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Library Benefit Has a 'Let Them Eat Cake' Attitude

By CALVIN NAITO

Shame on the Los Angeles Public Library's Literary Odyssey Dinners program organizers and participating luminaries for crafting such a hypocritical and snobby event where access is available only to those few able and willing to pay \$300 to \$2,500.

The fund-raiser sends a terrible message to all Angelenos. It is devoid of inclusiveness and egalitarianism – values the public library ostensibly claims to be about. An event to create a more literate L.A.? We will have a more literate L.A. only when the ticket for admission to the dinners is based on the person's hunger for knowledge, not the size of his or her wallet.

When access is limited to about 1,000 people and less than 1 % of the 12 million annual library visitors can afford to pay the dinner fee, the program is practicing de-facto class-based discrimination. Unless the program transforms itself, the fundraiser is a patronizing "trickle down" concept in which elites rub shoulders with fellow elites while considering themselves too good to dine with the less financially prosperous masses. There is still time to fix the problem before Monday's dinners: I challenge the event principals to allow each ticket buyer to bring, at no extra cost, a less financially fortunate reader to the dinners to make up for the program's elitist design. Send a message that the Los Angeles Public Library is truly committed to learning and culture for all Angelenos.

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