

Trump booed at Madison Square Garden during NBA playoffs

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Millions of people across the United States and internationally watched on various media platforms Monday night as basketball fans loudly booed President Donald Trump when his image appeared on the Jumbotron inside New York City's Madison Square Garden. The eruption of hatred for Trump occurred during a National Basketball Association (NBA) playoff game between the New York Knicks, the favored home team, and the San Antonio Spurs.

Trump was attending the event in a bullet-proof glass VIP room with members of his family and cabinet, including Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, along with the widely despised Knicks owner (and owner of Madison Square Garden) James Dolan, a billionaire and longtime Trump supporter.

The audience booed Trump for many reasons—his assault on immigrants, his attack on Medicaid and other social programs, the war with Iran, his erection of a personalist dictatorship—but certainly on their minds was the fact that Trump's presence had turned the area around the venue, near a central transit hub and the center of many business and corporate headquarters, into an armed camp.

The New York Police Department (NYPD) fenced in 10 blocks around Madison Square Garden and deployed thousands of cops alongside hundreds of federal agents. Every single ticket holder had to pass through heavy-duty, airport-grade metal detectors set up at street checkpoints blocks away from the Garden's actual doors. Secret service agents and members of NYPD tactical units had a long list of items to confiscate, such as metal water bottles, aerosols, glass, selfie sticks, and laser pointers.

Bags and backpacks had been banned in advance. Because of how long it took security personnel to clear thousands of people through long lines, the stadium was

half-empty just before tip-off, causing massive entry delays for the fans.

As part of the security presence, the city canceled what would have been a huge outdoor fan watch party, such as those that had occurred outside the Garden all postseason. This forced ticketless fans to go to Bryant Park instead.

Small businesses in the area that broadcast the game were closed because of Trump's attendance. Citing one owner, *Cranes New York Business* reported that "the previous two Knicks games, played in San Antonio, were among the highest-grossing nights the bar had ever seen. But half an hour before tipoff Monday, she expected sales to reach just 5 percent of what the bar brought in on those nights." The NYPD arrested 16 people on Friday, the night of the previous game, after a watch party outside of the Garden.

Millions of working class Knicks fans in New York could not afford the cheapest seats at the game, priced at between \$3,100 and \$4,600, since the Knicks had the possibility of winning an NBA championship for the first time since 1973. Prices for better seats started at \$8,150.

It is worth noting that standard ticket prices for the 1973 playoffs ranged from \$5.00 to \$15.00. A \$15.00 ticket would put a fan in some of the best lower-level seats in the arena. In 2026 dollars, accounting for inflation, those tickets would now cost between \$37 and \$259.

These differences in prices are not simply the product of inflation, but of the vast social chasm that has opened up in the last half-century between the top 5 or 10 percent of income earners and the rest of the population. Basketball, football and baseball games were affordable and regularly attended by working class families. But now the working class is far poorer than it was in 1973, and attendance at one of these games is at best an annual treat.

Businesses providing services to wealthy fans attending the game profited handsomely. Hotels and five-star

restaurants all reported record profits on the nights around the game, as did Dolan's media arm, MSG Productions, which generated \$140 million in revenue from the Knicks postseason games alone.

One only has to look at the grotesque publicity for the game to get a sense of the unreal world the rich inhabit. Coverage in the media featured the anticipated attendance of super-rich Hollywood and sports celebrities such as former Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter (net worth \$200 million); filmmaker Spike Lee (net worth \$60 million); actor Timothée Chalamet (net worth \$30 million); comedian Chris Rock (net worth \$60 million) and singer Jay-Z, whose net worth is estimated to be \$2.6 billion. The aristocrats of today's degraded culture sat at the courtside seats. Sources in the media wasted no time in pointing out that Spike Lee could have sold his three tickets for over \$500,000.

The most deceptive and mendacious coverage of the event, however, was reserved for the *New York Times*, which glorified it for supposedly uniting New Yorkers. Its lead article after the game told readers, "Mr. Trump's attendance was a footnote on a night when New Yorkers banded together to support a team that had united them like few things can." It quoted the Democratic Party political operative and charlatan Al Sharpton as saying in an interview before the game, "I don't care about Trump... This is one of the few things I've seen New Yorkers across gender and race united around. You walk around, everyone has Knicks' gear. It's healthy."

The entire social context of the game, including the *Times*' reporting, are, in fact, deeply diseased. Trump was sandwiching his appearance at the game, during which he visibly fell asleep, between war crimes and social devastation. His administration had just made cuts to SNAP benefits (food stamps) for the working poor, and ICE and Border Patrol agents had attacked protesters at Delaney Hall, an ICE-run immigrant concentration camp in Newark, New Jersey, some 13 miles from Madison Square Garden, where 300 inmates are on a hunger strike against inhumane conditions.

In a pre-game Sunday interview with NBC, he said of the Iranians, "Now, if we don't make a deal, then we're going to take them out militarily, very harshly."

Zohran Mamdani, the pseudo-socialist DSA mayor of New York City, was also present at the game, although he was standing in a cheaper area farther away from the court. At a press briefing last Thursday, he said that he would be "In a very different section of the stadium... I won't be courtside or in a suite."

He told the media, nevertheless, that his ticket cost \$1,000, a price out of reach for at least 80 percent of New Yorkers, including the 50 percent of working-age city households that do not earn enough to cover basic necessities (housing, food, healthcare, childcare) without assistance or extreme budgeting.

Mamdani was taking a break from promoting his new "Block by Block" housing plan, a project that provides major sops for the same criminal layer of building developers from which Trump emerged. He is also in the midst of imposing government "efficiencies" through his new COGE city government restructuring plan, having reneged on his campaign promises, including free bus service. Last month he encouraged commuters to scab on striking Long Island Rail Road workers.

Mamdani played a central role in encouraging the bogus "unity" of New Yorkers proclaimed by the *Times* in social media posts that took jibes at the Spurs. While Mamdani did not, at least publicly, meet with the fascist in the White House for a third time, he did welcome Trump. He told the *Atlantic*: "I think we look forward to welcoming any New Yorker who is excited for the Knicks to have that chance to win that championship."

Always ready to offer up a political diversion in the service of their ruling class masters, the supposed "progressives" in the Democratic Party such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez spent the days preceding the game tweeting in support of the home-town Knicks and ignoring the multiple crimes of Trump and American imperialism.

The grotesque episode of Game 3 of the NBA playoffs underscored the mammoth social divide between the financial oligarchy and the broad mass of working people that will, perhaps sooner rather than later, produce political convulsions that will shake the entire rotten economic and political system to its foundations.



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