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The People's Hour

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SOURCES DHS: Haitian Illegal Alien Accused of Murdering FL Woman Was Released into U.S. by Biden Administration, 15 colleges now cost \$100k+ per year — and almost none of them are worth it, New Jersey Dems Demand AG Drop Paramount-Warner Merger Lawsuit Threatening Thousands of Jobs

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- [Breitbart] DHS: Haitian Illegal Alien Accused of Murdering FL Woman Was Released into U.S. by Biden Administration

<https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2026/09/02/dhs-haitian-illegal-alien-accused-of-murdering-florida-woman-was-released-into-u-s-by-biden-administration/>

Why: A named victim, a named suspect, and a direct line to a prior administration's release policy — exactly the accountability story this audience wants on immigration enforcement failures.

- [New York Post] 15 colleges now cost \$100k+ per year — and almost none of them are worth it
- <https://nypost.com/2026/09/03/us-news/15-colleges-now-cost-100k-per-year-and-almost-none-of-them-are-worth-it/>

Why: Hits the middle-class squeeze on tuition and student debt with hard numbers — a kitchen-table issue for any parent listening at 7 PM.

- [Breitbart] New Jersey Dems Demand AG Drop Paramount-Warner Merger Lawsuit Threatening Thousands of Jobs

<https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2026/09/02/new-jersey-democrats-demand-attorney-general-drop-paramount-warner-bros-merger-lawsuit-threatening-thousands-of-jobs/>

Why: A big-media consolidation fight where politicians of both parties are picking sides on thousands of working jobs — populist anti-consolidation red meat with a local-jobs hook.

01 — OPENER JINGLE

[STING — markford_open.mp3]

02 — COLD OPEN (DATE SLATE + ROADMAP)

Good evening, America.

Thursday, September third, twenty twenty six. I'm Mark Ford, and this is The People's Hour.

A woman is dead in Lee County, Florida. Her name was Amadette Longin. She was killed in her own home, and the man they arrested for it is her nephew. His name is Whycliff Longin. He's a Haitian national who crossed into this country illegally back in twenty twenty four, and instead of being turned away, he was released into the interior by the Biden administration. Tonight I'm going to walk you through exactly what happened to Amadette and to her daughter, who was there. I'm going to read you what Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin had to say about it, and I'm going to tell you what charges this man is facing right now. A family is destroyed, and Washington owes them an explanation.

Then I'm widening the lens. Because Amadette Longin is not an isolated tragedy. She's a data point in a policy. Catch and release. No real vetting. People walked across the border, given a court date years out, and turned loose in American neighborhoods. I'm going to lay out the pattern of violence tied to that policy, and I'm going to ask the question nobody in Washington wants to answer. When a decision like that gets made in some office in D.C., and a woman ends up dead in Florida, who pays for it? The bureaucrat who signed off? No. The family pays for it. Forever.

After that, we're switching gears to something that hits just as close to home for a lot of you. College tuition. Fifteen schools in this country now charge over a hundred thousand dollars a year. A year ago, it was two schools. Two. Now it's fifteen, and I'm going to go down the list. Harvey

Mudd. Duke. University of Chicago. NYU. Fordham. I'm going to show you how these schools score on actual return on investment, and here's the kicker. Public schools right here in New York, the CUNY system, are beating these hundred-thousand-dollar factories on value. Let that sink in.

And in our final segment, I'm going to pull back the curtain on how these schools get away with a sticker price like that in the first place. It's a shell game. Financial aid. These universities will discount tuition seventy five percent for one family and hammer the family next door with the full bill, dollar for dollar. Working families. Middle class families. The ones who make just enough to get nothing, and not enough to afford what's left. I'm going to tell you what that says about who these universities actually serve anymore, and it isn't the kid trying to build a life for himself.

A dead woman in Florida because Washington couldn't be bothered to vet the man they let walk into this country. A college system that's turned a diploma into a con game for anybody without connections or a low enough income to qualify for the discount. Two different stories tonight, but they've got the same rot underneath them. People at the top making decisions, and regular families footing the bill when it all goes wrong.

Stay with us. This is The People's Hour, on The Mark Ford Show, right here on WRZF. We'll be right back.

03 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

04 — SEGMENT A: A WOMAN IS DEAD BECAUSE WASHINGTON LET HIM IN

A woman named Amadette Longin is dead tonight. She's dead because she did something kind. She took in a family member who needed a place to stay. And that kindness got her killed in her own home in Lee County, Florida.

Let me tell you what happened, because the details matter here. They matter because they show you exactly how this system fails people.

Amadette Longin took in her nephew. His name is Whycliff Longin. He's twenty eight years old. He's from Haiti. And according to the Department of Homeland Security, Whycliff Longin entered the United States illegally through Florida back in twenty twenty four. He did not come through a port of entry with a visa. He did not wait his turn. He crossed illegally.

And here's the part that should make your blood boil. When Whycliff Longin was caught, when the federal government had him in custody, the Biden administration made a choice. They released him. They released him into the interior of the United States. Not held. Not detained. Not processed and sent home. Released. Free to go wherever he wanted, live wherever he wanted, do whatever he wanted.

He wanted to go to Lee County, Florida. And his aunt, Amadette Longin, took him in. She gave him a roof. She gave him a bed. She gave him food. That's what family does. That's what decent people do.

And this is how he repaid her.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office says Whycliff Longin murdered his aunt in that home. Not in some alley. Not in a robbery gone wrong with a stranger. In her own house, the house she opened up to him.

But it doesn't stop with Amadette. There was another woman in that house too. Amadette's daughter. Whycliff's cousin. And according to the police report, that young woman woke up in the middle of the night to find Whycliff Longin strangling her. Strangling her with his hands, trying to choke the life out of her while she slept.

She fought him off. She broke free of his grip. And she ran. She ran and she hid in the bathroom of that residence, terrified, while her mother lay dead somewhere in that same house.

When Lee County deputies got the call and arrived on scene, they found Whycliff Longin. He hadn't even left. He was next door, in the duplex right

beside the house where he'd just committed murder. They arrested him right there.

Then the officers went inside. And that's when they found Amadette Longin's body. Lifeless. In the home she shared with her family. In the home she'd opened to a nephew who needed help.

Whycliff Longin has now been charged. Murder. Attempted murder. Sexual battery. Burglary involving battery. Those are the charges Lee County has filed against him, and he is sitting in Lee County custody right now.

Read those charges again. Murder. Attempted murder. Sexual battery. Burglary with battery. That's not a bar fight that went wrong. That's not a crime of passion between two people who had an argument. That is a violent, predatory attack on two women in their own home, one of whom did not survive it.

Now here's where Washington comes into this story, because this did not have to happen.

On Wednesday, officials from the Department of Homeland Security came forward and confirmed what a lot of us already suspected the moment we heard this story. Whycliff Longin should never have been in that house. He should never have been in Lee County. He should never have been in the state of Florida. Because he should never have been released into this country in the first place.

DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin put out a statement on this. And I want to read it to you, because he says it plainly, the way it needs to be said. Mullin said, quote. This dangerous illegal alien should have never been allowed into our country in the first place. If it weren't for the Biden administration's reckless open border policies, Amadette Longin would still be alive. End quote.

Sit with that for a second. A cabinet secretary of the United States government is standing up and saying, by name, that a specific woman would be alive today if a specific set of policies from the previous administration had

not been in place. That is not political rhetoric for the sake of scoring points. That is a direct, causal statement about a dead woman.

And he's right. Whycliff Longin entered illegally in twenty twenty four. That was under Joe Biden. The decision to release him into the interior of the country instead of holding him or removing him, that was made under Joe Biden's Department of Homeland Security. Every step in the chain that put Whycliff Longin in that duplex in Lee County traces back to a policy choice made in Washington.

Secretary Mullin also said this. Quote. ICE has lodged a detainer and will work with our partners in Florida to make sure this killer is never released onto our streets ever again. End quote.

Never released onto our streets ever again. Think about what that sentence admits. It admits that the system already released him once, when it shouldn't have. And now the federal government is promising, after a woman is already dead, that it won't make that mistake a second time. That's a promise you make after the damage is done. It doesn't bring Amadette Longin back. It doesn't undo what happened to her daughter in that bathroom, hiding, listening, not knowing if she was about to die too.

Now I know what some people will say when they hear a story like this. They'll say, don't generalize from one case. Most immigrants, legal or illegal, are not murderers. And that's true. I'm not standing here telling you that everybody who crosses that border is a killer. Most people crossing that border are looking for work, looking for a better life, looking for the same things anybody would want for their family.

But that's not the point, and it never was. The point is that when a government controls its border and processes people properly, it has the chance to catch the ones who are dangerous before they end up in a stranger's home, or in this case, a family member's home, with murder on their mind. When a government throws that border open and releases people into the country without proper vetting, without holding them accountable to their court dates, without knowing where they end up or what they do, you lose that chance. You lose it every single time. And when you lose it enough

times, across millions of people, you are going to get outcomes like this one. Not because immigration itself is bad. Because an ungoverned border is bad. There's a difference, and Washington spent years pretending there wasn't one.

Whycliff Longin illegally entered in twenty twenty four. That's not ancient history. That's not something from a decade ago that everybody's forgotten about. That is barely two years ago. The Biden administration was in office. The policies at the border were loose. The interior enforcement was loose. And a man who should have been detained and removed was instead let go, free to travel, free to move in with an aunt in Florida who trusted him.

I keep coming back to that detail because it's the cruelest part of this whole story. Amadette Longin wasn't a stranger to this man. She wasn't some random victim he picked off the street. She was his aunt. She took him in. Family members are supposed to be the safest people in your life. And because the federal government failed to do its most basic job, which is knowing who is in this country and whether they're dangerous, that trust turned into a death sentence.

Her daughter is alive tonight because she was strong enough and fast enough to break free from a grown man's hands around her throat. That is the difference between one funeral and two funerals in that family. Not policy. Not the system working the way it's supposed to. Just one woman's will to survive in the middle of the night.

Lee County will prosecute Whycliff Longin now. He faces murder, attempted murder, sexual battery, and burglary with battery. If convicted, he should spend the rest of his life behind bars, and I don't think there's a reasonable person in this country who'd disagree with that.

But convicting him doesn't fix the thing that put him in that house. ICE has a detainer on him now. Fine. That matters for what happens after this case, assuming he ever sees the outside of a prison again. But the detainer should have existed in twenty twenty four. The removal should have happened in twenty twenty four. Amadette Longin should be alive right now, going about her life, having no idea any of this was ever a possibility.

She's not alive. She's dead because a system in Washington decided that catching and releasing was easier than doing the job right. And no amount of statements after the fact from a DHS secretary changes what got taken from that family.

That's the cost of an open border. It's not an abstraction. It's not a talking point on a cable news chart. It's a woman named Amadette Longin, who opened her door to family, and paid for it with her life.

We'll be right back.

05 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

06 — SEGMENT B: CATCH AND RELEASE HAS A BODY COUNT

Let me tell you about a woman named Amadette Longin.

She lived in Lee County, Florida. She did what a lot of good people do. Her nephew needed a place to stay, so she gave him one. She let him into her home. She fed him. She put a roof over his head. And earlier this month, police say that nephew murdered her in that same home, and then turned on her daughter, his own cousin, and tried to strangle the life out of her too.

The cousin woke up with his hands around her throat. She fought him off. She broke free and locked herself in the bathroom. When Lee County sheriff's deputies got there, they found the man next door, arrested him on the spot. Then they went inside and found Amadette's body.

His name is Whycliff Longin. He's twenty-eight years old, from Haiti. He's now charged with murder, attempted murder, sexual battery, and burglary with battery. He's sitting in Lee County custody right now.

Here's the part I want you to sit with. Whycliff Longin should never have been in that house. He should never have been in that neighborhood. He

should never have been in this country at all, not the way he came in. Department of Homeland Security officials confirmed this week that Longin entered the United States illegally through Florida back in twenty twenty-four. He didn't sneak across in the dead of night and disappear into the brush. He got caught. And then the Biden administration released him. Right into the interior of this country. Right into a stranger's neighborhood, if you can even call an aunt a stranger. Right into Amadette Longin's spare bedroom.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin put out a statement about it. Here's what he said, quote: This dangerous illegal alien should have never been allowed into our country in the first place. If it weren't for the Biden administration's reckless open-border policies, Amadette Longin would still be alive. ICE has lodged a detainer and will work with our partners in Florida to make sure this killer is never released onto our streets ever again. End quote.

I want you to notice the last part of that sentence. Never released onto our streets ever again. Which means he was released onto our streets the first time. That's not a hypothetical. That's not a talking point. That's the plain, documented sequence of events. Man enters illegally. Man gets caught. Man gets released anyway. Man ends up in Amadette Longin's house. Amadette Longin ends up dead.

Now I know what the defenders of this policy are going to say. They're going to say you can't detain everybody. They're going to say the system is overwhelmed, there's no capacity, due process takes time, and releasing people with a notice to appear is the only realistic option when you've got that many people crossing. And look, I'll give them this much. The numbers under the last administration were enormous. Millions of encounters. Nobody disputes that the system was strained.

But here's my answer to that. If your system cannot tell the difference between people who deserve a chance in this country and people who are going to strangle their own family members in their sleep, then you don't have an immigration system. You have a lottery. And the prize, for people like Amadette Longin, is a body bag.

This is not an isolated event. I wish it were. I could stand here and tell you this was some freak, one-in-a-million tragedy, and I'd feel a lot better saying it. But it's not. It's a pattern. Catch and release was the operating policy of the United States government for years. Encounter somebody at the border, run them through a system that everyone admits couldn't keep up, and if there's no immediate red flag, you cut them loose with a piece of paper and a court date most of them never show up for. That's it. That's vetting. A piece of paper.

And when that policy produces a Whycliff Longin, when it produces a man who walks free for two years and then allegedly murders the aunt who took him in, somebody ought to answer for that. Somebody ought to have to stand in front of a camera and explain the decision. But that never happens, does it. The officials who built that policy, who defended it, who called anybody who criticized it a xenophobe, they don't get a phone call from a detective. They don't get cross-examined by a judge. They don't sit in Lee County lockup. They go on speaking tours. They write op-eds about compassion. Meanwhile Amadette Longin is dead, and her daughter is going to carry the memory of her cousin's hands around her throat for the rest of her life.

That's the body count I'm talking about tonight. Not just this one case. The whole architecture of a policy that treats border security as an inconvenience and treats the American public, the actual citizens and legal residents who live next door to wherever these people get dropped off, as an afterthought.

Think about what accountability actually looks like in this country when it comes to policy failure. If a company builds a car with a defective airbag and people die, there are hearings. There are recalls. There are lawsuits, fines, sometimes criminal charges against executives. If a bridge collapses because an engineer signed off on bad steel, that engineer's career is over, and maybe worse than that. We have systems in this country built entirely around the idea that when your decision costs a life, you don't just walk away from it.

But immigration policy gets a pass. Nobody in the last administration is losing their job over Amadette Longin. Nobody is facing so much as a hearing. The policy gets rebranded, the talking points get updated, and the

machine keeps running exactly the way it ran before, waiting for the next family to pay the price.

And I want to be fair here, because fairness matters even when you're angry. The current administration, through ICE and Secretary Mullin's department, has lodged a detainer on Longin. That's the right move. That's what should happen every single time somebody with an immigration violation gets picked up on a serious charge. Detain them. Don't let them walk. Don't give them a new court date in a system where half the people who get one never show up for it. If that had been the standard back in twenty twenty-four when Whycliff Longin was first caught, Amadette Longin would be alive today, and I don't say that lightly. I say it because Secretary Mullin said the exact same thing, and he's right.

Here's what gets me the most, though. This isn't really a story about one man from Haiti. It's a story about the value we place on the safety of regular families in this country. Amadette Longin wasn't a senator's daughter. She wasn't going to get a segment on network news unless a local Florida outlet picked it up and it made its way to the wires. She was just a woman who did a kind thing, who took in family, and the policy of her own government put a killer in her guest room.

Every family that opens their door to somebody, every neighborhood that has no idea who's living two houses down, they're all downstream of decisions made in Washington by people who will never live with the consequences. That's the part that should make you furious. Not because immigration is complicated, it is complicated, but because the people making the calls have built themselves a permanent shield from the results of those calls. They get to be wrong forever, at other people's expense, and never pay for it.

I don't think that's asking too much. I think if you are going to make a decision that determines who gets released into an American neighborhood, you ought to have some skin in the game. You ought to have to answer for what happens next. Right now nobody does. The bureaucrats who ran catch and release for years are not tracking Whycliff Longin's court date. They're not sitting with Amadette Longin's daughter in a hospital room. They're not

identifying a body. They made a policy, they walked away from it, and somewhere in Florida a woman is dead because of it.

Secretary Mullin said it plainly, and I'll close with his words because I don't think I can say it better. If it weren't for the Biden administration's reckless open-border policies, Amadette Longin would still be alive. That's not a talking point. That's a fact, sitting in a morgue in Lee County, Florida, and it deserves better than a press release and a shrug.

He was found right next door, in a duplex, hiding, while Amadette's body lay just a few feet away in the home she had opened up to him. Think about that geography for a second. Not across town. Not across the state. Next door. Whoever built the case for releasing people like Whycliff Longin into American communities never had to think about geography like that. They never had to think about how short the distance is between a border checkpoint and a bedroom.

Breitbart News broke the local reporting on this, and their correspondent John Binder laid out the sequence exactly the way Lee County investigators pieced it together. Longin's cousin woke up mid-strangulation. She fought, she ran, she survived. That detail matters, because it means we have a living witness who can testify to exactly what kind of danger was sitting in that house. This isn't secondhand. This isn't speculation about what might have happened. A grown woman is alive today because she managed to break a grip around her own throat and lock a door behind her. If she hadn't, we'd be talking about two bodies in Lee County instead of one.

Now, DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin's title matters here too. He's not a pundit. He's not a talk radio host like me shouting from behind a microphone. He runs the Department of Homeland Security. He's the man whose desk this now sits on, cleaning up a decision made two years before he ever took the job. And even he, with all the diplomatic language that comes with a cabinet position, couldn't dress this up as anything other than what it is. He didn't say "unfortunate." He didn't say "regrettable." He said this dangerous illegal alien should never have been allowed into our country in the first place. That's about as blunt as a government official gets on the record.

And here's the mechanism worth understanding, because it's not complicated. Somebody crosses the border illegally. They're apprehended. Under a real system, apprehension means detention until your status is sorted out. Under catch and release, apprehension means a court date, a bus ticket, and a prayer that you show up. Whycliff Longin was apprehended in twenty twenty-four. He was released instead of detained. Two years of freedom later, a fifty-something-year-old woman who trusted her own nephew is dead, and her daughter is left explaining to police, and now to a courtroom, and now to the rest of her life, what it felt like to wake up being strangled by family.

Somewhere in a federal office, there is a personnel file for whoever signed off on that release. That file will never show a consequence for this. No demotion, no hearing, no name in the paper. Just Amadette Longin's name, in an obituary, and in a police report, forever.

We'll be right back.

07 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

08 — SEGMENT C: THE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLAR DIPLOMA

Let's talk about college. Let's talk about the biggest financial decision most American families make outside of buying a house, and let's talk about how the people running these schools have lost their minds on price.

Here is the number that should stop you cold. Last year, two colleges in this country charged more than a hundred thousand dollars a year to attend. This year, fifteen colleges cross that line. Fifteen. That is not a trend. That is a stampede. And when you're talking about four years of school, you are talking

about families being asked to hand over close to half a million dollars for one kid's undergraduate degree.

Let me read you the list, because you need to hear it with your own ears. Harvey Mudd College in California, one hundred four thousand five hundred and twelve dollars a year. Duke University in North Carolina, one hundred three thousand nine hundred and seventy five dollars. University of Chicago, one hundred three thousand eight hundred and twenty one dollars. University of Southern California, one hundred three thousand one hundred and sixty two dollars. Barnard College in New York, one hundred three thousand dollars flat. Washington University in Missouri, one hundred two thousand two hundred and sixty dollars. Smith College in Massachusetts, one hundred two thousand two hundred and twenty six dollars. Fordham University in New York, one hundred two thousand one hundred and eighty eight dollars. Claremont McKenna College in California, one hundred one thousand nine hundred and ninety dollars. Vassar College in New York, one hundred one thousand and fifty one dollars. Wesleyan University in Connecticut, one hundred one thousand and thirty dollars. New York University, one hundred thousand nine hundred and ninety eight dollars. Georgetown University in Washington, one hundred thousand eight hundred and sixty four dollars. Colgate University in New York, one hundred thousand two hundred and twenty four dollars. And Haverford College in Pennsylvania, one hundred thousand and twenty six dollars.

That's the list, according to the Princeton Review's numbers as reported by the Washington Post. And right behind them, nine more schools are just a few dollars shy of six figures, including Vanderbilt. Brown, Columbia, and Cornell are all sitting right under that line too. This is not a fluke at one or two elite schools anymore. This is becoming the going rate for what people think of as a top-tier education.

Now here's where I want you to lean in, because the price tag is only half the story. The other half is what you actually get for that money. And when researchers went and checked, the answer is not good.

The Wall Street Journal did an analysis of return on investment. They took the estimated earnings of graduates from each school and they weighed that

against what it costs to go there. And get this. Harvey Mudd, the single most expensive school in the country at one hundred four thousand five hundred and twelve dollars a year, ranked fiftieth on the Journal's best-value list. Fiftieth. University of Chicago, the third most expensive school in America, ranked sixtieth for return on investment. Duke ranked one hundred and sixty sixth.

And it gets worse the further down the list you go. New York University was the twelfth most expensive school in the country. For value, for what you actually get back on your investment, NYU ranked three hundred and twenty first. Fordham was the eighth priciest school on this whole list, and it ranked four hundred and twenty third for value. Vassar was the tenth most expensive school in America, and it ranked five hundred and fourteenth for return on investment.

Sit with that for a second. You are paying among the highest prices in the entire country, and you are getting a return that ranks somewhere in the five hundreds. That is not a bad deal. That is close to a scam, if you ask a family that doesn't know any better and just assumes the sticker price means the school must be worth it.

Now here's the part that really gets me. While these six-figure schools were floundering on value, you know who was cleaning up? CUNY. The City University of New York system. CUNY schools dominated the top of that return-on-investment ranking, taking the top seven spots. Princeton, Stanford, and California State University, Los Angeles were right behind them. Think about that lineup for a second. You've got a public university system in New York, schools that regular working families can actually afford, beating Duke, beating University of Chicago, beating NYU, on the one measure that actually matters. What do you get back for what you put in.

Now, I want to be fair here, because the story isn't quite as simple as "these schools are all robbing you blind." Rob Franek, who's with the Princeton Review, told the Washington Post something worth hearing. Quote. Without question, when schools start to charge over a hundred thousand dollars, it starts to raise a lot of eyebrows. But there's a great deal of available aid. End quote.

And that's true, to a point. Some of these schools discount hard for families with real financial need. Washington University hands out about seventy five thousand eight hundred and eighty dollars in need-based aid on average, which knocks that one hundred two thousand two hundred and sixty dollar price down to about twenty nine thousand one hundred and ninety five dollars a year. University of Chicago and Wesleyan offer similar discounts, around seventy five percent off for families who qualify. Harvey Mudd, Duke, Vassar, and Claremont McKenna all knock off sixty percent or more for need-based students.

So if you're a family with real financial need, the actual price you pay can be a fraction of that scary sticker number. Fine. But here's the catch nobody wants to say out loud. Only about half the students at these top schools even qualify for need-based aid. That means the other half, roughly half of every incoming class, is paying full freight. And a lot of those families are not billionaires. They're doctors, small business owners, two-income professional households who make good money but not enough to shrug off a hundred thousand dollars a year without blinking.

A Wellesley College economics professor named Phillip B. Levine put it plainly. Quote. These prices exist for families with very high incomes, at least three hundred thousand or four hundred thousand dollars a year. End quote. He also said the schools are actually spending more per student than they charge, and that the cost of providing that education is rising faster than inflation. So even the schools will tell you, if you push them, that they're not exactly gouging you for profit. They're just running an expensive operation and passing the bill along.

But Sandy Baum, a fellow at the Urban Institute, put her finger on the real human cost of this. Quote. For certain people, this is really significant. End quote. That's an understatement if I ever heard one. For a family making, say, two hundred thousand dollars a year, a family that looks rich on paper but is nowhere near the three or four hundred thousand dollar income Levine was talking about, one hundred thousand dollars a year for one kid's tuition is not a rounding error. That's a mortgage payment. That's a second mortgage

payment. For four years. For one child. And a lot of these families have more than one kid.

Here's the good news, if you want to call it that. Not everywhere is prices climbing like this. Average tuition, nationally, has actually been dropping over the last ten years at most schools. According to the College Board, average tuition at nonprofit private universities dropped from forty thousand four hundred and eighty dollars in the two thousand sixteen to two thousand seventeen school year, down to thirty seven thousand three hundred and eighty dollars for the current two thousand twenty five to two thousand twenty six school year. At public four-year colleges, average tuition dropped from twenty four thousand three hundred and ten dollars down to twenty one thousand three hundred and forty dollars over that same stretch.

So the headline-grabbing schools, the Dukes and the NYUs and the Harvey Mudds, they are the exception, not the rule. Sandy Baum made that point directly to the Washington Post. Quote. To think this is what it costs to go to college is very misleading. End quote. And she's right. Most families are not paying six figures a year. Most schools are not charging six figures a year. This is happening at a small cluster of brand-name institutions that know their name alone can carry the price tag, at least for a while.

But here's my worry. When fifteen schools blow past one hundred thousand dollars in a single year, up from just two the year before, that number is not going to shrink. It's going to keep climbing, and other schools are going to look at Duke and NYU and Fordham and think, well, if they can charge that and still fill every seat, why can't we? That's how a bad number becomes a normal number. That's how one hundred thousand dollars a year becomes just the going rate for a name-brand diploma, whether or not that diploma actually earns its price back.

So if you've got a kid looking at colleges right now, do yourself a favor. Don't fall in love with the name on the sweatshirt. Pull up the return-on-investment numbers before you pull out the checkbook. Because right now, in this country, a public school in New York City can beat Duke on what actually matters, and the only difference is which one has spent more money convincing you their name is worth the debt.

We'll be right back.

09 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

10 — SEGMENT D: STICKER PRICE IS A CON GAME

Let me talk to you about a number. One hundred and four thousand, five hundred and twelve dollars. That is what Harvey Mudd College in California wants for one year. One year. Not four years. One year of room, board, and classes. And Harvey Mudd is not alone anymore. Fifteen colleges in this country now charge more than one hundred thousand dollars a year. Fifteen. Last year it was two. Two schools broke the six-figure mark. This year it is fifteen, and another nine schools are sitting right below the line, close enough to smell it. Vanderbilt is one of them. Brown, Columbia, and Cornell are all charging just under one hundred thousand dollars a year too. That means over four years, a family sending one kid to one of these schools is looking at something close to half a million dollars. For an undergraduate degree.

Now here is where it gets interesting, because I want you to really sit with this. Duke University charges one hundred and three thousand, nine hundred and seventy five dollars a year. That is the second most expensive school in the country. And when the Wall Street Journal ranked schools by return on investment, meaning how much money you actually make after graduating compared to what you paid, Duke came in at number one hundred and sixty six. Not first. Not top ten. One hundred and sixty six. The University of Chicago charges one hundred and three thousand, eight hundred and twenty one dollars a year, third most expensive school in the country, and it ranked sixtieth for value. Harvey Mudd, the single most expensive school in America, ranked fiftieth for return on investment. New York University is the twelfth most expensive school in the country and it ranked three hundred and twenty first for value. Fordham is the eighth priciest school and it ranked four

hundred and twenty third. Vassar is the tenth most expensive and it ranked five hundred and fourteenth for value. You are paying premium prices for what the numbers say is a below-average outcome.

Meanwhile, you know who dominated the top of that value ranking? CUNY schools. The City University of New York. Public schools. Cheap schools. They took the top seven spots for return on investment, with Princeton, Stanford, and Cal State Los Angeles right behind them. So the schools that actually deliver the best bang for the buck are not the ones charging you six figures a year. They are the ones charging a fraction of that.

So why does anybody pay one hundred thousand dollars a year for a school that ranks three hundredth or four hundredth for value? Here is where I get to the real story, the story behind the sticker price. Because almost nobody actually pays that number. And that is not an accident. That is the con.

Rob Franek from the Princeton Review said it plainly. Quote. Without question, when schools start to charge over one hundred thousand dollars, it starts to raise a lot of eyebrows. But there's a great deal of available aid. End quote. Now think about what he just told you. The school sets a price so high it shocks you on purpose. And then it turns around and offers to knock most of it off. Washington University in Missouri lists its price at one hundred and two thousand, two hundred and sixty dollars a year. But on average, the school hands out seventy five thousand, eight hundred and eighty dollars in need-based aid. That drops the real cost down to about twenty nine thousand, one hundred and ninety five dollars a year. That is a seventy five percent discount off the sticker price. The University of Chicago and Wesleyan University offer roughly the same discount, about seventy five percent off. Harvey Mudd, Duke, Vassar, and Claremont McKenna all cut sixty percent or more off the top for families who qualify.

So what is actually going on here? These schools are not selling tuition. They are running a price discrimination operation, and they are dressed up in ivy and quoting Latin mottos while they do it. A car dealer marks up the sticker price so he has room to "negotiate you down" and make you feel like you won something. These schools are doing the same thing, except the

stakes are a college degree and the discount depends on your family's tax return.

Phillip B. Levine, an economics professor at Wellesley College, said it out loud. Quote. These prices exist for families with very high incomes, at least three hundred thousand or four hundred thousand dollars a year. End quote. Let that land. The sticker price, the full one hundred thousand dollars a year, is not really meant for the middle class at all. It is meant for the family making three or four hundred thousand dollars a year who can write the check without blinking, or at least without qualifying for a dime of aid.

And here is the part that should make every working parent in this country furious. Only about half the students at these top schools qualify for need-based financial aid. Half. That means the other half, the families who make too much to get help but do not make anywhere close to three or four hundred thousand dollars a year, are stuck paying the full freight. Sandy Baum, a fellow at the Urban Institute, put it simply. Quote. For certain people, this is really significant. End quote. That is an economist's polite way of saying it will crush you. You are the electrician making one hundred and forty thousand dollars a year. You are the small business owner clearing one hundred and sixty thousand. You make too much for a discount and nowhere near enough to pay one hundred thousand dollars a year without bleeding your retirement account dry. You are the one this system is built to squeeze, because you cannot claim poverty and you are not rich. You are just an ordinary American who worked hard and got nothing for it but a bill.

Now Levine also explained why the price keeps climbing in the first place. Quote. They reflect the fact that most of these schools are spending more per student than they charge, and the cost of providing that education is rising at rates faster than inflation. End quote. Now that might sound like a defense. It is not. If your cost of doing business keeps climbing faster than inflation, faster than everybody else's cost of living, that tells you the business itself is bloated. It tells you there is administrative fat, building projects, prestige spending, that has nothing to do with teaching kids how to think.

And here is the thing that really gets me. This is not happening everywhere. According to the College Board, average tuition at private

nonprofit colleges actually dropped over the last ten years, from forty thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars down to thirty seven thousand, three hundred and eighty dollars. Public four-year colleges dropped too, from twenty four thousand, three hundred and ten dollars down to twenty one thousand, three hundred and forty dollars. So while fifteen elite schools are racing each other to one hundred thousand dollars a year, the average American college is actually getting cheaper. This six-figure club is not the story of higher education in this country. It is a tiny, self-selected group of institutions playing a status game with each other, and the losers in that game are the middle class families who get talked into thinking that name-brand school is the only ticket to a good life.

Sandy Baum said something that I think is the whole ballgame. Quote. To think this is what it costs to go to college is very misleading. End quote. Misleading is a generous word for it. It is a marketing con dressed up as a moral good. The high price signals prestige. The steep discount signals generosity. And the family in the middle, the one who is not poor enough for the discount and not rich enough to shrug off the bill, gets played from both directions.

So what is a school like this actually for anymore? It used to be that a university's job was to educate the most people it could, as well as it could, for as little as it reasonably had to cost. Now the sticker price does something else entirely. It sorts families by income before the kid even sets foot on campus. It tells the wealthy family, come here, we will make you feel special and we will take your check. It tells the low-income family, come here, we will make you feel generous toward you and take almost nothing. And it tells the working and middle class family, you get to pay for both of those other deals, because you are the only one without leverage.

This is not an accident and it is not a mystery. It is a business model. A university that charges one hundred thousand dollars a year and discounts seventy five percent of it for some families is not confused about economics. It knows exactly what it is doing. It is maximizing revenue from every family based on what that family is willing and able to pay, the same way an airline prices a seat differently depending on when you book it. Except an airline

seat gets you to Cleveland. A degree from a school that ranks three hundredth for value gets your kid a bill and a diploma that costs four times what it is worth on paper.

If you are a parent looking at one of these schools, do not be shamed by the sticker price and do not be flattered by the discount. Look at the CUNY school. Look at the state school. Look at the return on investment number, not the name on the sweatshirt. Because the sticker price was never the truth. It was the opening bid in a negotiation that was rigged against you before you ever sat down at the table.

We'll be right back.

11 — [BREAK] — COMMERCIAL

[COMMERCIAL — slot for 30s ad]

12 — CLOSING / SIGN-OFF

That is the show tonight. Let's bring it home.

We talked about the border, and we talked about what it costs a family in Ohio when the policy gets made three thousand miles away by people who never see the fallout. We talked about college tuition, and how a kid in Tennessee ends up sixty thousand dollars in debt because some administrator needed a new building with his name on it. Different topics. Same story.

Here's the thread. The people who write the policy do not live with the policy. The senator who votes for open borders lives behind a gate with armed guards. The university president who jacks up tuition every year sends his own kids to school for free. They make the decision, and they walk away clean. The rest of us do not get to walk away. We pay the tax bill. We pay the tuition bill. We deal with what is left over after the decision gets made.

That is the pattern in this country right now. Somebody else calls the play, and the ordinary family blocks and tackles. Nobody in Washington loses sleep over your grocery bill. Nobody at that university loses sleep over your daughter's student loan. They are insulated. You are not.

I do not think that changes until people start asking the right question about every single policy that comes down the pike. Who benefits, and who pays. Ask that question enough times, and you start to see the whole picture pretty clearly.

I appreciate you spending this hour with me tonight. I do not take it for granted. There are a lot of places you could have been, and you chose to be right here.

Get some rest. Get up tomorrow and do the work nobody's going to thank you for. That is what this country runs on, and it is not the people in charge.

I will be back tomorrow night at seven. Same time, same station.

I'm Mark Ford. Good night, America.