



Socialism in current K-12 textbooks: invisible & dismissed

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For years now I've been showing students and friends [the polls](#) that show an increasingly favorable view of socialism especially among low income, young African-American and Hispanic youth. I often commented that if the past is prologue, future historians would be wondering why they missed the "Rise of the Left" in their obsession with the "Rise of the Right." An openly socialist working class politics is no longer a pipe dream. But the tools we have to give context to this are often woefully inadequate.

This offers a great opportunity for teachers to give context to the label not only in this election season but to open dialogue in the future. We've already featured Jim Gregory's fabulous [mapping website](#). We'd like to invite more commentaries about this on Labor Online. How are you dealing with the issue in your classes? What are some tools that we could offer K-12 teachers?

We start today by posting a great analysis of textbook coverage of socialism in current textbooks by Robert Shaffer of Shippensburg University. It is an essay ["Socialism in the](#)

United States: Hidden in Plain Sight” for *Social Education* 80 (1) earlier this year. Shaffer shows the invisibility of Socialism in most-used U.S. textbooks and asks teachers to consider the bias of their textbooks as a window to helping students understand the connection between past and present. But he also gives some good examples of how teachers can use the opportunity of the gaps or bias to enhance their teaching.

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Socialism in the United States: Hidden in Plain Sight

Robert Shaffer

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders has attracted some of the largest crowds of the 2016 presidential campaign thus far: 11,000 in Phoenix, 25,000 in Los Angeles, and 28,000 in Portland, Oregon. Sanders, a democratic socialist who for three decades has won office as an Independent, is now running in the Democratic Party primaries. While he does not advocate the original goal of socialism—that “a nation’s resources and major industries should be owned and operated by the government on behalf of all the people, not by individuals and private companies for their own profit,” in the words of one U.S. history textbook¹—Sanders has put “socialism” back in American

become, as Sanders notes, broadly accepted—or at least part of mainstream debate.

The Invisibility of Socialism in U.S. Textbooks

As we seek to increase our students’ sophistication as citizens, discussing

Author



Rosemary Feurer

Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950*, among other books and essays. She is working on *The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940* and a new biography of Mary Harris “Mother” Jones.