



The Price of Admission: How America's Ruling Class Buys Its Way into Elite Colleges--and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates

Daniel Golden

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Every spring thousands of middle-class and lower-income high-school seniors learn that they have been rejected by America's most exclusive colleges. What they may never learn is how many candidates like themselves have been passed over in favor of wealthy white students with lesser credentials—children of alumni, big donors, or celebrities.

In this explosive book, the Pulitzer Prize–winning reporter Daniel Golden argues that America, the so-called land of opportunity, is rapidly becoming an aristocracy in which America's richest families receive special access to elite higher education—enabling them to give their children even more of a head start. Based on two years of investigative reporting and hundreds of interviews with students, parents, school administrators, and admissions personnel—some of whom risked their jobs to speak to the author—*The Price of Admission* exposes the corrupt admissions practices that favor the wealthy, the powerful, and the famous.

In *The Price of Admission*, Golden names names, along with grades and test scores. He reveals how the sons of former vice president Al Gore, one-time Hollywood power broker Michael Ovitz, and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist leapt ahead of more deserving applicants at Harvard, Brown, and Princeton. He explores favoritism at the Ivy Leagues, Duke, the University of Virginia, and Notre Dame, among other institutions. He reveals that colleges hold Asian American students to a higher standard than whites; comply with Title IX by giving scholarships to rich women in “patrician sports” like horseback riding, squash, and crew; and repay congressmen for favors by admitting their children. He also reveals that Harvard maintains a “Z-list” for well-connected but underqualified students, who are quietly admitted on the condition that they wait a year to enroll.

The Price of Admission explodes the myth of an American meritocracy—the belief that no matter what your background, if you are smart and diligent enough, you will have access to the nation's most elite universities. It is must reading not only for parents and students with a personal stake in college admissions, but also for those disturbed by the growing divide between ordinary and privileged Americans.

From the Hardcover edition.

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