

# FORUM

## Will Bernie Sanders be able to sustain free?



**Dr. James B. Ewers Jr.**  
Guest Columnist

I am a fan of free! Whenever I can get something for free, I am usually the first person in line. Some years ago, a major pizza chain was giving away free crazy bread with each pizza order. Unfortunately, that didn't last very long. It could have been that the company saw that free was not going to fit into their long-term economic plan.

One of the Democratic presidential candidates, Bernie Sanders, is a proponent of free! During both of his presidential

bids, he has been an advocate of free healthcare for all. He references the Canadian system as a model for what our system might look like. Of course, during his last run, Hillary Clinton was the candidate and therefore his healthcare idea fell short.

Now with new energy and an emerging presence, Senator Bernie Sanders is leading the field of Democratic candidates. As I listen to him, he comes across in multiple personas. First, he is a convincing fellow and aspirational for the American people. When he talks about free healthcare and our moral right to have it, it is easy to believe him. He has crowds, especially young people, in such a frenzy that the price points and costs never really enter the picture.

Senator Sanders also

sounds a bit mean. He has a kind of "I'm going to beat your brains out" mentality. In the long run, how will that mindset sit with American voters? After all, we don't want a mean sounding president of the United States of America.

When I was a young boy growing up in North Carolina, we would go to the fair each year. At the fair, there was always a guy trying to sell us something. That's Bernie! He is trying to convince us that he can become the next president. He talks non-stop and has all the answers without hesitating.

Now, in addition to free healthcare, Bernie Sanders is telling us that student loans will be forgiven, and that college education will be free. Just a few years ago, one of the lyrics to a Hip Hop song was "blow the whistle."

Well, Bernie Sanders is really blowing the whistle. Is this the whistle of hope or the whistle of temporary insanity?

Senator Sanders describes himself as a Democratic Socialist. In everyday terms, that means sharing everything and that almost everything is free. Here are some perspectives on his ideas, at least from where I stand.

First off, Bernie Sanders is not a Democrat. He identifies himself as an Independent from Vermont. Is he aligned with the Democratic Party because the Republican Party wouldn't accept him? Can you imagine a Republican Socialist?

Many believe that the Democratic Party is misguided by having Bernie Sanders in it. My position is if he wants to run as a Democrat, he should be-

come a Democrat. If you are not all in, then you are all out. How can you be partially in and partially out? Our nation is especially troubled now with who is in the White House. Remember, he wasn't always a Republican.

Senator Sanders' proposals are far reaching. Who is going to pay for free college, free healthcare and for the forgiveness of student loans? His generic answer has been Wall Street. My consumer answer is really? Recently, at a CNN town hall meeting, he said that a part of his plan was for us to pay a small tax. Will that strategy work over a long period of time?

Bernie Sanders has a lot of supporters. The question is whether America is ready for these radical transitions and transformations. Impor-

tant primaries coming up will give us a temperature reading as to the viability of his programs.

Just days ago a Yahoo poll said Joe Biden has the best chance of defeating the president. This is good news for the Biden camp. Going forward in the weeks ahead, we will get a clearer picture of exactly who the Democratic candidate will be.

Fasten your seatbelt, we are in for a bumpy ride.

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## Bernie's assault on our cliché of greatness



**ROBERT C. KOEHLER**  
Guest Columnist

"Excuse me, occasionally it might be a good idea to be honest about American foreign policy."

I don't think I've heard that much honesty from a mainstream party presidential candidate in virtually half a century. And suddenly this race begins to matter in a way that seems like ... oh my God, a return of democracy? Suddenly I don't feel utterly marginalized as a voter, as an American, left with nothing but cynical despair as I wait to learn which "lesser evil" the Dems will serve up for me as a candidate.

The words are those of Bernie Sanders, of course, standing up to the red-baiting moderators and some of the other candidates were slinging at him during the latest debate, trying their best to bring him down.

He went on: "That includes the fact that America has overthrown [democratic] governments all over the world — in Chile, in Guatemala, in Iran."

Well, yeah, but ... we're still the greatest country on the planet,

right? I get why the corporate media hates Sanders and wants to get rid of him ASAP. The American political center (as it likes to call itself) has done a helluva job marginalizing the truth-wielding, anti-war, pro-empathy, pro-sanity wing of the American population ever since the early '70s, in the wake of George McGovern's shattering defeat by Nixon. Never again! The taming of the liberal agenda cleared the way for the Reagan domestic counter-revolution and the U.S. military's recovery from Vietnam Syndrome and public distaste for war. But now that all this is settled and endless, profit-spewing war is quiet background noise.

Along comes Bernie Sanders, giving voice to ideas and realities that have long been declared taboo in American political discourse, certainly at the level of presidential politics. Could real change — what I like to think of as evolution — actually start claiming political traction again?

Sanders is leading in the polls and has won the early state caucuses and primaries, but there's no telling if he'll succeed in actually claiming the Democratic nomination or, my God, defeating the orange-haired one, much less pushing a progressive,

peace- and environment-conscious agenda through Congress. But this much seems apparent right now: He's beating — and, I hope, deconstructing — the centrist media.

These highly paid bouncers are so used to defining the political limits of the American spectator democracy — i.e., establishing the nature of reality (it's a big horse race) — they are ever more contemptuous of someone like Sanders, not to mention the constituency for whom he speaks. A glaring example of this contempt was Chris Matthews' idiotic blather on MSNBC last week, in the wake of Sanders' big win in the Nevada caucus, managing in a twisted analogy to compare this victory to the Nazi invasion of France in 1940.

Well, it turns out Matthews hit himself in the head with his own hardball. His profoundly offensive analogy immediately generated a #FireChrisMatthews hashtag and he was forced to spew an apology in order to keep his job.

"Senator Sanders," he said two days later on his show "Hardball," "I'm sorry for comparing anything from that tragic era in which so many suffered, especially the Jewish people, to an elected result in which you were

a well-deserved winner. This is going to be a hard-fought, heated campaign of ideas."

The apology was accepted by the Sanders campaign, whose manager said, "We hope to get fairer coverage going forward." And maybe they actually will! But what's worth pondering for a moment is the atmosphere behind the scenes at MSNBC, and throughout the corporate media, prior to Matthews' remark. Sanders had relatives murdered in the Holocaust, for God's sake, but how could such a stupid comment form in a pundit's consciousness as a newsworthy observation about any candidate's victory? The anti-Sanders, and therefore anti-progressive, atmosphere at MSNBC must have been wide open and uncontained.

And indeed, consider one of the primary lines of attack on Sanders, the democratic socialist, by the corporate media: red-baiting.

Red-baiting is a throwback to the unrestrained Cold War era, in the early '50s — the McCarthy era, the HUAC era — when a grotesquely hypocritical moral righteousness gained sufficient governmental power to limit Americans' freedom of speech and thought by poisoning certain political positions with the label

"communist." Has this era returned?

Sanders has been lambasted recently for such sins as saying something good about Fidel Castro, telling Anderson Cooper on "60 Minutes": "It's unfair to simply say everything is bad. When Fidel Castro came into office, you know what he did? He had a massive literacy program. Is that a bad thing? Even though Fidel Castro did it?" Pundits have been trying desperately to tear Sanders to shreds over this outrage (and seem to have no memory of the mob-linked Fulgencio Batista, the Cuban leader overthrown by the Castro revolution).

The media has also made a point of reporting that Sanders has been briefed by U.S. intelligence that the Russians are attempting to help his campaign, seemingly because he's the candidate least likely to defeat Trump. While the briefing occurred over a month ago, it only became news, reported by the Washington Post, the day before the Nevada caucus. Sanders' response: "I don't care, frankly, who Putin wants to be president. My message to Putin is clear: Stay out of American elections, and as president I will make sure that you do."

And then there was the

New York Times, throwing such poison seeds into the wind as "his support for the Sandinistas" — as though there weren't legitimate reasons to support them and extreme controversy during the Reagan years about U.S. support for the anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua, known as the contras. And in the same paragraph, the Times seems to summon the ghost of Joseph McCarthy, informing America that Sanders had a "honeymoon in the Soviet Union."

Can you imagine electing a president so arrogant he actually claims the right to think for himself and challenge U.S. foreign policy, past and present? A president who honeymooned under the Soviet moon?

As the media is pointing out, the cliché we deeply cherish — we're good, they're bad — is under assault in 2020.

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## Low voter turnout drives primary election results



**Algenon Cash**  
Guest Columnist

The primary election season has ended with many predicted outcomes coming to pass and other results taking some by surprise. One fact that always seems to amaze observers is voter turnout in primary elections.

Early results indicate 82,314 Forsyth County residents cast a ballot this past Tuesday — only 32% of all registered voters. Not only are those numbers abysmal, they are down from 2016 when

nearly 36% of all voters showed up for primary elections.

I asked many local people if they planned to vote and received wide ranging feedback — including not trusting the process, not understanding who the candidates are, with some informing me they didn't even realize an election was underway. The country is divided and voter apathy does nothing to unite us around so many common goals and objectives.

Elected officials are extended authority in so many areas of life. We depend on these leaders to protect us, manage public resources, generate economic opportunities, serve the least of us, and guide the community

with a compelling vision. It's simply mind boggling as to why more people don't care to share in the process.

Although final voting results are still under review, we do have a breakdown of early voting data that is concerning. Around 13% of African Americans voted early and just 5% of voters aged 18-24. These groups often are most vocal about issues in the community — violence, police brutality, housing, economic mobility, and transportation — however repeatedly they are the most underperforming voting bloc.

Wealthy voters tend to vote more frequently. Nonvoters are more likely to be poor, young, Hispanic, or African American.

I spoke with a single 23-year-old mother of two about the challenges of raising her children with no other parent in the household. She complained about the inefficient public transit system, lack of jobs paying a decent wage, and her desire to one day be able to afford to return to a university to complete her college degree.

However, when asked about voting, she decided, "No, I'm not voting, none of those people care about me and my kids."

The response may sound contrarian, but it's not. For every ten adults eligible to vote, only about three cast a ballot in primary elections. Some voters don't understand why primary elections are criti-

cal.

In today's hyper partisan political arena, many races don't feature general opposition and often get decided on primary voting day when the major political parties vote to establish their candidate for the general election. The unspoken truth is that American elections are far less competitive these days as a result of gerrymandering, which packs select voters in certain districts to engineer a desired outcome.

It's hard to argue whether election results would alter if the entire population of registered voters participated, but voters must come to realize the process determines more than which candidate wins or loses. Elections matter and the

outcomes influence which public policies elected officials champion and whose needs candidates selectively acknowledge or ignore.

Undoubtedly there will be mass attention on who voted and why. But hopefully, elected officials and political pundits will consider an equally important question: who is not voting and what impact does that have?

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# Have an Opinion?

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