

Money (Should Not Be) on My Mind



Senior Inaara Padani

It's April 1—known to most Americans as April Fool's Day, but better known to high school seniors as the day their fate is decided; the day that everything they've worked for comes to a single conclusion; the day their entire future flashes before their eyes!

You refresh your inbox 12 times, and once more just for good luck, and then you see it: an email from your dream college. That knot you had in your stomach seconds before transforms into pure happiness as you read the words, "Congratulations, you've been accepted!"

Of course you'll go, right? It's your dream school, and you're in. There's nothing else to it. Compose a Facebook post. Start buy-

ing college gear. Let senioritis officially commence.

But for some seniors, it's not that easy.

For many families across the nation, the question is no longer, "Is my child accepted?" but rather, "What's my child's financial aid package?"

Most of these packages are based on the Free Application For Federal Student Aid—better known as FAFSA, which is then used to determine your family's Expected Family Contribution through a complex equation that regards various factors. In simple terms, this value is the amount that the government believes your family can contribute toward college tuition.

But this formula has one problem. It doesn't consider aspects such as paying for your younger sibling's tuition, family expenses, saving for retirement, etc. For example, if tuition is \$54,470, and your family's EFC is \$48,470, you won't qualify for a single cent more than \$6,000 in financial aid, which is the difference between tuition and EFC. The government pretty much assumes that your family can afford college without much difficulty even if that's not the case.

Although there aren't statistics available to show this situation at Hockaday, it's safe to as-

sume that college tuition is a huge expense for everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status. A substantial majority of us apply to elite colleges, which include Ivy League institutions and private universities with low acceptance rates. However, most of these schools only provide need-based scholarships, rather than those awarded for merit. As a result, some families find themselves in a complicated situation: they're too rich for financial aid but not rich enough to pay for college.

All of this raises a critical question: what's the point? We spend four years of our lives molding the perfect application in hopes of being accepted to our first-choice college only to decline the acceptance due to absurdly inflated tuition costs and only a few thousand dollars in aid. Even though there are multiple external scholarship opportunities available, it's not uncommon for a student to graduate with student debts: according to a 2014 analysis from credit bureau Experian, 40 million Americans have at least one outstanding student loan.

Unfortunately, the current system of higher education is connected to a number of other economic aspects, which makes it



ILLUSTRATION BY JENNY HO

difficult to find a single-faceted solution to lowering college tuition. Successfully accomplishing this would require revamping college as it is—perhaps by requiring students to spend less time in the classroom and more time practicing their profession with employers through internship opportunities.

Additionally, schools should consider offering more online courses, which would reduce the amount of funding necessary for classroom courses and therefore decrease the amount of tuition students would need to pay.

Certainly, transitioning into such a system will take years, but in the meantime, it's important to remember one thing: while your dream school may not be a feasible option for your family, that doesn't mean you won't be successful. What you do at the college you attend matters much more than its name.

Brooklyn



PHOTO PROVIDED BY LIONSGATE



Brooklyn
John Crowley

★★★★☆

While the psychological argument that where we come from heavily influences who we are might be true, the journey of finding yourself holds just as much merit. “Brooklyn” proves exactly that.

This emotion-evoking film, set in the early ‘50s in the titular borough and in

a small Irish town that’s always ripe with gossip, tells a classic immigrant romance tale.

But unlike the typical American Dream melodrama, “Brooklyn,” adapted from the novel by Colm Tóibín, avoids nearly all clichés.

Aside from the seasickness and homesickness that Eilis must endure due to her journey from Ireland to Brooklyn, she learns quickly. Through the assistance of a kind Irish priest (Jim Broadbent), Eilis is promised a sales position at a fashionable department store and a room in a boarding house upon her arrival. Timid and slightly vulnerable at first, Eilis is taught the American way of life by her stern yet motherly landlady (Julie Walters) and the other boarding house residents. However, the most captivating individual that this naive Irish lass meets is an Italian-American gentleman, and future boyfriend, Tony Fiorello (Emory Cohen).

Although Tony’s family somewhat resembles an ethnic stereotype (they love baseball and eat spaghetti when Eilis comes over for dinner), it’s almost impossible not to root for the two lovers. Writer Nick Hornby designs a happy-go-lucky relationship, complete with the perfect amount of passion and awkward tension. While Eilis does rely on Tony to fulfill the loneliness that she feels after leaving Ireland behind, Eilis seems to be in control of the relationship. By the end of the film, she becomes a self-respecting, fearless female character, which makes it difficult not to like her despite some questionable decisions she makes.

The turning point of the film nearly writes itself — Eilis has straight-A’s in her night classes, a good job, a pleasant place to stay and a caring boyfriend. Something was bound to go wrong. And it certainly does, compelling Eilis to return home.

Upon her arrival in Ireland, she is greeted with a dream job and a new suitor. Maybe it’s just me, but I prefer the romantic, Italian plumber over a skinny red-head named Jim Farrell (Domhnall Gleeson). Regardless, her romantic plight is one that you can’t help but have an opinion about.

Perhaps what contributes to the picture’s authenticity is director John Crowley’s clever instruction. The film seems rather apathetic in depicting its two settings; rather, the camera remains focused on Eilis and her experiences. At one point, Eilis and Tony take an excursion to a popular tourist location. While it’s clear that the two are on a date at Coney Island, the camera essentially ignores the surrounding environment, therefore allowing Ronan to use every breath, word, facial expression and movement to passionately yet subtly convey a sea of emotion that absorbs the audience one wave at a time without losing a single drop of heartache, excitement, worry or joy.

It’s clear that Saoirse Ronan has remarkably transformed from a child actor in Wes Anderson’s “The Grand Budapest Hotel” to a brilliant and compelling performer. Love might be the superficial conflict throughout much of the film, but Ronan effectively expresses the true, raw friction that emerges from the contrasting aspects of Eilis’s life — her identity in Brooklyn versus her identity in Ireland. It’s the struggle of letting go and personal discovery that the audience can directly relate to. By the end of “Brooklyn,” Eilis has developed a true sense of self, and it’s a conclusion that feels just like home.

INAARA PADANI
MANAGING EDITOR

Religion Trumps Politics



Senior Inaara Padani

"Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on," Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said, reading from a piece of paper about Muslim immigration released by his campaign.

I pressed pause. Fifteen seconds had passed in a video of Trump speaking at his campaign rally on Dec. 7 in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, and I just didn't want to hear more.

The emotions came one after the other as I attempted to stomach his words.

I immediately felt angry. "A total and complete shutdown?" If such an outrageous scenario were to actually happen, who would it apply to? Syrian refugees struggling to escape the war that has torn up the place they used to call home? Muslim-American citizens returning from a trip overseas? Muslims serving in the military? My own mother and father? Me?

Next came the frustration. As a

Muslim, nothing is more exasperating than being placed in the same category as Islamic terrorists. If you ask me, those people are not Muslims. Their true religion is violence and hatred. They kill innocent people in the name of Islam — and the Islam that I know, the Islam that has nurtured me for as long as I can remember, the Islam that has helped me grow closer to God, does not sanction such inhumane crimes.

All of this bitterness was initially directed toward Trump, at least until I decided to click play again. And that's when I felt hurt. Sure, Trump's words were, and still are, offensive. But the cheering, whistling and applause that followed his statement — that's what was truly upsetting.

For months, I've always wondered how Trump continues to lead the polls almost every week without fail. Some of his comments and tweets are the opposite of what a presidential candidate should be saying; they're insensitive and prejudiced.

But I've realized that Trump's success comes from his choice to abandon the concept of political correctness and state what some people in this country actually feel and believe: According to a New York Times/CBS News poll conducted in early December, Americans are more afraid now of an imminent terrorist attack since the weeks following Sept. 11, 2001. Seventy-nine percent of those surveyed "believe a terrorist attack is somewhat likely or very likely in the next few months."

Perhaps one reason that many

Americans are feeling this way is because recently, nearly every news source has written an article or two intertwining the words "bombs," "shootings," "radical Islam" and "Muslims." These articles became even more commonplace following the events in Paris and San Bernardino.

Of course, hearing about such unjust tragedies would make anyone worried and afraid. So when an influential public figure like Trump says that Muslims should be banned or at the very least placed in a national database, he's appealing to the masses by making them feel "safe." He's using a fear-mongering tactic to garner more support for his campaign. He says that he wants to "make America great again," yet he's simultaneously going against the constitutional rights of Muslims

and violating the ideals that America stands upon.

Many don't realize that this is exactly what groups like ISIS want. They want to create a divide between Islam and the West. They want Muslims to feel like they don't belong so that they can recruit more people for their cause. If we want to stand up to terrorist organizations, then staying united is the best way to do so.

As a Muslim, I am guaranteed the freedom of religion, just like any other American citizen. But how am I supposed to practice this freedom when my own country fears it? I'm tired of feeling afraid when I go through security at an airport. I'm tired of feeling like I have to apologize for the actions of some. I'm tired of feeling like I have to hide my religion. I am a Muslim, but I am not a terrorist. So don't classify me as one.

