Posted online June 28, this was printed in the Boston Sunday Globe on July 10. Here also are Globe readers' comments that were posted below the online edition.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/>

Sunday print edition (full page):



**Mark Shields had Ivy League fatigue — and he had a point**

**The late pundit prized civic trust and the common good. With his death, I wonder: Do America’s elite schools even teach those ideals anymore?**

**By Jim Sleeper**  **June 28, 2022**



**The late Mark Shields at home in Chevy Chase, Md. in 2020. VALERIE PLESCH/NYT**

**W**hen President Obama, a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, nominated the former Harvard Law School dean Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court in 2010, the PBS News Hour’s Jim Lehrer asked its commentator Mark Shields what he made of the fact that, with her confirmation, all nine justices would hold degrees from Ivy League universities.

Shields, a son of Weymouth whose death on June 18 has left a hole in the soul of TV punditry, gave Lehrer an unvarnished answer: “I am so tired of Ivy Leaguers, I really am. I want somebody who went to a state university . . . who worked nights, maybe, to pay for their own books, who either was in . . . the enlisted ranks of the United States military or knows somebody who was, somebody who . . . is west of the Hudson and east of Malibu. Why do we . . . restrict it to this pool . . .? I really just think it is terribly elitist, I mean, it sounds like the British ruling class.”

The Ivied overgrowth that rankled Shields wasn’t rectified by President Trump’s appointments of justices Neil Gorsuch (Columbia University, Harvard Law School, Oxford PhD) and Brett Kavanaugh (Yale College, Yale Law School). Only Amy Coney Barrett (Rhodes College, in Memphis, Tenn., and Notre Dame Law School) has broken the pattern. Shields, himself a University ofNotre Dame alumnus who respected her qualifications, nevertheless considered her rushed, partisan confirmation “[a sham or just a pretense](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/shields-and-brooks-on-the-barrett-hearing-dueling-town-halls).”

His quick wisdom came from a Massachusetts, Irish Catholic working-class-parish sense of right and wrong, tempered with compassion and an impish appreciation of absurdity. When he deadpanned that some hypocritically censorious public authority would “ticket you for double-parking outside the orphanage on Christmas Eve,” his point — that political hacks wouldn’t let even a good deed like giving toys to poor kids on Christmas go unpunished — reflected his sense that bureaucracy and consumerism are draining the life out of what G.K. Chesterton had called “a nation with the soul of a church.”

Since Shields’s death, I’ve been thinking a lot about my own experiences inside the elite bastions about which he was so skeptical.I was a Jewish public school kid from western Massachusetts who’dnever heard of the WASP, patrilineal private preparatory schools of the Yale classmates I’d found aristocratic and chilly when I first arrived in New Haven in 1965.

Early one morning in 1969, stumbling across a residential college courtyard after an all-night party, I came upon two groundskeepers contemplating trees festooned with streams of toilet paper hurled by my drunken classmates. I tried to commiserate, but a stolid veteran of such cleanups cut me short. “It’s OK,” he said. “You guys deserve it once in a while. You’ve got a lot on your minds. You’re up late most nights studying.” I remember thinking, If only he knew how little it’s true.

Now, that man’s successors’ trust has likely curdled into easily tapped anger. And today’s elite college graduates scramble out of their gilded incubators lacking civic compasses and commitments deeper than platitudes and shareholder values. Rare among them will be those who make the time or have the inclination to double-park outside an orphanage on Christmas Eve.

And yet, the old colleges were founded to nourish dedication to the public good. The old colleges knew that the world isn’t flat but that it has abysses that open unpredictably beneath our feet and in our hearts, and that students need coordinates to plumb those depths and to face down the demons in them and in themselves. That root has been displaced by STEM — science, technology, engineering, and math — to which faith and virtue are instrumental, but not foundational.

Shields knew that a good society needs to ground meritocracy in civic trust. He knew that the best leaders might come from Little Leagues as much as from Ivy Leagues. He knew they arise from state universities, historically Black colleges, and religiously denominational colleges like his own Notre Dame. And he knew they were to be found among immigrants, union halls, and civic organizations and movements.

Many of those civic crucibles were opened and led by Ivy League alums, but I wonder how many of my former students appreciate that nation-building achievement. Shields spoke for Americans like the two groundskeepers I met that morning in 1969, before colleges like Yale and Harvard became career-networking centers and cultural gathering places for a global elite that is no longer accountable to any democratic polity or moral code.

America feels a long way from the days of civic-minded Ivy grads such as Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy and his brothers Robert and Teddy, and Barack Obama. I wonder: Do the old colleges still balance students’ training for worldly success with the arts and disciplines of citizen leadership and truth seeking, whatever the political or economic risks?

[*Jim Sleeper*](https://www.jimsleeper.com/)*, a journalist in New York, taught expository writing at Harvard in the 1970s and seminars on journalism, liberalism, and democracy at Yale from 1999**to**2021.*

**Comments**

[**Expat204**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5614091)[6/28/22 - 4:42AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138322312)

Mr Sleeper is advocating a sort of noblesse oblige morality in our leaders. While that is certainly to be preferred to the present moral vacuum in our society and in the bastions of higher education, it is nevertheless unquestioning regarding the 'noblesse' part of that formula. It is not coincidental the that the Roosevelts and the Kennedys were rich beyond the dreams of Croesus and it was therefore in their interests to distribute balm to those wounded by the system from which they profited. The Obamas are quick studies it appears.
Mark Shields was by all accounts a very decent man, a high accolade in these times.

o

[**djnfox**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5369420)[6/28/22 - 6:38AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138325864)

Your observation about the Kennedys is unfair. While patriarch Joseph P. Kennedy was no angel, each Kennedy was an individual, and should be accorded respect as such. Second, there are plenty of families with wealth, whose members have contributed nothing to our country.

[**Spanophile**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5575168)[6/28/22 - 7:06AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138327364)

Didn't seem like he was advocating for noblesse oblige, but rather a true education, not just an introduction to others striving to earn big money.

[**DannyCambridge**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5559301)[6/28/22 - 4:50AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138322348)

Well said, Mr Sleeper. While I've always been a supporter of a limited meritocracy, too many of those who are successful in their business/professional lives seem to think that they are meritorious in all aspects of life, and those who are not as successful must somehow be morally deficient.
This leads to condescension and arrogance, which of course puts the recipients' backs up, who then not only tune out, but actively oppose "the elites". We've seen how that turned out.
I've recently wondered about the Ivies. After all, they've given us the likes of Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, and Tom Cotton, not to mention the theocrats Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito.
As for Mark Shields, for years I've enjoyed listening to him spar with David Gergen and then David Brooks. Though Mr Shields wasn't Jewish, he was what we'd call "a mensch"; a good-hearted and unselfish person, with thoughts for others beside himself.

[**autocarr**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5563884)[6/28/22 - 9:40AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138340360)

And not only the political and judicial output of the elites, there’s the captains of industry and… As Sleeper lays it out… “today’s elite college graduates scramble out of their gilded incubators lacking civic compasses and commitments deeper than platitudes and shareholder values. Rare among them will be those who make the time or have the inclination to double-park outside an orphanage on Christmas Eve.”

[**Sidewalks**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5381202)[6/28/22 - 10:33AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138344407)

I have really enjoyed reading so many of the tributes to Mark Shields. They glisten with genuine affection for an obviously kind and decent man. He represents the best of Irish Catholic Boston. (There are plenty of issues with Irish Catholic Boston but it's okay to reflect on the bright spots on occasion.) He's a personality type I know well, with a sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate that was informed by faith formation, Jesuit schooling and leavened by a twinkle-eyed sense of humor. I'll miss him. And I'll miss the passing of his kind. The younger generations of Irish Catholics (of which I am one) have mostly lost that unique sense of duty and humility and kindness. We have other attributes but the community life informed by faith and the power of the church to mold moral compasses has largely disappeared.

[**globethinker**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5455735)[6/28/22 - 5:36AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138323169)

Voters outside of the Northeast bastion of the Ivy League and the West coast centers of Berkley and Palo Alto are keenly aware that their votes count just as much as the chosen elite of the Ivy Leagues. Our country's founders anticipated the rise of an aristocracy and built safeguards into our (less than perfect ) founding documents to insure that voters in each state ultimately controlled their own destiny. They also included a method to amend the Constitution. It may be time for the Constitution to be amended. Thankfully, your vote counts as much as that of any Ivy League graduate in that process.

[**user\_4466995**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5368565)[6/28/22 - 7:55AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138331390)

Amend to comply with the Old Testament?
No thanks
The electoral college is worse than Ivy leaguer college

[**CoffeeCoffeeCoffee**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5575474)[6/28/22 - 11:42AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138348959)

The funny part of that is that the country’s founders, through the electoral college, anticipated that local land owners would vote for the most educated and elite among them to go meet in the Capitol and decide among themselves who would be our next president.

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[**Giermund**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5199886)[6/28/22 - 5:57AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138323851)

The bigger problem, always ignored by corporate lapdogs and the purposefully ignorant, isn’t that the Ivies fail to adequately prepare future politicians to be thoughtful and decent to their own constituents, it’s that those schools fail to impress upon future corporate leaders those same values. After all, corporations run this country and own us all. Our elected leaders are not even really that expensive considering the potential rewards.

[**screenname713**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5301024)[6/28/22 - 6:18AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138324625)

Pete Buttigieg meets the model Mr. Sleeper describes, and that Mr. Shields would like. So I guess the thoughtful elite do exist.

[**shosty**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5050821)[6/28/22 - 6:44AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138326215)

The kids of those two groundskeepers may be attending an Ivy League school these days. And pursuing STEM so they won't have to be groundskeepers. The old days of prep school boys studying humanities and then entering Dad's firm are not gone but do not relfect the majority at Ivy League schools anymore. I am a supporter of arts and humanities study, but the increased socioeconomic diversity of students may actually work to increase the focus on money, and for good reason given the costs.

[**Spanophile**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5575168)[6/28/22 - 7:09AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138327517)

If only

[**kno64**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5040459)[6/28/22 - 12:58PM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138353903)

It's hard to say what the kids of those groundskeepers would be doing now. The Ivy League schools and other elite colleges are definitely more of a meritocracy than they were back in the days when Thurston Howell the 4th and his prep school chums ruled the roost. And yet, the more meritocratic system found in today's top schools is far from representative of the nation as a whole, at least when it comes to class. Witness a NY Times review just a few years ago that found that many of our top colleges have more students from families in the top 1% of the income distribution than from families in the bottom 50%.

[**user\_4456472**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5369660)[6/28/22 - 6:47AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138326428)

It is hard to comprehend the plight of the common man if your life has consisted of private schools, wealth, privilege, and an Ivy League college. That handicap didn't stop DJT from grifting the entire nation and building a cult of the poorly educated. Privilege has been a differentiating factor for all of our history and many successful people owed their success to who they knew. I think Mr. Shields was a wise curmudgeon and was right that too many elitists in public life create a gentry that has lost touch with the lives of the majority. Serving in the military was a way for many to experience reality and , for the most part, those who might benefit from the experience totally avoid the opportunity. When it comes to representation of the people and filling the ranks of the SCOTUS all would benefit from a more representative group that more clearly represents the nation. In my profession people with Ivy League credentials often thought of themselves as elites but had feet of clay.

[**MontpellierExpat**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5622089)[6/28/22 - 12:58PM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138353871)

Growing up in an aristocratic bubble didn't stop FDR, but I think the consensus is that his contracting polio had much to do with his empathy for the suffering of ordinary Americans.

[**northshore123**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5125947)[6/28/22 - 7:08AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138327472)

This article makes him sound like a poor kid from Western Mass. Longmeadow is not a poor community- it's the richest in that part of the state. So yes, he wasn't one of the elite at Yale, but calling his hometown a working class community is a bit of a stretch.

[**R&S**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5585793)[6/28/22 - 8:28AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138334273)

A lot of assumptions being made here that are unfair to the writer. He could be from Springfield. Besides, that area isn't known for fancy prep schools, etc.

[**chobrien01007**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5621639)[6/28/22 - 11:45AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138349101)

R&S there are almost a dozen elite private schools in the Pioneer valley. Deerfield Academy, Wilbraham and Monson, The Williston Northampton School, and Eaglebrook School for example.

[**user\_1700434**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5381821)[6/28/22 - 7:32AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138329593)

Mark Shields advocated for the hard working people in this country and for those trying to pull themselves out of poverty. He was absolutely correct about elites (who are policy setters in both political parties) and the value of serving in or knowing those who serve in the Military. His voice will be missed.

[**user\_3558424**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5383407)[6/28/22 - 7:37AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138329869)

If this were a problem limited to Ivy League schools, it'd be less of a problem. Unfortunately, the retreat from civic values goes way beyond the absence of "noblesse oblige" in the 1%. It has been more general, and has become fully embedded in the way we raise and educate children.

In schools that serve "elite" kids, the ethos of educating and rearing kids toward becoming members of their communities has all but vanished. Instead, all efforts are focused on getting kids into the "right" college - meaning Ivies and a handful of highly selective non-Ivies. Coursework by high school has to include as many AP courses as possible; music and art have to include individual achievements like being selected for the all-district orchestra or an art award; community service is undertaken in order to fill-out a competitive transcript; even guidance counseling becomes way more about individual admissions than it is about overall wellbeing. And if all that doesn't produce a prestigious admission, then parent, child, and school are seen as having failed.

Perhaps that's always been part of schooling in well-off communities, but thirty years ago it was still producing Yalies like Mr. Sleeper who had some understanding that it's not always about individual, economic success - that educating to maintain a civil society is vital to our collective wellbeing. Since then, the balance has decidedly shifted to "what's in it for me and mine", making both high school and college more transactional than transformative. The shamelessness it's produced is, well, a shame, but perhaps even worse is how that same shift has played out with the rearing and education of the other 99%.

Until the 1980s there was at least a semblance of balance between the civic and economic mission of schools. Uneasy though it might have been, the idea of producing citizens had a visible place in the very reasoning behind public schooling. The same might be said of how kids were raised outside of schools (team sports, youth groups, scouting, etc.), but the seminal change occurred where kids spend the majority of their day - in school. The, "A Nation at Risk" report, issued during the Reagan Administration, marked a shift in the perception of what schools are for in its explicit arguments that (a) they primarily exist for the purpose of individual economic competitiveness, and (b) economic competitiveness is a matter of national security. The argument (if not the report itself) prompted policies in the decades since that have all but gutted the civic mission of schools in favor of STEM, School-to-Work, College and Career Readiness, and similar initiatives that push the unmistakable message that individual, economic competitiveness is what matters, what defines success, what justifies public education. A sense of community and civic obligation? Expendable. Humanities? Nice if you can afford them. School as experience of how to live in a community? Perhaps after Math and ELA test-prep, if there's time.

I could get into the weeds of how this intersects with standardized testing, federal initiatives like No Child Left Behind (or Race to the Top, if you prefer), learning gaps, and so on, but for the moment they're not my main point. All of this has transformed the idea of schooling into job-training, and turned students, our children into human capital. It looks a bit different from the top or bottom of the economic pyramid, but it's the the same blight, and we're answering for it now wherever we look. I think it can change, but it'll take a lot more than taking Ivies off their pedestal or encouraging their graduates to be more charitable toward the staff.

[**autocarr**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5563884)[6/28/22 - 9:48AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138340949)

“ the balance has decidedly shifted to "what's in it for me and mine", making both high school and college more transactional than transformative. The shamelessness it's produced is, well, a shame, but perhaps even worse is how that same shift has played out with the rearing and education of the other 99%.”
The way forward, the MAGA plan for life…

[**user\_4466995**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5368565)[6/28/22 - 7:56AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138331502)

What’s worse than Ivy League College?

The Electoral College ….

[**MyLucy**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5209319)[6/28/22 - 8:27AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138334153)

This was wonderful. I adored Mark Shields and was deeply saddened by his death. He was so sharp, so funny, and so balanced.

[**jimnearby**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5632626)[6/28/22 - 8:56AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138336580)

Mark was a rumpled man in dress and had a wonderfully fertile wit and mind. The gleam in his eye as he was about to best an opponent was great to see. He was smart, savvy, so decent and likable. Who wouldn't want to enjoy a beer and a chat with Mark? Had Mark been a judge he would have dispensed justice infused with mercy. We sure need more Marks in this bitter, contrived, polarized country Mark and his like served in the military.

[**FormerlyYoung**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5559526)[6/28/22 - 8:57AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138336648)

Mark Shields was honest, funny and a great wordsmith.
My favorite Shields quote, "If hypocrisy was a felony, Republicans would be doing hard time".
I miss his commentary on the NewsHour,

[**BenjiBallou**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5618816)[6/28/22 - 9:13AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138338025)

Why is that these opinion pieces about the overrepresentation of the Ivy League in (alleged) positions of power seem always to be accompanied by the author’s humble brag that, “Because I went to [Yale/Harvard/Princenton, etc.] my opinion is based on first hand experience and knowledge….” ? Jim Sleeper went to Yale? Who knew? None of us would have, if he hadn’t told us.

[**autocarr**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5563884)[6/28/22 - 9:50AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138341141)

But that was his point to share his vantage point.

[**Diana Moses**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5379598)[6/28/22 - 9:18AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138338543)

I could argue that the demise of education supporting civic responsibility and humanistic values reflects how superficial that earlier orientation apparently was. And I don't think it's irrelevant that in the time it apparently flourished, the pool of competitors was apparently artificially restricted, so being more generous perhaps reflected merely being less concerned about whether one would be comfortable oneself.

What I see is that it became acceptable to see everything in stark terms of a power dynamic, which then gets buttressed by some form of snobbery. (Let me insert here as a place marker that there are other ways to see life than in terms of power dynamics.) I associate the changes with the rise of irony and savviness as positives. But at root I think it's about greed -- for power, money, and social status -- and the willingness to be more ruthless in pursuing those things. There is a lot more acceptance these days of lying in contexts where it used not to be so accepted, for example. So I think the deference to the Ivies and the hollowness of what they now offer are symptoms of a wider problem of the coarsening and regression of our culture more generally. Simply put, mature adult life much more resembles the dynamics and behavior on offer in the school cafeteria than it used to.

[**Nhcentrt**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5630568)[6/28/22 - 9:32AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138339686)

This column should be required reading for every Globe reader who is obsessed with support of current dogma from the left

[**WWH47**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5608448)[6/28/22 - 9:40AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138340386)

Often the best solutions for common problems come from common folks. Too often the elite over think the problem; causing more dissatisfaction along the way. Perfect example; abortion protest do not solve any issues, but the protesters just feel good. Wrong solution, the best solution is to tone down the chants, sit down and work on an acceptable solution. Unfortunately the Elite only believe in “our way is the only way because we know best”.

[**9.10.61**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5625112)[6/28/22 - 12:05PM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138350563)

Huh?

Tell that nonsense to the people of the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement, without whose willingness to take to the streets those movements would have been stuck spinning their wheels in mud.

[**ks70**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5563364)[6/28/22 - 10:10AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138342655)

I fault the leadership of these institutions.. colleges, universities, independent high schools… afraid to talk about the responsibility of “giving back”, the common good… being good citizens , defending our democracy. They are afraid to offend someone prospective student, alum or donor.

[**tincan25**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5622470)[6/28/22 - 10:13AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138342827)

Throughout the arc of my career I have met and done business with many ivy grads, most of whom would have me looking for an escape hatch after 15 min or so.

[**Honor-and-achievement**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5464427)[6/28/22 - 10:59AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138346301)

It's hard to instill or teach the need for "public good," when our schools and society keep telling our young people "do your own thing," not to mention identity politics pushed by our government leaders and the media.

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[**salemlawyer**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5286096)[6/28/22 - 11:17AM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138347343)

Getting into an Ivy League schools is a great accomplishment. I never want to downplay how hard it is to do, unless you have a parent who donates there. And the Ivys have produced some great people. No doubt. But they are not the ONLY place that does so.

Choosing a SCOTUS figure (or other prominent position) is always a hard one. If you nominate someone from something less than an Ivy background, the snobs and elitists (Ivy grads) will cry the person is unqualified. Never mind that the person has a list of credentials down their sleeve.

Ivy Leaguers hire other Ivy Leaguers. It's their minimum qualification. And thus the myth that the Ivy League degree equals future success is maintained.

And while I am impressed at young people who get into an Ivy league school, I am not as impressed as the Ivy Leaguers themselves.

[**9.10.61**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5625112)[6/28/22 - 12:12PM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138351063)

" before colleges like Yale and Harvard became career-networking centers and cultural gathering places for a global elite that is no longer accountable to any democratic polity or moral code."

There never was a time when those schools did anything other than produce new recruits for those who run the world. There was a time when those schools produced any significant number of people interested in devoting their lives to democratizing either the US or the world.

That's why so many of the CIA and state departments of both parties were filled with people from elite colleges who spend their careers fighting to preserve colonialism in the third world, including being willing to kill millions and destroy Vietnam in order to prevent the Vietnamese people from chosing their own government.

[**Staying Sane**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5590101)[6/28/22 - 12:33PM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138352394)

So much depends upon your definition of "meritocracy." There are so many measures of merit that could be applied.

[**user\_1139042**](https://pages.bostonglobe.com/user-profile/5002147)[6/28/22 - 2:30PM](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/06/28/opinion/mark-shields-had-ivy-league-fatigue-he-had-point/?ia=138357575)

I enjoyed reading this, but wow, this piece has a lot of false equivalencies and straw arguments. The goal of intellectual and ideological diversity is worthy, and that seems to be the gist here. But treating all of the Ivy League schools as "elites" is like dismissing everyone who works in Times Square (from the Broadway star to the bodega cashier) as being part of the corporate industrial complex. No one who has an honest recall of college, regardless of which college they attended, can plausibly claim that everyone there thought the same way. That is not the experience most of us have in school, but that's what it sometimes gets reduced to for political convenience.

The phrase "Ivy League" (which is a sports conference — Cornell and Dartmouth could scarcely be less alike), like the word "elite," functions mostly as a placeholder for any situation where people feel disenfranchised, even when those situations contradict one another. That's why, as the comments here reveal, some people equate the Ivies with the scourge of liberal politics even though the elite Ivy League SCOTUS just overturned Roe v. Wade. Do we seriously think the faculties at Harvard and Yale would have voted for that outcome?