



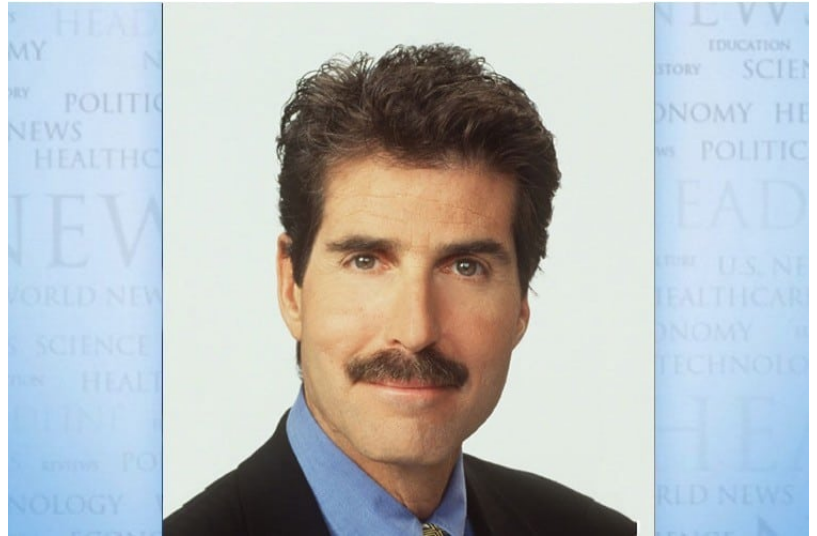
Written by [John Stossel](#) on May 3, 2023

Moochers and Looters

There's a socialist wave in Latin America. Mexico, Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil recently elected leftists.

These politicians at least distance themselves from thugs like Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro, but all propose socialism-lite policies giving government more control over more people.

Why don't people in Latin America learn from the mistakes of the past? Gloria Alvarez, a social media star from Guatemala, is running for president of her country to try to educate people about the damage socialism does.



John Stossel

People do need educating.

"It's like Stockholm syndrome," says Alvarez in my new video. "When you ask people, 'Who should take care of health, education, football, arts, whatever?' They always answer, 'government.' How are you going to not have corruption if you leave everything in the hands of the government?"

Alvarez's campaign is based on social media. Her TikTok announcing her campaign garnered 1.5 million views.

I'd like to think I taught her how to do that. Alvarez was once a Stossel TV Fellow. I'm hiring another now.

We helped Alvarez make a video about socialism that got a remarkable 15 million views.

But she knew about socialism well before that. She went to a libertarian university, Francisco Marroquin. "One thing that they do is teach socialism and communism. They make you read Marx and Engels.... This is lacking in most national universities. People push for socialism because they don't study it."

One survey found that most millennials support socialism. But "when they were asked to define or describe socialism, none of them could!" says Alvarez. "They don't know socialism's massive failures."

How can they not? The collapse of the Soviet Union and misery in Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba aren't visible enough?

Apparently not. Socialists still win elections.

"We're all part of that same mentality that the government has this magical power to control the economy, tell you how to live your life and definitely not let you be free because you're too dumb or too poor to be responsible for your own life," says Alvarez.

"We have two different Latin Americas, the 'moochers and looters' that Ayn Rand defined in 'Atlas Shrugged,'" and then the "60 million Latin Americans who voted with their feet and live in the United States. They work and send money back home. In some countries, like Guatemala, these remittances are the number one source of income. This proves that we don't need governments to take care of our



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poor. If there is freedom, private property, rule of law, then Latin Americans thrive!”

But people keep failing to learn.

Chile once prospered by embracing capitalism. Their leader, Augusto Pinochet, met with Milton Friedman and other free market economists. They persuaded him to cut tariffs and taxes and to privatize state industries and Social Security. When Pinochet took over, Chile was poorer than the rest of Latin America. Adopting free markets soon made Chile the richest country.

Unfortunately, Pinochet was also a vicious dictator who murdered opponents. His cruelty has allowed leftists to smear economic freedom ever since.

“You cannot enforce free markets through a dictatorship,” says Alvarez.

Recently Chile elected a leftist president, Gabriel Boric. He wants to abolish the private pension funds that helped make Chile richer! He wants free public transport, universal health care, higher taxes on the rich and to end student debt. A national vote to adopt a progressive constitution was defeated, but he’ll return with similar plans.

“If you don’t keep educating new generations in the philosophical aspect of why individual freedoms are sacred,” says Alvarez, “eventually you will have a generation with material wealth that forgets the importance of these values, and then they go out and say, ‘Let’s have socialism!’”

That’s why she keeps making videos.

Her presidential campaign is really just an education campaign, since at 38, she is two years too young to legally become president in Guatemala.

But I’m glad she’s spreading the word.

“Freedom implies ... that nobody else makes decisions for you,” says Alvarez. “People don’t like freedom. They like their populist messiah promising them bullsh*t.”

Every Tuesday at JohnStossel.com, Stossel posts a new video about the battle between government and freedom. He is the author of Give Me a Break: How I Exposed Hucksters, Cheats, and Scam Artists and Became the Scourge of the Liberal Media.

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