

Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and the \$3500 Suit

Few observers missed Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez' interview and [photoshoot](#) last week in which the rising, avowedly-socialist NY Congressional candidate wore a \$3500 suit and shoes while hobnobbing with construction workers. (Such are the perils of outspoken class warfarism; a thing like that tends to be noticed.) Her opponents lambasted her as just another in a long line of collectivist hypocrites, while Cortez' supporters dismissed the criticism as petty. Ocasio herself noted that the outfit she wore was not in fact hers, and had to be returned after the shoot.

This was not her first encounter with pretense: taking ride-sharing firm Uber to task for "[exploitation](#)" on Twitter in early March 2018 didn't keep her and her campaign from amassing [thousands](#) of dollars' worth of rides with the company (and [others](#)) between 2017 and 2018 (some for distances resulting in decidedly non-"living wage" fares of less than \$1.00).

In fact, though, there is no hypocrisy afoot. The significance of Cortez' suit and shoes combo – the cost of which is more than the [monthly salary](#) of the average American as of 2nd Qtr 2018 – is not antithetical to socialism but completely consistent with it.

Intellectuals, after all – academics, activists, and technocrats – are the fount from which socialist ideation, theory, and practice spring. "Grassroots" movements, even in the rare event they are spontaneous, require organization and direction, and this unfailingly comes from those whose lives are spent studying, interpreting, and synthesizing theory.

Vladimir Lenin himself [wrote](#) in "What is to Be Done?" (1902)

that despite the predictions of Marx – that what today would be called popular movements among “the people” or “the workers” – history proves that a working class do not tend to develop ‘class consciousness’.

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals.

This comes as little surprise: amongst themselves, individuals of blue, gray, white, or any other color collar naturally tend to want more pay, better working conditions, and/or more benefits; grandiose ideas regarding the wholesale remaking of society, radical restructure of the economy, and the like tend to come from above.

Practically speaking, the process of proselytizing and mobilizing a population, consolidating power, and converting an economy to central planning – to say nothing of running it – starts and ends with a small, elite corps of ruling intellectuals. That over time they accord to themselves the trappings of the moneyed class they simultaneously assail is neither surprising or hypocritical. Collectivism of every stripe – democratic socialism, national socialism, communism, syndicalism – cultivates a new, political aristocracy.

Ocasio’s affluent attire is thus in keeping with a longstanding tradition of exceedingly well-heeled redistributionists, as are Bernie Sanders’ [homes](#), the wealth of Cuba’s [Castro](#) brothers, North Korea’s [Kim](#) family, Hugo Chavez’ [daughter](#), and in historical cases which include those of Romanian dictator Nicolae [Ceausescu](#), Chairman of the

People's Republic of China [Mao Zedong](#), [and many others](#). (An interesting side note is that another of the accouterments of high peerage – nepotism – is found in nearly every example as well.)

Despite the core assertions made by its adherents and promoters, in practice socialism is *always* an exercise in privilege. It should come as no surprise that in a political/economic system helmed by an elite that the trappings of a ruling class inevitably follow, as does the very wealth that by pillorying they ascend to. 'Revolution' indeed.

This [article](#) has been republished with permission from the American Institute for Economic Research.

—

[Image Credit: [Wikipedia](#), [CC BY- SA3.0](#).