



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 2, 2026

Mayor Mamdani Vows to Replace “Individualism” With “the Warmth of Collectivism”

“My skin literally crawled.” So said New York City council member Vickie Paladino in response to Mayor Zohran Mamdani’s inaugural address. What gave Paladino the creeps was a comment so eyebrow-raising that an editor of mine first thought it was parody.

“We will replace the frigidity of rugged individualism,” Mamdani said on Thursday, January 1, “with the warmth of collectivism.” My, that’s quite the New Year’s resolution.

Oh, it’s not as bad as stating, let’s say, that your end goal is “seizing the means of production.”



AP Images
Zohran Mamdani

Mamdani [made that statement, too](#) — while [addressing supporters](#) in 2021.

It all reflects how the new mayor certainly is historic, much as how the Great Chicago Fire or the fall of Rome was. Mamdani has become not just the youngest and first Muslim, South Asian, and African-born New York City mayor. He’s also the first to be an avowed socialist and make that central to his campaign. Additionally, there was no other Big Apple head who’d been a noncitizen just seven to eight years before attaining power. And then there’s his rhetoric.

He Said That?!

Mamdani might not long ago have been a noncitizen, but he can’t be accused of being a non-entity. As with Benito Mussolini, he’s a remarkable orator, and he used his talented tongue Thursday to lean into his radicalism. (Although, he casts his radicalism as realism, risible though it is.)

Mamdani hit upon many expected themes in his speech. He preached unity and inclusivity, while playing up New York City’s multicultural and polyglot character. He said, for example, that the “authors” of the city’s “story will speak Pashto and Mandarin, Yiddish and Creole.”

That’s nice. But if they don’t all speak English fluently and embrace a common culture, they won’t be too united.

Also relevant here is that among the people Mamdani thanked in his speech was socialist senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). In fact, he called Sanders the model for the “leadership I seek most to emulate.”

This is interesting given Sanders’ behavior while running for president in 2020. It was then that a field organizer of his, Kyle Jurek, [was caught on video](#) talking about burning cities and putting political opponents (including “liberals”) in gulags, shooting them, and setting them alight. And Sanders’ response?

His “leadership” [was to neither fire nor denounce Jurek](#), but to dismiss the controversy as “political gossip.”



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Mamdani also vowed Thursday to deliver expansive government, democratic socialism, affordability, abundance, solidarity, and to restore faith in government.

The Details — With the Devil Inside

President Bill Clinton famously and disingenuously [said](#) in 1996 that the “era of big government is over.” Far from such posturing, Mamdani actually proclaimed in his speech:

To those who insist that the era of big government is over, hear me when I say this — no longer will City Hall hesitate to use its power to improve New Yorkers’ lives.

Of course, coming to mind here could be President Ronald Reagan’s famous 1986 warning:

The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: “I’m from the government, and I’m here to help.”

And Mamdani is from the government and says he’s here to help. We “have turned to the private sector for greatness,” he complained, “while accepting mediocrity from those who serve the public.” We will ensure, he promised, that “government is no longer solely the final [but the first?] recourse for those struggling.”

This reflects [a vow](#) Mamdani made in his victory speech in November. To wit:

We will prove that there is no problem too large for government to solve, and no concern too small for it to care about.

The latter, of course, smacks of nanny-state micromanagement of the people’s lives, as if they’re toddlers. (Regulating light bulbs, anyone?) Yet even more troubling is claiming there’s “no problem too large for government to solve.” This is synonymous with saying that the state can solve *any* problem. Yet this would require it to be omnipotent and omniscient — and that, of course, describes God. Translation: Mamdani is deifying government.

Much of the mayor’s speech, though, amounted to flowery language devoid of substance. The “there” there was not exactly, well, abundant.

“Can’t Lives on Won’t Street” — and Mamdani Way?

But when Mamdani did provide substance, he often repeated promises he can’t himself fulfill. For example:

The mayor said that “we will deliver universal childcare for the many by taxing the wealthiest few.”

Reality: Delivering this almost assuredly requires state involvement, and taxing the wealthy definitely does. And what happens if the rich just decide to leave? There is no Berlin Wall bounding the Big Apple.

Mamdani also promised to “make buses fast and free.”

Reality: The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (a state entity) controls fares, so state funding/approval is required.

Mr. Mayor also resolved to “freeze the rent” for rent-stabilized homes.

Reality: This requires the approval of the Rent Guidelines Board, which may not be currently amenable



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to Mamdani's machinations. He can replace its members. But they serve staggered terms, and this would take time.

Warm and Cozy Collectivism

Then, though, there's Mamdani's *pièce de résistance*, that warm collectivism on a winter's day. For context, what he said was that if for too long New York City's communities

have existed as distinct from one another, we will draw this city closer together. We will replace the frigidity of rugged individualism with the warmth of collectivism. If ... the people of New York yearn for solidarity, then let this government foster it.

Interestingly, if Mamdani had spoken just of "solidarity" and balanced it with "subsidiarity," it wouldn't have been alarming but enlightening. Note here that the "Solidarity" movement in Poland in the 1980s was anti-communist (and was persecuted by Mamdani's ideological forebearers).

"Solidarity" just means working together; it doesn't necessarily imply government involvement. "Subsidiarity" relates to ensuring that decisions and actions occur at the lowest appropriate level (e.g., individual, family, local community). Significantly, too, they are *theological concepts* — and they're meant to *balance each other out*. Applying them in isolation leads to societal perversion, to a lack of balance in civilization.

Mamdani's talk of "collectivism," though — which bears a communist connotation — is most troubling. After all, some of the worst crimes in history, from Stalin's to Mao's to Pol Pot's, have been committed in collectivism's name.

So why did Mamdani use the term? It could be a nod to his socialist supporters. It could be that he's trying to sanitize the word and concept. This wouldn't be surprising, either, because Mamdani appears a true believer. What's for sure is that to wiser heads it sounds scary — and not very American.

And maybe this for a very good reason. As Mamdani's own mother, Mira Nair, [said](#) of her son in a 2013 interview, "He is a total *desi*." (i.e., an Indian and only an Indian.)

"He is not," she stated, "American at all."



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