

**NEWS** **EXCLUSIVE**

AOC's 'Tax the Rich' dress designer Aurora James owes debt in multiple states

By [Jon Levine](#) and [Kathianne Boniello](#)

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Designer Aurora James called her “**Tax the Rich**” dress for Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez a “**powerful message**” — but it’s not one she has taken to heart.

The 37-year-old fashionista who made waves at the Met Gala with Democratic-Socialist AOC last week is a notorious tax deadbeat with unpaid debts dogging her in multiple states, records show.

Most of luxe-living James’ arrears center on Cultural Brokerage Agency, an LLC she formed in 2011 to serve as the parent company of her fashion brand, which today is known as Brother Vellies. It’s a favorite of people like [Beyoncé](#), [Rihanna](#), and [Meghan Markle](#).



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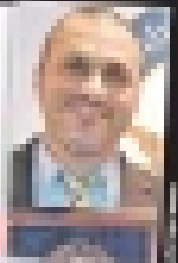
Tax 'Skirter'

AOC dress designer owes debts to feds, states

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Magaly Lili and her former partner, Alexander Aguirre, the 30-year-old, were arrested near the residence in 1998. Aguirre, a computer hardware salesman, was charged with kidnapping her. He was later released on bail. Aguirre was charged with kidnapping her, but later released on bail. Aguirre was charged with kidnapping her, but later released on bail.



1998

● Maspeth High School faked classes, passed kids with no credit

● **Principal gave diplomas 'not worth paper they're printed on'**



Internal Revenue Service placed six federal liens on Cultural Brokerage Agency totaling \$103,220. The liens specifically cite the company's failure to remit employee payroll taxes.

The IRS declined to comment on their current status.

"Just because they take it out of your paycheck doesn't mean they're sending it to the government," David Cenedella, a Baruch College taxation lecturer explained after reviewing the liens. "It's certainly not something you want. I would not say your average business out there has this. Something went wrong."



Aurora James owes \$2,504 in property taxes on this home.

While James apparently has no problem stiffing the Taxman, she isn't shy about taking money from taxpayers — her company received in \$41,666 in pandemic relief aid.

Over the years Cultural Brokerage Agency has also faced multiple legal challenges as a result of habitual nonpayment of worker benefits.



2018. The company currently owes \$62,722 and no payments have been received to date, a rep for the board told The Post. Workers' comp is paid out when an employee is hurt at work and misses time.



The interior of Aurora James' home in Los Angeles.

Ex-staffers blasted the operation as a sweatshop that relied on legions of unpaid interns working full-time jobs.

"I experienced a lot of harassment when I worked for her," one former contract employee told The Post. "Aurora would ask me to do things that were not in anyone's job description, like scheduling her gynecological appointments. The work environment was so hostile that I was afraid to ask for my check." The employee was ultimately terminated.

An ex-intern called James "quite cold," adding that "she never gives recognition or acknowledgement to her team."

James is also an alleged rent deadbeat, records show.





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Getty Images

In August 2020, James’ landlord filed papers to evict Brother Vellies from their location at 71 Franklin St. in Brooklyn, as well as demanding more than \$25,000 plus interest for staying beyond the end of her lease. The case was settled.

She was sued by a previous landlord in February 2018 for more than \$5,000 in unpaid rent at her shop’s old address at 209 West 38th Street in Manhattan.

“Aurora, obviously we did not want it to come to this, but you never have paid your rent in a timely manner,” wrote Matthew Mandell, a rep for her Manhattan landlord in a frustrated March 2018 email. “We have been more than patient.”

Though AOC proudly labeled James a “**working class**” designer as they waltzed down the Met Gala red carpet, her lifestyle has been anything but. As the pandemic raged across America, igniting a deep recession, James scooped up a \$1.6 million residence in Los Angeles in September 2020.

The Tudor-style home with cathedral ceilings, a master-bedroom fireplace and backyard hot tub sits on 7,095 square feet in the posh Hollywood Hills, according to RedFin.

True to form, the property is already listed as “**delinquent**” by the Los Angeles County assessor’s office, which told The Post James owed \$2,504 in property taxes.

Though AOC was comped tickets to the annual ball for boldfacers, entry to the famously exclusive Met Gala runs \$35,000 a head. James attended the bash with Benjamin Bronfman, a rumored boyfriend she’s frequently spotted with. Bronfman, 39, is a scion of the powerful Bronfman family and its distilling empire. He is worth an **estimated \$100 million**.

Photos from the event show the pair smiling broadly with Ocasio-Cortez and her boyfriend Riley Roberts.

James’ unpaid bills belie her champagne tastes. She frequently jets off to exclusive locations, her Instagram richly decorated with photos from **Jamaica, Morocco, France**,



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Jose Perez/Bauergriffin.com / ME

She also found money to make a **\$2,700 donation** to Hillary Clinton in 2016.

“It’s the height of hypocrisy when socialists attend a \$30,000 per ticket gala with a message of ‘tax the rich’ while wearing an overpriced dress by a luxury designer who doesn’t pay taxes,” Republican Staten Island Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis told The Post. “What happened to everyone paying their fair share?”

Both James and her reps did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Post.

James pushed progressive causes long before making headlines for dressing America’s most famous socialist. After the death of George Floyd in May 2020, she created the **15**



Vogue, Sephora, and Crate & Barrel, **according to a 15 percent pledge website.**

“This is the least you can do for us. We represent 15% of the population and we need to represent 15% of your shelf space,” James said in an **Instagram post** announcing the idea.

Ocasio-Cortez, who has made a career out of demanding better worker wages and benefits, and taxing the rich to pay for her budget-busting federal programs, did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Additional reporting by Ben Blanchet

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