



The Supreme Court is Out of Touch With the Cost of College

On February 28, the Supreme Court is set to hear two cases — *Biden v. Nebraska* and *Dept. of Education v. Brown* — that will determine whether millions of Americans receive aid through President Biden’s student loan debt relief program. More than 26 million people have applied for relief and the administration has already approved applications for 16 million borrowers. The program is expected to especially help [people of color and low-income Americans](#), and up to 20 million borrowers could have their debt totally erased. But the Supreme Court, which will unilaterally decide whether approved applicants actually see relief, is packed with justices who are woefully out of touch with the explosive costs of college today.

All nine justices attended elite, private schools for their college educations — the first step in their journeys to the ultimate ivory tower, the Supreme Court. But the costs of those educations have exploded since the justices attended college, leaving them out of touch with just how hard it is for most Americans to afford undergraduate expenses. **The Supreme Court justices have little sense of how out-of-reach the type of elite education they received — or in fact, any college education — is for today’s students, especially people of color, students from working class backgrounds, and those from other vulnerable communities.**

We used university and media archives to approximate the 4-year cost of attendance for each of the justice’s undergraduate schools at the time of attendance and compared those figures to the cost of attendance at those same colleges and universities today. **The results show just how much college costs have soared and how out of touch the Court has become:**

Justice	College Attended	4-Year Cost of Attendance Then	4-Year Cost of Attendance Now
Thomas	College of the Holy Cross	\$14,550	\$299,920
Alito	Princeton University	\$15,040	\$318,160
Roberts	Harvard College	\$21,400	\$337,652
Sotomayor	Princeton University	\$21,900	\$318,160
Kagan	Princeton University	\$41,055	\$318,160
Kavanaugh	Yale University	\$57,990	\$338,100
Gorsuch	Columbia University	\$64,900	\$343,868
Barrett	Rhodes College	\$70,664	\$273,112
Jackson	Harvard College	\$75,360	\$337,652



Even adjusting for inflation, the numbers tell the same story: college was far more affordable when the justices attended than it is today. Each of the justices' degrees would currently cost between nearly double and nearly triple what it did at the time in today's dollars.

All of the Supreme Court justices benefited from steep discounts in college costs when they obtained their degrees compared to today's students. **As an institution, the Supreme Court is wholly out-of-touch with the cost of college and the needs of young people.** And yet the Court is set to usurp the Biden administration's authority to provide debt relief in the wake of a deadly and costly pandemic — squashing millions of Americans under the enduring burden of student loan debt.