



Democratic congressional candidate Darializa Avila Chevalier speaks during a Get Out The Vote rally ahead of New York's primary election June 18, 2026, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. (AP/Ryan Murphy)



by Michael Sean Winters

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Poor Graham Platner. In a self-pitying [11-minute video](#), the now former U.S. Senate candidate for Maine seemed to think he was the victim here, not the woman whom he is alleged to have raped. And, the "establishment" won't let him ignore a credible accusation of sexual assault. He sounded like a teenager who got caught doing something bad.

Platner was one of a group of candidates which aims to lead the Democratic Party's version of the Tea Party. They claim the mantle of progressivism. As a group, their distress at the Democratic Party's failure for two generations to defend the interests of the working class is as admirable as it is understandable. But it is not clear whether they, like their Tea Party forebears, will only further polarize the country and whether they will saddle the Democrats as a whole with their own ideological baggage.

The president has focused on the least problematic part of these progressive Democrats, the fact that several are avowed democratic socialists, including the group's avatar, New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani. The record of democratic socialism in postwar Europe is something Americans would do well to emulate. At its heart, it stands for the proposition that the common good needs to play a larger role in setting national priorities, that the hyper-individualism, and most especially the deregulation of capital, that characterized the Reagan-Thatcher revolution was a mistake. John Judis [has penned an excellent analysis](#) of the development of democratic socialism in recent years vis-à-vis the Democratic Party.

This is not merely my opinion. That noted leftie pol Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2006 book co-written with Marcello Pera, [Without Roots](#), famously said: "In many respects, democratic socialism was and is close to Catholic social doctrine and has in any case made a remarkable contribution to the formation of a social consciousness."

The problem with the democratic socialists is not their economics. It is their indifference to the way liberal democracy works. If they called themselves "social

Democrats" they would not be such an easy target. Or, better, if they called themselves "FDR Democrats" they would put their opponents on the back foot. And there is not a single item on their agenda that requires one label over the others. One suspects that they like the fact that "democratic socialist" sounds more radical. In a democracy, however, one has to persuade, and this group of progressives prefers to hector. They speak as if their ideas are self-evident.

These new progressives like simple solutions. CNN's KFile [unearthed a series](#) of social media posts from Daria Avila Chevalier, the Democratic nominee for New York's 13th Congressional District, in which she called for abolishing police, prisons and borders. She also tweeted "the pyromania associated with anarchism is very intriguing to me," although the laughing emoji she posted after it may have taken some of the edge of an otherwise morally insane suggestion. This is the kind of performative foolishness that makes most Americans conclude the Democrats are off their rocker.

Nowhere is the progressives' morally obtuse self-certainty more obvious, and more troubling, than in the ease with which they accuse Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. Everyone is free to criticize any decision of the Israeli, or any other, government. Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel delivered a master class in how you criticize an ally [in his speech](#) in Tel Aviv last week. When a person only criticizes Israel, and ignores Hamas' responsibility not just for the pogrom of Oct. 7, 2023, but for repeatedly placing Gaza's civilian population in harm's way and refusing to turn over hostages which would have brought the war to a speedy conclusion, why is that? Avila Chevalier [attended a pro-Palestinian rally](#) the day after the Oct. 7 attack. There is a word for looking at a complex problem and only blaming the Jews involved: antisemitism.

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When you [read the letter](#) that brought Colorado Democratic candidate Melat Kiros to national attention, you realize the depth of her anti-Jewish sentiment. After affirming the Palestinians' right to self-determination, she states, "By conflating 'calls for the elimination of the Israeli state' with anti-Semitism, you delegitimize any solution that forces Israel to reckon with its colonial role in Palestine." So, Jews, alone among the peoples of the world, do not have a right to self-determination? Her historical account of the establishment of Israel is so tendentious as to be either astonishingly

ignorant or willfully deceitful. Kiros is not stupid.

Attacking Zionism, and the pro-Israel, American lobbying group AIPAC, has become a big applause line for these progressive candidates. I find it chilling. Avi Berman, president of Yeshiva University, [wrote a nuanced essay](#) for The New York Times explaining what Zionism is and what it isn't. He connects it to a universal yearning: "From its biblical beginnings until today, Zionism has carried one of humanity's most enduring ideas: that a people, rooted in its values and returned to its homeland, can build a society that honors faith, dignity, responsibility and hope."

Like the U.S., Israel needs to recapture its highest ideals. Both Israelis and Palestinians need to recognize that the death of a Palestinian child is as much of a moral failure as the death of a Jewish child. Both societies need to make the equal human dignity of all a centerpiece of their policies and of the education they provide their young. Maybe, just maybe, the day will come when both sides tire of endless war. Maybe the day will come when Palestinian political leaders will, like Egyptian and Jordanian leaders, realize that a compromise for peace is better than on-going violence. How the U.S. can help Israel and the Palestinians to move forward in the quest for peace in the region is an important conversation.

That is not the conversation these so-called progressives are starting. They are feeding the most persistent recessive gene in Western culture, the morally contagious sin of antisemitism. Their spiffy social media campaigns scream "turn the page" on the admittedly moribund Democratic Party establishment. That is a message that resonates with millions of Americans. But we should not have to overlook the moral stupidity of those who claim the progressive mantle.