

The White House Correspondents' Association super-spreader event

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Within days of the White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) dinner held Saturday night, it is clear that it was yet another super-spreader event among the elite of Washington D.C. Dozens, if not hundreds, of the more than 2,500 maskless attendees were likely infected with COVID-19 at the dinner and related parties.

In effect, the dinner was a live-streamed propaganda event designed to falsely portray the pandemic as over. This was stated most bluntly by Biden himself, who remarked in his speech at the event, "I know there are questions about whether we should gather here tonight because of COVID. Well, we're here to show the country that we're getting through this pandemic."

By gathering over 2,500 maskless reporters, politicians and celebrities together in one room, the White House thought they could send a message that large, maskless gatherings are now safe. Instead, the event has turned out to be a disaster.

The first confirmed infection was *ABC News* reporter Jonathan Karl, who tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday evening. This was followed by an announcement Tuesday that Voice of America's chief national correspondent Steve Herman had also contracted the virus.

On Wednesday morning, CNN reported that an undisclosed number of "reporters and staffers from CNN, ABC News, NBC News, CBS News, Politico, and other participating news organizations have tested positive for the virus."

By Wednesday afternoon, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken became the first White House cabinet official to test positive for COVID-19 after attending the dinner. Blinken also attended a dinner hosted by multimillionaires David and Katherine Bradley, as did CIA Director Bill Burns, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, homeland security adviser Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, White House press secretary Jen Psaki and several other cabinet officials, as well as reporters Judy Woodruff, Jake Tapper, Wolf Blitzer, John Dickerson, Jeffrey Goldberg, David Frum, Anne Applebaum and dozens more.

As of this writing, six attendees at the WHCA dinner have publicly revealed their positive results, including Karl, Blinken, Herman, journalist Julia Ioffe (her third time catching COVID-19), *ABC News* President Kimberly Godwin, and journalist Jada Yuan.

That the WHCA dinner would be a super-spreader event was entirely predictable and foreseen by numerous scientists. It took place just weeks after the massive super-spreader at the Gridiron Club dinner, which officially infected roughly 10 percent of all attendees.

Ignoring experts' warnings, the WHCA proceeded with the event under conditions in which the highly infectious and immune-resistant Omicron BA.2 and BA.2.12.1 subvariants are causing a new surge of infections across the US. On Wednesday, News Nodes reported 119,865 official new infections in the US—the highest one-day figure since February 22—and a seven-day average of 67,159 daily new cases.

According to the *New York Times*, COVID-19 infections are rising in 47 states and Puerto Rico, while 40 states and Puerto Rico are experiencing a rise in hospitalizations. In New York, one of the earliest states to be hit by BA.2, hospitalizations have risen threefold over the past month and on Tuesday surpassed 2,000 for the first time since late February.

While WHCA dinner attendees were required to show proof of vaccination and that they had tested negative for COVID-19 that day, they were allowed to use rapid antigen tests, which are more likely to return false negatives than PCR tests.

Elements of self-delusion, recklessness and criminal irresponsibility saturate the WHCA dinner, and it is hard to tell where ignorance ends and treachery begins. Not only did those in attendance endanger themselves and others. They are also the opinion makers for every major corporate media outlet, including ABC, CBS, Fox News, NBC, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Politico* and more.

Throughout the pandemic, each of these outlets has continuously misled the public and downplayed the dangers

of COVID-19, parroting the anti-science lies of either the Democrats or Republicans. The WHCA dinner, followed shortly thereafter by Monday's obscene displays of wealth at the Met Gala in New York City, are the latest in this deepening propaganda campaign, which has vastly intensified since the rapid global spread of the Omicron BA.1 subvariant began in late November.

Particularly shameful at the WHCA dinner was the presence of White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha, who until last month was the Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health. While Dr. Anthony Fauci recused himself, hypocritically citing "my individual assessment of my personal risk," Dr. Jha happily took part in the sordid affair.

Putting aside the conscious element of deception, many of the reporters and politicians present at the WHCA dinner themselves have no idea of the dangers posed by SARS-CoV-2. These people refuse to listen to science or act on the basis of science. They have been deluded by their own propaganda and class interests, which lend to their actions an increasingly reckless character.

Evidently, none of the elites present at the dinner were aware of the fact that fully vaccinated people like themselves can suffer breakthrough infections and have nearly the same likelihood of developing Long COVID as unvaccinated people.

Multiple scientists attempted to consult with the WHCA prior to the dinner, to help them install high-quality air filtration devices at the venue in order to minimize airborne transmission, but these efforts were rebuffed. A reporter who brought a carbon dioxide monitor to the dinner recorded CO₂ levels upwards of 2,200 parts per million, indicating very poor ventilation and an extremely high likelihood of airborne transmission.

From the standpoint of the ruling class, the most reckless element of the event was Biden's personal participation. As of his 2019 medical history report, the 79-year-old Biden takes the anticoagulant drug Eliquis, which interacts with and likely makes him ineligible to take Paxlovid, the highly effective antiviral treatment.

Aware of these dangers, the White House nevertheless chose to have the US President sit maskless at the front of the room for roughly 90 minutes of speeches, jokes and awards, rendering his chances of exposure very high.

Jonathan Karl himself shook hands with Biden while accepting an award. Seeking to downplay the possibility that Biden was infected during this interaction, on Tuesday the White House cited the CDC's unscientific guidelines which deem "close contacts" those who spend at least 15 minutes within six feet of an infected person. However, science long ago proved that airborne transmission can happen at a far

distance, especially in a poorly ventilated room with maskless people.

The ostentatious displays of reckless behavior show the level of arrogance that exists within ruling circles in the US. To a large extent, they really believe that COVID-19 is for the little people.

In stark contrast to the reality confronting the American working class, the millionaire journalists and politicians and billionaire media executives present at the WHCA dinner will receive the most advanced treatment available if they were infected with COVID-19. Those who are eligible for Paxlovid will have it hand-delivered to them at the drop of a hat.

For the vast majority of workers, particularly the over 30 million uninsured Americans, accessing treatments like Paxlovid is a bureaucratic nightmare or outright impossible.

While Biden and comedian Trevor Noah made tasteless jokes about the pandemic at the WHCA dinner, tens of millions of Americans who have lost loved ones are in a state of mourning as another tracker of the official US death toll surpassed 1 million on Wednesday. This horrific milestone, already reached by other trackers, has gone largely unmentioned by the corporate media.

All the publicity surrounding the WHCA super-spreader dinner has been in the hands of the same politicians and media conglomerates who took part in and helped stage the propaganda spectacle. While fabricating lies about the COVID-19 pandemic, these same reckless and empty-headed figures seek to foment war hysteria and escalate the drive by US-NATO imperialism towards a direct conflict with Russia over Ukraine.

The same people, following the same pragmatic method based on a calculated indifference to social needs, are tobogganing mankind towards nuclear catastrophe. It is critical that decision-making powers be taken out of the hands of these social layers and the capitalist class they serve.

The bipartisan, media-backed campaign to proclaim the pandemic over makes clear that the entire ruling class has abandoned the fight against COVID-19 and consigned the American population to unending waves of mass infections and deaths. This homicidal form of class warfare must be resisted through the building of a mass movement of the working class, in unity with workers throughout the world, fighting for the global elimination of COVID-19.



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