Florida, to visit family, and it was the first time I visited Washington DC. He rested me on the side of the reflecting pool and had my toes dip in the water, and he had me look at the Washington monument. Had me look at the capitol and he looked at everything and he pointed to all of it and he said this belongs to all of us. This belongs to you and this belongs to me.”**

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Congresswoman Cortez uses this quote in response to Trump's tweet telling her to go back to where she came from. She shows that she is proud to be an American and that she truly cares for this country and everyone in it using her experience with her father.

Last Remarks- This last part is just my personal opinion and thoughts about Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her impact. Personally, I am not a huge fan of politics, I never really had any trust in anyone who was in politics. It always seemed to me that anyone running was corrupt or would have to do corrupt things just to try and beat their opponent. Congresswoman Cortez was the person who really got me to like politics a little more. Her charisma and willingness to never back down always intrigued me and I have grown to like her as a person and leader of congress. Though I don't agree with all her beliefs, I at least feel that she is trying to do good. I also like the idea that she isn't your cliché millionaire politician, and that she actually has had some important struggles like making money for her campaign and her courage to face someone who hadn't been challenged in the primary for over ten years when she just got into politics. Whether you like or dislike congresswoman, I think it is safe to say that she has definitely impacted this country in many ways. I feel that she gave me a reason to get invested in politics and actually route for someone to win and fight for this country's needs. She has very much had both praise and backlash for her impact, and I felt that explaining the difference between socialism and Marxism was important. It seems to be a big trend that socialism and Marxism are the same, or at least similar enough to constantly compare them to each other. I have seen a lot of videos and websites that try to convince people that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a Marxist. I find this to be a big problem since there are very important differences that make socialism a lot less drastic as Marxism. Yes, there are some basic similarities that can very much link the two together, but they should not be taken as the same thing. This entire research project was try to bring facts and

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to try to interpret them as best as I could without putting too much of my opinion into it. If I could do something different, I think that I would have tried to go over more politicians, but that would have taken a lot more research and more information, so I went with just one.

Congresswoman Cortez seemed like the perfect choice in my opinion, because of her impact and I personally feel that she was the best person for me to research since I had already started to get invested in her work and impact. Since she got me into politics, I feel that it would be helpful for other people to get into politics as well. I also felt that I could never trust anything that was said about someone because of how much false news there is out there. Doing this research for just one politician, helped me be better at trying to look at many different sources and finding out what I believe to be is true. This goes along with the idea that I should only research one person since there is so much information on each politician. It helped me and I hope it will help others, to find out the truth, or what they think is true, by using multiple sources that are praising or giving backlash to the person. I think doing research on multiple people would be overkill for this. If I did do multiple people, I think the only thing that would be useful, would be to show my beliefs through many others and would have a higher chance of helping someone get into politics, since there are so many people that could influence them. It is also helpful to look at how someone is communicating ideas. To plainly put it, look at how congresswoman Cortez, or anyone else, is exposing their beliefs or ideas. Another idea is exactly how are they talking and what are they talking about, and how we interpret these ideas. For instance, I found interest in Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, because she always seemed genuine in the videos, I watched of her. She also has this way with words that I always found intriguing. Her charisma also helped me want to watch her talk and what she fights for in congress, has always inspired me.

Sources

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