

## Not All Applicants Are Created Equal!

Is every applicant evaluated on equal footing when their application is reviewed by the college of their choice? One might assume so, as colleges often boast about having diverse student bodies and awarding millions of dollars in scholarships and financial aid. Furthermore, equality and equity are core values of our society, rooted in the ideals proclaimed by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.*" This iconic statement encapsulates the principles of equality, liberty, and human rights upon which the nation was founded.

Yet, the statement was not originally intended to have the same meaning that many Americans hold to be true today. In the Declaration, it was a political philosophy designed to justify the American colonies' break from British rule. It asserted that all individuals possess certain natural rights—such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—that cannot be taken away by governments. This idea provided the foundational basis for the revolution, asserting that legitimate governments derive their power from the consent of the governed.

In other words, the phrase served as a justification for liberation from British colonial rule, rather than a declaration that the new nation would guarantee equality or equal rights for all. In fact, after independence, the socio-economic status of most people in the newly formed nation remained largely unchanged, except that they were now governed by those who had led the revolution. There was no greater equality or freedom before or after independence.

Today, "all men are created equal" is regarded as an aspirational principle, inspiring movements for civil rights, social justice, and equality across race, gender, and class. It calls on societies to eliminate systemic inequalities and ensure that all individuals enjoy the rights and freedoms it proclaims, including in critical areas such as college admissions.

Many of us are led to believe that every applicant, regardless of race, family background, or economic status, is given an equal chance to attend their dream college. Colleges frequently claim that their holistic admissions processes and need-blind policies are designed to create equitable and diverse student bodies.

Unfortunately, much like how "*all men are created equal*" rang hollow for the oppressed during the time of American independence, many highly capable and accomplished applicants today are overlooked in favor of those whose socioeconomic status grants them access to the nation's most prestigious institutions. In the coming weeks and months, my future blogs will explore why the notion of equality is an illusion, and how only a select few truly benefit from what elite colleges in the country claim to promote.