

Staff Editorial College admissions is rigged against all of us

In 2014, Students for Fair Admissions, a group of over a dozen Asian American students, sued Harvard University for allegedly using a race-based quota system in admissions.

In a case that may be headed for the Supreme Court, Students for Fair Admissions alleges that the Harvard admissions office violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by unconstitutionally practicing “racial balancing” of the student body and thus systematically discriminating against Asian applicants.

Of course Harvard considers race when evaluating applicants. Of course every competitive school in the United States considers race when evaluating applicants. Of course the admissions process is broken and, we would go as far as to say, unjust.

At a high school where college feels like an expectation rather than an achievement, where terms like “acceptance rate” and “legacy” are part of our vernacular, where the mention of “late March” triggers visceral reactions in anxious seniors, we are pros at the game of college admissions.

Now, we do not know to what extent Harvard considers race when evaluating applicants. That is up to the courts to decide.

But, what we do know is this: We are told for four years that as long as we earn the GPA deemed “good” by Naviance, as long as we commit hours to social service and take a leadership role to demonstrate our “well-roundedness,” as long as our test scores are on par with those of our competitors, then we will be admitted to that school.

You know, *that* school. It might be the school that your parents attended and expect you to attend. It might be the school that has a world-class stem cell research center or a Nobel Laureate professor. It might be the school whose name looks really good on a sweatshirt. Whatever the reason, we all have that school that makes us feel warm and fuzzy and special.

The cold and harsh truth of the situation is that few of us actually get to go to those schools. In fact, many of us are denied admission to schools based on factors that have nothing to do with us. Namely, we are denied admission based on factors such as geography and financial aid and race.

Contrary to what parents and counselors and admissions representatives have long told us, our “academic excellence” and “well-roundedness” no longer are sufficient. Not even close. Not when there are hundreds of thousands of other students out there who also take Honors classes, who also play on championship-winning teams, who also serve on boards and committees, and who also spend their summers volunteering in Guatemala.

When admissions offices weigh arbitrary factors like these to differentiate candidates, they devalue the hard work that all of us put in to achieve our goals, regardless of our backgrounds. When admissions offices weigh arbitrary factors like these, their decisions have simultaneously nothing to do with us and everything to do with us. The system is rigged—not against one group of students, but against all students.

We acknowledge that there are many students who are denied admission to colleges based on relevant factors. We are not referring to those cases.

We are referring to the aforementioned glaring flaws of the system of college admissions. Are prospective students, many of whom obsess over GPAs and purchase ACT prep books and subscribe to College Confidential threads, partially responsible for quite literally buying into this system? Yes. But, can you really blame us for seeking some semblance of control over a process that we clearly have little control over? Can you really begrudge Students for Fair Admissions for demanding some transparency from Harvard and schools like Harvard, which seem to take pride in their single-digit acceptance rates and elusive prestige?



Getting big money out of politics starts in the voting booths

by Ezra Wallach

On Mar. 20, J.B. Pritzker won the democratic gubernatorial primary over Chris Kennedy and Daniel Biss—and it wasn’t even close.

Pritzker dominated throughout Illinois, leading by 120,000 votes in Cook County, according to the Chicago Tribune. While Pritzker failed to get over 50% of the votes, he doubled the totals of both Biss and Kennedy, who likely split votes among more progressive voters.

Arguably more impressive than his margin of victory remains the amount of money Pritzker is spending on his own campaign. With a net worth of over 3.5 billion dollars, he has plenty of pocket money—70 million dollars worth to spend on the primary alone, according to the Chicago Tribune.

This means that in November we will see multimillionaire incumbent Bruce Rauner face a billionaire in the race for governor of Illinois.

So much for taking the money out of politics.

The state of Illinois is in a budget crisis, has significant disparities in the funding of public schools, and holds the fourth highest murder rate in the country.

We have serious problems, and they need to be fixed. But, the state of Illinois is running out of money.

It seems ironic that the two final candidates for governor will ultimately end up spending over \$200 million of their own money on this election.

While Pritzker insists that he is making the \$200,000-a-day investment for the purpose of getting Bruce Rauner out of office, it is still unsettling to see someone put

that much money into a political campaign, especially as a Democrat.

It’s okay for someone with money to run for office, but the amount of money he or she spends should not be ignored.

It should be noted that Pritzker has gained a significant advantage due to his personal wealth rather than fundraising and donations from the citizens of Illinois.

Pritzker was able to buy numerous television ads encouraging Illinois’ democrats to vote for him.

Kennedy and Biss also bought ads, but they didn’t have the money to compete with the amount of airtime Pritzker’s campaign could

A democracy that’s supposed to be controlled by the people is now heavily influenced by super-PACS and billionaires

afford.

A democracy that’s supposed to be controlled by the people is now heavily influenced by super-PACS and billionaires come election time.

I know some of you would love to hear it’s just the Republicans, but that isn’t true.

In the 2016 presidential election, Clinton and Trump spent a combined \$2.4 billion, according to the Washington Post. Trump got 80 million of that from super-PACS, while Clinton received 200 million.

The Clinton campaign received 16% of funding from donations of \$200 or less while Trump received

26% from these smaller donations. Bernie Sanders refused to accept donations from Super-PACS but received smaller donations on a scale we have never seen before.

Sanders kept the primary close, and probably would have won had Clinton been forced to gain funding from smaller donors and win national support without the backing of the DNC.

Why does this matter? Simply put, Clinton won the support of fewer yet richer people than Sanders did. If every citizen in America holds the same voting power, then the top 1 percent should not hold the same influence that the other 99 percent do.

Pritzker had the privilege of being able to spend 70 million dollars of his own money without breaking a sweat. 99.99999 percent of the people living in Illinois don’t have that privilege.

Some say that although his wealth gives him an advantage that is unfair, nothing in life is fair. But, elections shouldn’t fall under the category of “life isn’t fair.” A democracy should not be run by money.

This election will be a bidding war between two of the richest candidates in Illinois history. Both Rauner and Pritzker will seek to translate personal spending into votes. This is a problem.

If we want to keep our democracy intact, it starts with the politicians we support. Hold Pritzker accountable: if you agree with everything he says, then make sure he gets elected based on that fact alone—not on the size of his bank account.

Going to college 4,000 miles away



by Michelle Yurovsky

I am planning to leave the country for college. I am deciding between the University of Tel Aviv and the University of Amsterdam.

As of now, only a handful of people in my grade are leaving the country for college.

It is crucial to raise awareness about how there are other options. They aren’t always conventional options for New Trier students and most students in the United States, but that isn’t necessarily a bad thing.

I have had a decent experience at New Trier, and I have made amazing new friends, but I am ready to get the heck out of here. I am sick of the bubble we live in, and I’m so excited to have the opportunity to have such a unique college experience.

When I started telling people I was planning on leaving the country, they were shocked.

It’s so strange to look back to my junior year, when I thought I was going to go to Tulane or Lake Forest. Now, I am ready to live thousands of miles away.

I got denied from my top choice school in the United States, but

at the end of the day, I do believe everything happens for a reason. If I had gotten into my top choice, the thought of leaving the country would not have even crossed my mind.

When I was rejected, I was obviously disappointed. What was worse than the disappointment, though, was that I was not satisfied with the options that I had left.

I sat down with my dad, and we started coming up with other possibilities for next year. As we were brainstorming, Amsterdam came up as a potential new home. It’s a beautiful city with culture and great schools, and more importantly, my mom lives there.

Over spring break, my dad and I took a trip to Israel. While we were there, we made a spur-of-the-moment decision to visit the University of Tel Aviv. Once we got there, I immediately felt that this was where I potentially wanted to go. Israel is a special country, and although small, there is a huge variety of places and activities. Since the main language in Israel is Hebrew, hopefully I could pick up on it too.

My main reasoning to leave the country is honestly because I’m fed up with 90% of what is going on here, and because I want to have a clean slate in a completely different country.

The problem with being a student at New Trier is that there is most likely going to be at least one person going to the same college as you. Knowing absolutely no one in a

foreign country is as close to a clean slate as it gets.

As I’ve written about before, I am an only child. My dad works a lot, so being alone is nothing new for me. I consider myself to be independent and social, so trying new things does not scare me.

Aside from wanting to experience a new life and culture, my dad and I have taken the financial aspect of college into account as well.

It only costs \$2,000 a year to attend school in Israel, and it costs \$10,000 a year in Amsterdam.

This is far better than any offers I got from my schools. Basically, one year at a school in America is equivalent to if not more than four years in Israel.

Going abroad for school provides a countless number of opportunities.

It may be a bit late for seniors to start applying to schools abroad, but it’s not too late for underclassmen to look into these other options.

Throughout high school, I thought I only had two options for what I was going to do next year. Either taking a gap year, or going to college here.

I want you to realize you’re not just confined to the schools in America. You might want to look into schools in other countries as well.