

The Met Gala: America's elite celebrates death and destitution

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The annual Metropolitan Museum Gala took place on Monday, with seats starting at \$30,000. A procession of celebrities and billionaires, led by Elon Musk, the world's richest man, and Blackstone Group CEO Stephen Schwarzman marched up the red-carpeted staircase of New York's Met to hold a secret party, with no cell phones or recording devices allowed.

The week before, 9 million people lost unemployment benefits and another 3 million had their benefits slashed by a Congress and a White House that claimed that cutting benefits would "encourage" the jobless to find work. Throughout the United States, sheriffs were knocking on doors to evict families behind in their rent after the end of the eviction moratorium.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 680,000 people have lost their lives, and more than 1,500 people are dying every day. Throughout the South, hospitals are at capacity, and critically ill patients are being turned away.

For years, the Met Gala has embodied the interlocking pathologies of social inequality and celebrity worship, showcasing the ignorance and backwardness of the rich and famous.

Former US President Donald Trump proposed to his wife, Melania Trump, at the Gala in 2004, showing off a 10-carat diamond that Trump reportedly bought for over a million dollars. Musk made his debut with his girlfriend, the pop singer Grimes, at the 2018 Gala.

Year after year, the media fawns over the increasingly extravagant and garish costumes worn by the various celebrities, usually promoting a pet cause in a show of self-congratulation. US politicians would keep a distance from the tasteless event, with New York Mayor Bill de Blasio refusing an invitation in 2018, saying, "This is the kind of place where the elite goes

and likes to be with each other."

But this year, de Blasio was in attendance, in his words, to send a "message." Together with the reopening of Broadway shows and in-person schooling this week, de Blasio said his aim was to ensure the world knows that New York City is "open."

The Met Gala, the mayor said, showcased an "Amazing, amazing group of performers and leaders gathered together who love New York City, who were really doing this in large measure to send the message that the city is coming back strong."

He continued, "And speaking of our bright future, yesterday morning one of the most important things that's going to happen in all of 2021, our kids coming back to school."

In the name of "economic recovery," all measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 are being abandoned. As pediatric COVID-19 cases hit the highest levels ever, children are being warehoused in schools as their parents lose unemployment benefits.

The celebrities and oligarchs assembled at the Met were, according to de Blasio, there to send a "message" to the working population of the city and the world about the new reality of living with COVID-19.

The 2020 Met Gala was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, the 7-day average of new COVID-19 cases was 36,000, and 739 people were dying each day. Today, there are four times more daily cases and twice as many deaths. But the annual party proceeded regardless, the attendees conspicuously maskless.

Many of the pop stars, actresses, and other celebrities in attendance are too stupid and self-centered to know that attending a \$300,000-a-table gala funded by two massive media corporations—Facebook and Conde Nast—during a pandemic and mass economic

dislocation is, to say the least, inappropriate.

But whether or not they consciously sought to help send de Blasio's "message" that COVID-19 will be allowed to spread unchecked, they know that if they or their families get sick, they will be given the best medical care, provided for by concierge medical services, often costing hundreds of thousands a year.

And, after all, why not celebrate? Schwarzman, Musk and the world's other billionaires saw their wealth increase by 54 percent since the start of the pandemic, according to the Institute for Policy Studies. This wealth came about as a result of the unsafe reopening of factories and workplaces, which led to the preventable deaths of hundreds of thousands of people.

If there were a prize for cynicism and hypocrisy awarded at the Gala, it would have gone to Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who attended wearing a designer dress emblazoned with the slogan "tax the rich."

Ocasio-Cortez said she participated in the event to bring America's financial oligarchy into the "conversation" of addressing social inequality. She told reporters, "When we talk about supporting working families, and we talk about having a fair tax code, oftentimes this conversation is among working and middle-class people amongst themselves, and I think it's time to bring all classes into the conversation."

This is the "extreme left" of official American politics, whose perspective is to attend galas with billionaires in order to bring them "into the conversation." Ocasio-Cortez's appearance was widely and justly ridiculed, driving home to millions of people how completely disenfranchised America's working class is.

This year's Met Gala shows where social revolutions come from. The American oligarchy and affluentsia, with greed, self-absorption and cluelessness feeding upon each other, use the occasion of mass death and economic destitution to throw a celebration of wealth and privilege. As Sophocles wrote long ago, "Evil appears as good in the minds of those whom the gods lead to destruction."



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