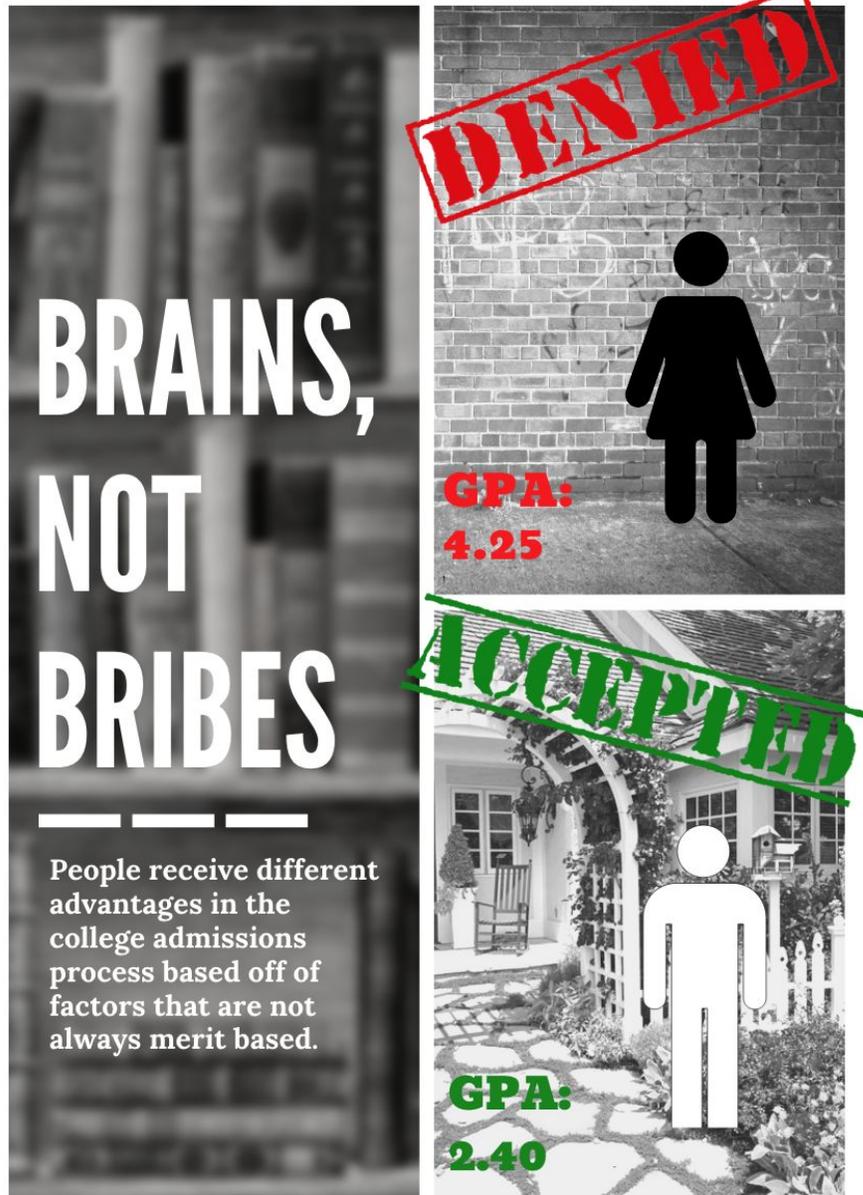


Admissions Injustice: An Underlying and Unjust Truth

Summary Paragraph:

Throughout their time in high school, most students work hard to hopefully ensure themselves a spot at a college or university. Many teens often overwork themselves by piling copious extracurriculars on top of their already rigorous workload. Four years of strenuous effort, sleepless nights, and hard work can do a number on a student, but the light at the end of the tunnel, admittance to the higher education institution of their choice, offers them strong incentive and solace. But, often, a person's admission into a university can rely on factors separate from their application or true intelligence, such as wealth, race, gender, sexual orientation, the town they live in, or even the school they attend. In an attempt to shine a light on the mysteries and injustices of college admissions, I have delved into the efforts made by individuals, institutions, and widespread social systems (such as the prevalence of standardized testing, legacy admissions, and success ideologies) throughout America that have tried to manipulate a seemingly innocent and unbiased process for their own benefit. My project cannot cure this deeply rooted injustice on its own. Through my project I am hoping to challenge the aspects of my project that are extremely prevalent in the daily lives of all Americans: the culture surrounding college admissions, the false meritocracy present in modern society, and the cultish quality of higher education as a whole.

Post 1: Introduction and Explanation of Topic

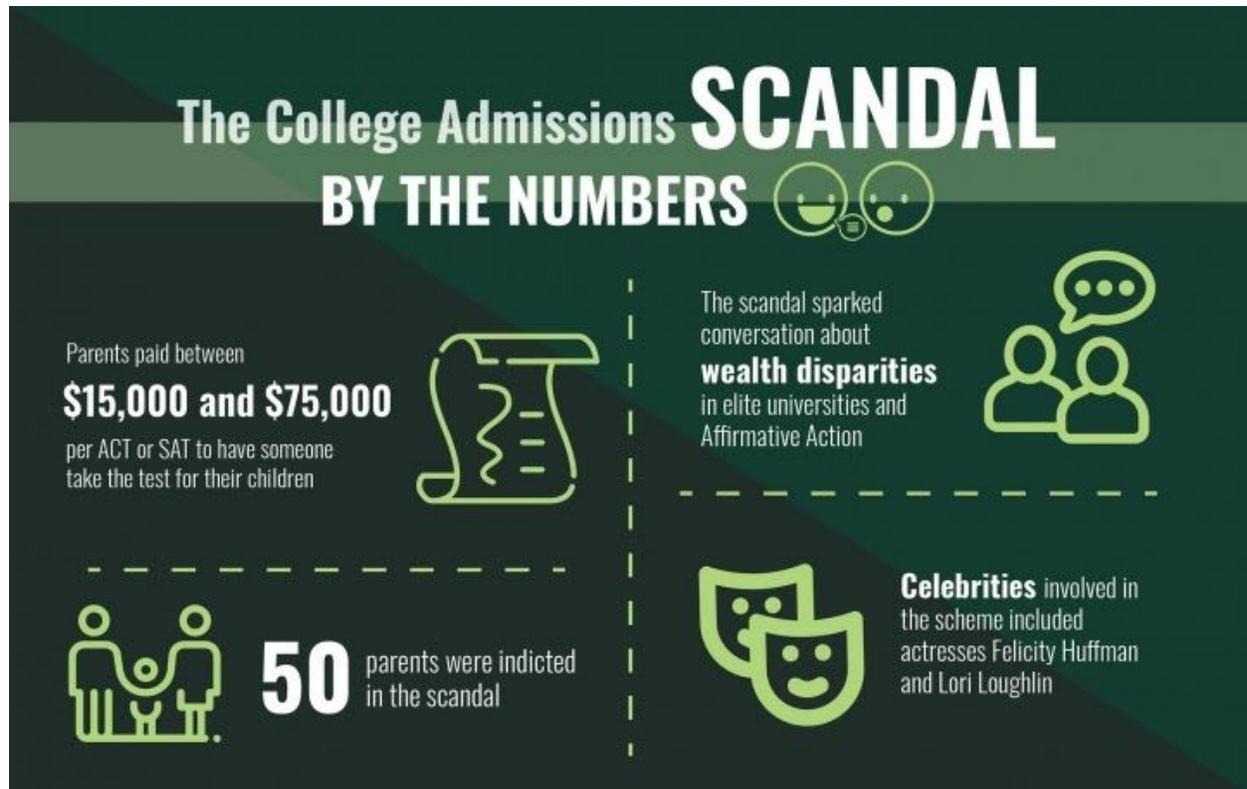


Caption:

Hello, my name is Chloë Downs and I am a senior at Fontbonne in Milton, Massachusetts. At Fontbonne, each senior is expected to complete a capstone project in their theology class centering around Catholic social justice teaching. My capstone project is titled *Injustice Within American Admissions - A Systemic Social Injustice*. Throughout my senior year, I have studied injustice within the college admissions process and the various unjust factors that affect a person's admission into prestigious colleges and universities in this country. Injustice within the college admissions process is founded on complex systems and deeply rooted ideologies within the American mindset. Through this account, I hope to educate those who are blinded by false narratives surrounding college admissions and hopefully inspire more compassion and understanding toward those who are going through the college process themselves. In helping

others to understand how fundamentally unfair the college process is, I will be able to push them to seek out ways to change the unjust system they live in.

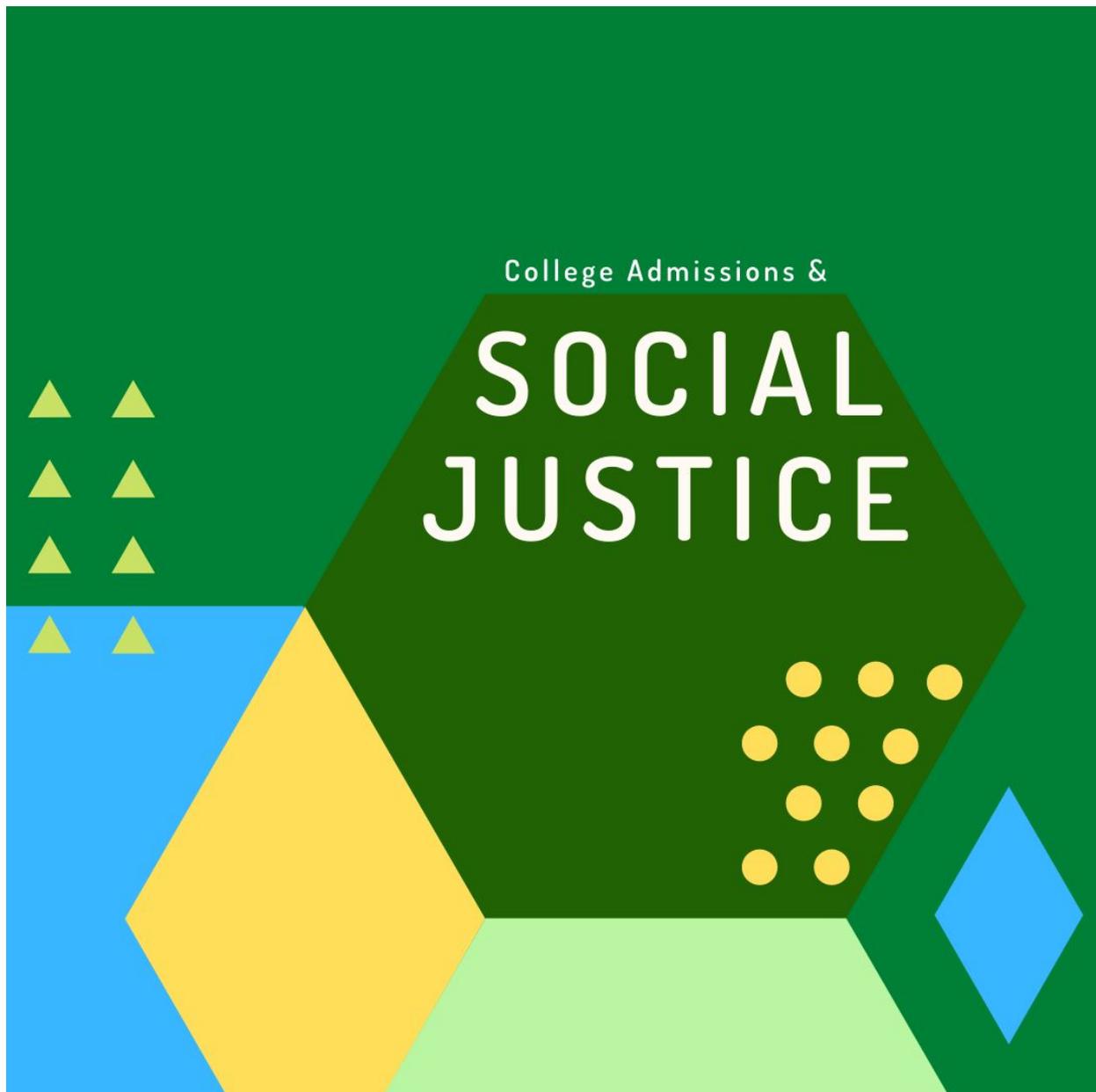
Post 2: My Interest



Caption:

As a young woman who has just applied to colleges herself, inequality within the college admissions process is very prevalent in my life. I have witnessed its absurdity first hand. I have been both beneficiary and victim to the process because as white, middle-class, woman, programs like Affirmative Action have actually been proven to benefit me the most, while I have also experienced first hand the negative ways in which male and female applicants are treated differently. I choose to investigate this injustice further to hopefully discover the truth behind the secrecy of the college process and the obvious violations of justice that have been occurring long before I started applying myself. I was also very intrigued by the topic after the recent news about the various college admissions scandals came to light (the statistics of which are shown above). It was baffling to me how easily the offenders had committed their crime, with just some money and the right person on their side. The news made me think more critically about the validity of what I was going through, and forced me to assess information that before, I had taken strictly at face value. Throughout my research, I hope to find the reasons why this injustice has gone unchecked for so long and to discover ways we can bridge the gaps that separate those who are deserving of admittance and those who are not, especially when it comes to differences in wealth and privilege .

Post 3: Relation of Catholic Social Justice Themes



Caption:

Injustice within college admissions directly relates to three of the Catholic Social Justice themes: rights and responsibilities, life and dignity of the human person, and option for the poor and vulnerable.

The corruptness of the college process goes directly against the Catholic Social Teaching regarding rights and responsibilities. If a person is not accepted to a college due to factors other than their application or capability, it shows that not everyone is receiving the same privileges (or the same right to quality education) and that there is a lack of responsibility by those who are not serving society well in the way that they put the needs of the powerful over those who are actually in need of higher education (those who have the best skills to serve their communities).

In relation to college admissions, applicant's dignity is being disrespected constantly. Fundamentally, the injustice creates a power dynamic in which those with wealth and prosperity are deemed more important than the people around them, and disregards the value of the low

income or less privileged students as a whole. The existence of the cycle that the injustice fuels violates the dignity of those applying to college, because it sets them up for a competitively disadvantaged life from the moment they are denied from a school they rightfully deserved to go to for no other reason other than wealth. Applicants are no longer viewed as persons but are rather dehumanized, seen only as the money that they could represent or bring back to the university.

Post 4: CST Themes Continued

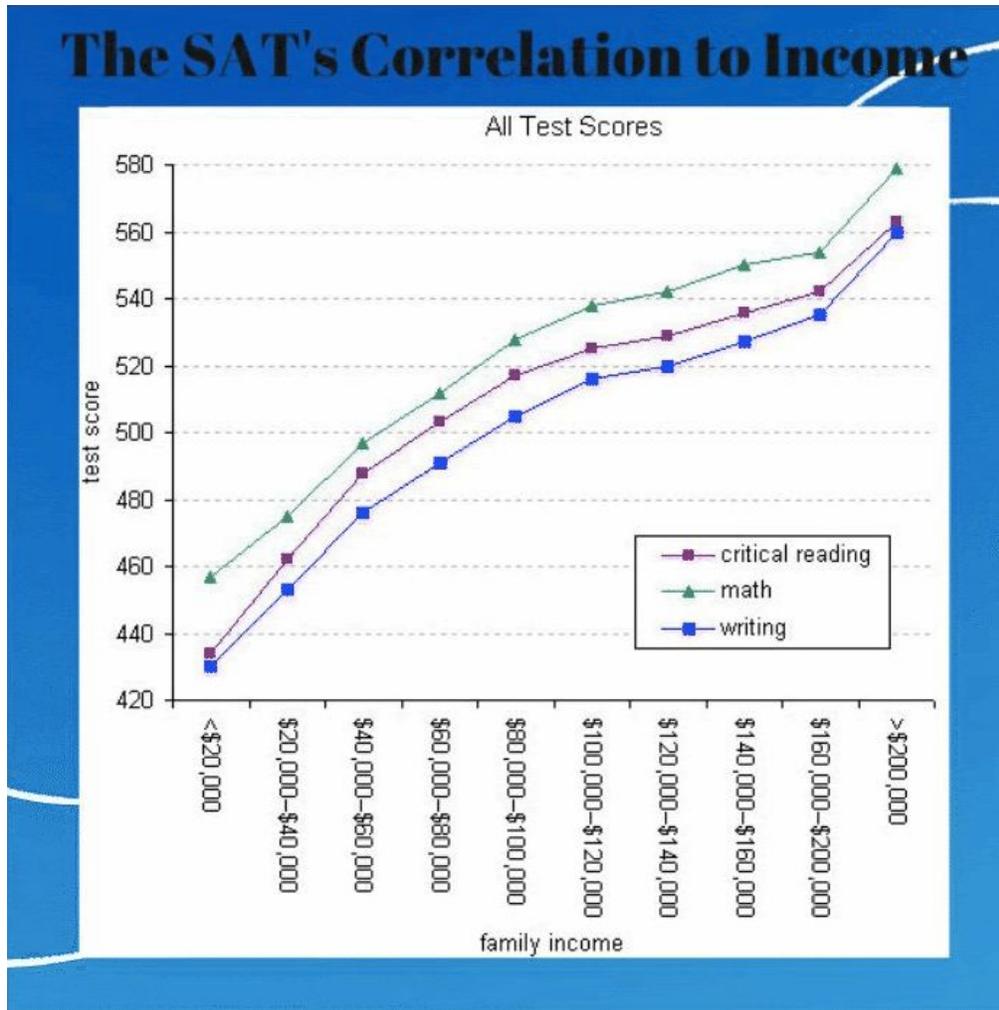


Caption:

Theologian Joan Chittister and her focus on helping others through social justice has inspired my social justice project, especially when it comes to talking about the Catholic Social Justice teaching of options for the poor and vulnerable. The theme of option for the poor and vulnerable refers to putting the needs of the poor and vulnerable before the needs of others. It states that God calls his people to lift up those who need help. In the college process, one of the main points of inequity is that many people use their power and affluence to secure a position in a school they want to go to, which denies the poor and vulnerable their right to have an education (that they may have deserved in comparison to the person who pushed their way into the university), especially in a society that relies strongly upon a person's requirement to be competitive intellectually in order to be deemed successful or even to make enough money to provide for

themselves. Many people also receive different kinds of financial aid which is not always rightfully dealt out as many students struggle to secure the aid they deserve. This can often be blamed on their inability to fill out the FAFSA on their own (and their lack of access to a trusted/able adult who can help them) as well as the corrupt nature of the form itself, where it is unable to see the true need that exists in applicants. Instead of raising up the destitute, these inequities in the college process glorify and aid the already rich and privileged.

Post 4: The SAT



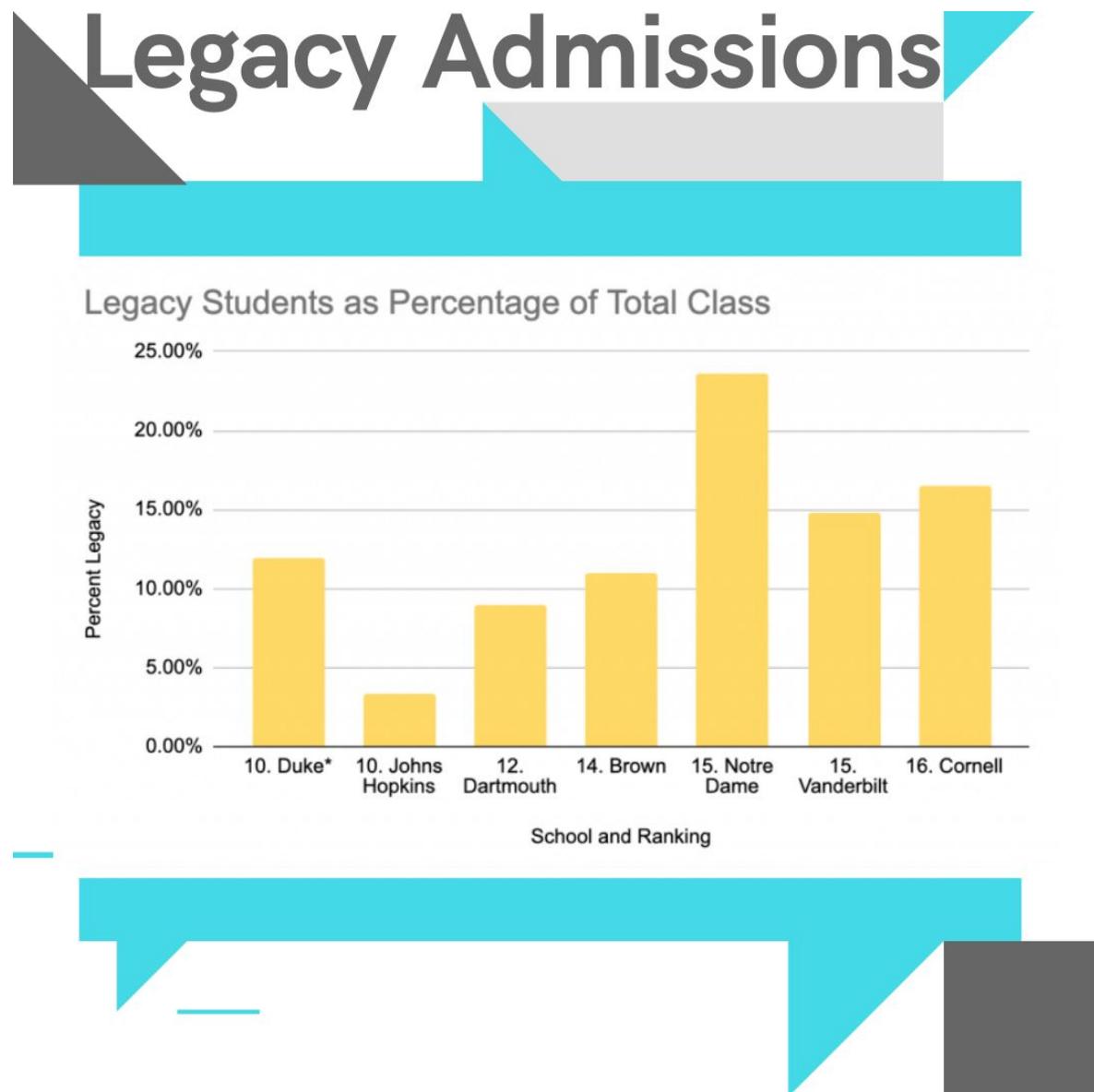
Caption:

The presence and consideration of the SAT as a form of evaluation of intelligence for applicants is one example of the ways in which factors such as wealth, race, gender, place of residence, he school attended unfairly affects an applicant's admission. Essentially, the use of the SAT as a factor in a person's admission to a school offers structural importance to a system of evaluation that is fundamentally flawed. Research has proven to show that a person's performance on the SAT is directly proportional to their family's income (as demonstrated in the graph above from The New York Times), which obviously is an indicator of a much larger problem. The SAT is not a reading on a person's intelligence or ability but rather a test of the resources that a student has been given to succeed in their life (such as tutoring, test prep, etc...). The use of the SAT as a key factor in college admissions supports the persistence of a classist cycle in which those from

poorer backgrounds are unable to break out of the boundaries set for them. By taking even a small look into the history of the SAT, we can prove its corruptness and faults.

Throughout history, the College Board (the organization that facilitates the SAT and other standardized tests) has used their tests to exclude different marginalized groups from higher education. The National Education Association reports that the College Board itself was created by a eugenicist, seeking to prove that ethnic origin and intelligence were directly related, who changed the test format to work against specifically people of color and skewed results of certain minority test takers to better fit his racist narrative. In light of this information, it is clear this medium is not the best measure of a person's intelligence, as it is so clearly rooted in repulsive and utterly prejudiced beginnings.

Post 5: Legacy Admissions



Caption:

As shown in the graph above (from *The Vanderbilt Hustler*), many prestigious universities have student populations that heavily represent legacy students. Legacy based admissions is yet another example of a social system that perpetuates injustice and bias within the college admissions process. Legacy admissions is unjust in the way that it offers admissions to top universities to those who do not necessarily deserve to be admitted just because they have a relative who went there. Once again, classism is entrenched in the college admissions process. Students who have affluent parents, who went to elite universities have an advantage that sets them up for success for the rest of their life. It is often the case that students who are admitted as legacies do not meet the standards of a normally admitted student, as their legacy status gives them preferential treatment. The true basis of this systematic social oppression is that legacy students are taking away spots from those who actually have the academic achievement congruent with the universities they apply to. Legacies tend to be admitted on legacy status alone. The privileged and well off are given unnecessary aide once again, while other students who might be more deserving are left unrecognized

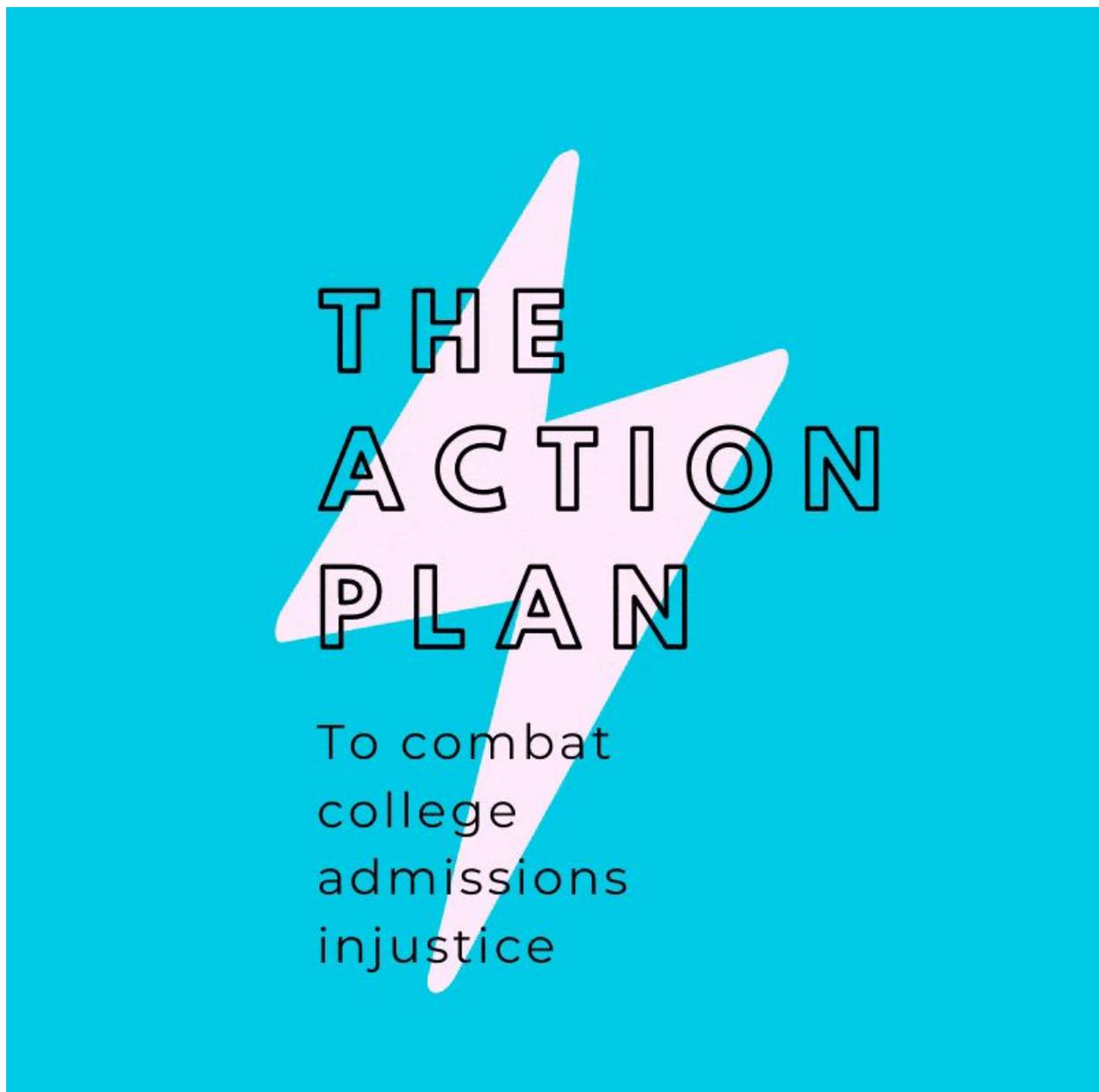
Post 6: Corrupt Success Ideologies

Caption:

A large ideology that also presents itself systemically is the perfectionist idea that for someone to be deemed successful they must attend a form of higher education. Nowadays, it is not uncommon for an entry level job to not only require a bachelor's degree, but also a Masters. The

majority of students and young people feel so pressured to get a respectable job that they attend strenuous amounts of schooling only because they feel like they must, not because they want to. To blame for these unnecessary standards is the competitiveness of the job market and also of the college process itself. This aspect is especially true for areas of work where a college degree is not necessary for the job, such as vocational work. The case is more often than not that students get a college degree because they feel like they must bide their time in schooling that they do not need, and then spend copious amounts of years in their life trying to pay off debt for attending a college that they did not need to go to in the first place. The social system of demanding college degrees for every line of work both financially and spiritually oppresses people by unnecessarily forcing them to attend higher education even when it is not needed.

Post 7: Action Plan



Caption:

For my plan of action, I hope to try to correct the culture surrounding college admissions, as well as generate a ripple effect of change that will be able to change societies prejudiced preconceptions that inform their judgements surrounding college admissions. I hope to do this through the education that this campaign provides and by opening up a discussion to those viewing this, that helps you recognize and analyze the potentially harmful mindsets you perpetuate when it comes to talking about college admissions. In terms of correcting the entirety of college admissions injustice, I am nowhere near solving the problem and most likely never will be, as it is deeply rooted in widespread laws, systems, and ideologies. I hope to do this through the education that this campaign provides and by opening up a discussion to those viewing this, that helps you attack and analyze the potentially harmful mindsets you perpetuate when it comes to talking about college admissions.

Post 8: Discussion Post



Caption:

It is often easy to perpetuate unfair or unjust cultural norms without even knowing it. I know that even I, as a younger student, I would often find myself judging my classmates on what school

they were attending, even if I had no semblance of understanding when it came to why they were attending the school they were. Now is the time to take a moment to think about how you reflect on how you think about college admissions and the stresses that college applicants endure. Hopefully, with the new knowledge supplied to you, your outlook has changed. Please comment below!

Post 9: What can you do to show support?



Caption:

As you can see college admissions is a fundamentally flawed process, but there is still hope. There are many organizations and new policies being put into place that are currently working to end the cycle of unjust admissions and offer education justice to the underprivileged and disadvantaged who are applying to college. Groups like Bottom Line, act as a resource for low income, first generation students who need extra help with their applications, as they often are completing them all on their own. Nonprofits like Bottom Line are not the only ones working to try to better the system though. Recently, colleges themselves have been making the decision to offer test optional admissions. These schools have been revolutionary in their discussion of the

fairness and legitimacy of the SAT. Test optional admission makes a school more available and accessible for a larger group of students, as the school recognizes the inadequate nature of the assessment that the SATs offer. The Education Trust works to advocate for all students, and their right to educational justice. They are self-described as “a national nonprofit that works to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income families”.

You can do your part in working against admissions injustice by showing your support for these organizations and systems. Even more so, you can help end admissions injustice by staying cognizant of the unfair circumstances that applicants face, as well as relinquishing your pre-existing biases about the relation between success and the college a person attends. In society today, it is easy to believe that your value lies in other’s ideas about you. Once people come to realize that value is an intrinsic and inherent principle that is not dependent on one’s actions or perceived intelligence, but exists in every person from birth until death, then as a society we will be truly able to dismantle college admissions injustice.

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