

# In Miami speech, Howard Schultz attacks Democrats for ‘tilt’ to socialism

BY DAVID SMILEY

MARCH 13, 2019 03:28 PM, UPDATED MARCH 14, 2019 10:11 AM

---

Howard Schultz brought his not-quite-presidential-campaign to Miami, where he lauded South Florida's Cuban, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan exiles and then criticized the Democratic Party for embracing socialism and jeopardizing free trade.

By **Pedro Portal**

Former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz brought his not-quite-presidential-campaign Wednesday to downtown Miami, where he lauded South Florida's Cuban, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan exiles and then criticized the Democratic Party for embracing socialism and jeopardizing free trade.

“Our free enterprise system is under attack,” Schultz, a billionaire, said during a 35-minute speech at Miami Dade College. “Several Democratic presidential candidates espouse policies that amount to thinly veiled levels of socialism. Democrats in Congress are full partners of this left-wing tilt, with unrealistic plans like the Green New Deal and false promises like government-paid healthcare, free college and jobs for all.”

Schultz, who is touring the country around the idea of a campaign as a “centrist independent,” spoke to a crowd of around 150 inside a rented ballroom on the college’s Wolfson campus. He said that if elected, he wouldn’t sign any bills that don’t receive bipartisan support and wouldn’t seat a Supreme Court justice who didn’t receive support from a super-majority of the U.S. Senate.

He said the government has been “rigged” by gerrymandering and called Donald Trump a symptom of a country divided by extremes.

## YOUR ALL ACCESS SUBSCRIPTION IS WAITING!

Enjoy 92% off your first month of digital access when you finish signing up today.

[SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

#READLOCAL

“Once the center is lost, the heart of America will go with it,” Schultz said.

After speaking, he stepped down from a stage and signed copies of his book, “From the Ground Up,” while declining to take questions from reporters. The audience, which gave him a standing ovation when he spoke about restoring “civility, dignity and honor” to the country, was made up of invitees, local politicians and college kids.

“I think we are center here,” said Patricia Kahane, a 65-year-old Coconut Grove resident who left the Republican Party and became an independent after Trump became president.

“Schultz should do very well here.”

Schultz, to be sure, is hoping his ideology and backstory will resonate in Miami, which turned out in huge numbers in 2016 for centrist Hillary Clinton but last November dropped off steeply in a way that may have cost the unabashedly left-wing Andrew Gillum the race for governor. Schultz also talks at length about growing up as a third-generation American immigrant in public housing in Brooklyn and becoming the first in his family to go to college and graduate.



Howard Schultz, former Starbucks CEO, speaks at Miami Dade College's Wolfson campus in Downtown Miami as he tours the country, mulling a presidential campaign as an independent candidate for the 2020 Elections. On Wednesday March 13, 2019.

Pedro Portal [pportal@miamiherald.com](mailto:pportal@miamiherald.com)

That made Miami Dade College, which rented out a ballroom at its downtown Wolfson campus, a fitting background for his pitch. As an institution, Miami Dade College has more undergraduates than any other four-year university in the country. The school, which functions as a key education cog in a region with high levels of poverty and immigration, offers in-state tuition prices to Dreamers.

“This city and all of South Florida is home to hundreds of thousands of immigrants who’ve fled socialist revolutions that have destroyed free enterprise systems and the rule of law,” said Schultz. “These immigrants, these extraordinary people from Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and other parts of Latin America, have embraced the American way and found success while making tremendous contributions to their communities and their country.”

Schultz, 65, has had a rough go of things since he announced on “60 Minutes” in late January that he was strongly considering a run for president as an independent candidate.

Democrats immediately began freaking out about the possibility that a Schultz campaign would guarantee Trump’s reelection by siphoning votes away from the party’s nominee. His own [internal polling](#), according to NBC, has Schultz earning 17 percent of the vote in a three-way race against Trump and either Kamala Harris or Elizabeth Warren (with Trump winning). He’s ripped popular Democratic stars like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, criticized the Republican 2017 tax overhaul, and generally knocked the flash-point political issues driving both parties.

Schultz spoke at South By Southwest in Texas last week and stopped in Alabama on Monday (where he accused Democrats of character assassination) before heading to Miami. He has had sharp exchanges with presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, among the farthest left in an already crowded Democratic field.

Schultz says he believes the Democratic Party sincerely wants to fix the country. But in Miami, where Trump recently visited to give a speech about the [end of socialism](#) in the Western Hemisphere, Schultz seemed to be talking the president’s language.

“These socialist ideas cannot be sustained financially. Nothing is free. They would raise taxes on all Americans, not just the 1 percent, reduce freedom of choice, and squash the spirit of innovation,” he said. “The answer to one extreme cannot and should not be another extreme.”





Howard Schultz, former Starbucks CEO, speaks to attendees after speaking at Miami Dade College's Wolfson campus in Downtown Miami on Wednesday. **PEDRO PORTAL** [PPORTAL@MIAMIHERALD.COM](mailto:PPORTAL@MIAMIHERALD.COM)