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Mark Ruffalo Talks Politics While Receiving an Award About Turtles: "This Is Fascism. This Is Authoritarianism. This Is a Corporate Takeover of Our Democracy."

by Lauren McCarthy

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Such was the case on Monday night, as the comedian served as emcee for the Fourth Annual Turtle Ball, honoring actor **Mark Ruffalo**. “When I was asked to emcee this night, I didn’t have to think; I just said yes,” Silverman began. “I have a huge heart and I’m wildly sensitive, and I see those commercials with the starving kids in Africa with the flies around them and their big bellies. These are one and two-year-old babies, and it breaks my heart. And I don’t give money because I don’t want them to spend it on drugs. But I do give, in ways like this: talking to lovely, wildly entitled, but well-meaning, successful people.”

She wasn’t wrong, at least in terms of that ‘successful’ estimation. Filling the ballroom at the Bowery Hotel were event co-hosts Edward Norton, **Drew Barrymore**, **Rashida Jones**, Fisher Stevens, and Eric Goode, as well as Naomi Watts, Owen Wilson, Matt Dillon, Cheryl Hines, Famke Janssen, and Robert F. Kennedy. **The annual event**, hosted by the Turtle Conservancy, helps to raise funds to protect the planet’s resources through the purchase of land preserves and the safeguarding of wildlife, thanks in large part to a live art auction, in partnership with Paddle8, featuring pieces from the likes of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Walton Ford, Richard Prince, Christopher Wool, Nate Lowman, Taryn Simon and Nan Goldin. In addition to opening their wallets (Monday’s event raised over \$235,000 through the live art auction alone; with Barrymore taking home one of the larger lots), the celebrities also took the opportunity to wax poetic (if the poems were of the angry nature) on their current concerns with the country, environmental and otherwise.

“We can’t afford for people to feel like somehow they’re marginalized or not allowed to participate in the conversation as citizens,” **Norton said** when introducing Ruffalo. “We have to all be citizen activists, and we have to act without permission, and despite the slings and arrows that people want to throw at us.”

In terms of passion delivered, however, Norton was the Bruce Banner to Ruffalo's Incredible Hulk (amazingly, the fact that both actors played the superhero, nor his green-likeness to turtles themselves, never came up--a missed opportunity by all summations).

“We have a system that doesn't take care of people or the essential things that we need for life, like water,” he began. “What I've learned as I came out of my little shell is that community made me better, it made me stronger, it made me more connected. And in that community, let me tell you who it was: the women, the people of color, the marginalized people, poor people. All of these people are the frontline fighters. These are the people that this kind of a room needs to be supporting now.”

He, proving himself Woke with a capital W, continued. “We're seeing an influx of women leaders. Women are the ones who are essentially, naturally on the front lines of these degradations, as far as humanity is concerned. They are the ones dealing with the children, they are the ones who have to worry about their health, they are the ones who have to worry about their education, they are the ones who have, for me, always been the most fearless, fiercest leaders... You know what, they have to push people out of themselves under the most incredible pain and they know the cost of what it is to be alive more than any of us do. They have an innate sense of morality in them that needs to be listened to and respected in this moment in time.”

But wait, there's more. "Let's face it guys, this is fascism. This is authoritarianism. This is a corporate takeover of our democracy. The way we have to fight that is with our money, the same language that they speak... You can do all the rallies, you can do all of that kind of stuff, but with this kind of room, put your money where your mouth is."

Silverman, by her own estimations, had been showed up. "I think I started off this night with an air of 'Fuck you, rich people,' and I'm ashamed of it," she said. "It was not me being my best self, truly. I think I was insecure, and this is a room of people I adore and people who care, deeply. I got very inspired when Mark said that all these people have so much power in terms of actual money, and if you were to divest, if you were to take your money out of banks and put it in credit unions, do you know what that would do?" She paused. "And also turtles."