

THE HILL AT GEORGETOWN

Transcript ENG



The Hill at Georgetown was produced for the Guestbook Project in 2013

Interviewees: Brian Hencke
 Christian Tobias
 Christine Roberts
 Ayo Akinmoladun
 Nicholas Adams
 Anna (last name withheld)

THE HILL AT GEORGETOWN

Narration: Seventy-five hundred under-graduates call the hilltop home. These students come from all over the country and the world. While students and faculty readily discuss the cultural diversity at Georgetown, socioeconomic diversity is frequently overlooked. Many students feel hesitant to discuss their socioeconomic background amongst peers. Despite their different backgrounds, our discussions show most students share a common feeling of being outside the norm.

Interviewer: Could you describe the typical socioeconomic background of a Georgetown student—what it looks like?

Brian Hencke: I think most of Georgetown students are upper middle class. It's not like everybody is rich, but it's definitely weighted towards the upper middle class.

Christian Tobias: Yeah, I definitely agree. If you look at their clothing, even the cars that they drive, it's pretty...pretty expensive and pretty—I don't know—pretty high end if you want to say that.

Christine Roberts: Upper middle class. I feel like there's not a huge range here at Georgetown. And I think a lot of people come from very wealthy families.

Ayo Akinmoladun: Definitely... definitely upper middle class. That's the answer to your question. You know, I think a lot of people come from very prestigious backgrounds. So, definitely upper middle class.

Nicholas Adams: Wealthy, trust fund—you know—house in Greenwich, drives a Porsche or a Maserati

Interviewer: You described the stereotype as an extremely wealthy stereotype. Is your perception of that upheld by working in the financial aid office?

Nicholas Adams: I would say kind-of because, although approximately forty-five percent of the student body are on financial aid, there are... I mean, that leaves fifty-five percent that aren't.

Interviewer: How do you believe your own socioeconomic background to be?

Anna: I perceive it to be—I mean—pretty good removed from Georgetown, but, in the context of Georgetown, it's different from everybody else's. My mom's a teacher and it's just me and my mom, my brother. And I started working when I was fifteen or sixteen. I feel like one thing a lot of people get jobs here for fun or for influence rather than actually to make money.

Christine Roberts: I do come from a definitely middle class—maybe upper middle class family. And most of my friends, I feel, tend to be in that same category.

Nicholas Adams: Well, I'm definitely not, you know, trust fund, house in Greenwich, drives a Porsche. I'm not like very bottom of the hierarchy, but I would say probably middle class.

Ayo Akinmoladun: Man... I think I'm poor compared to Georgetown.

Brian Hencke: It's hard to say because it's all relative to what you're used to. So at Georgetown I perceive mine as slightly lower than maybe the average, but, in terms of America at-large or DC at large, then I think I'm pretty well off.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you dress a certain way to be perceived as something—

Christian Tobias: Yes.

Interviewer: —or do you just dress because... you know what I mean?

Christian Tobias: Well you have... you have to. Back in Saint Louis, I feel as though there's a cultural aspect to it, and also an ethnic aspect to it. If I wanted to go and wear my Jordan shoes with a nice tee and some nice jeans or whatever, around here that stands out. And that makes you... I don't know... It makes you more vulnerable to criticism and to be extracted as someone that's un-normal. Whereas, if you're in different circumstances, a different setting, you would be perceived as right in. I think it just has to do with the culture: what Georgetown is and the demographic in Georgetown.

Interviewer: Have you had an experience at Georgetown that made you feel like you were set apart from your peers in terms of socioeconomics?

Anna: Not a specific experience, but I do feel like when I work work-study jobs, I definitely identify more with the people I work with rather than people who... I make most of my friends at my jobs at school—I guess is what I would say—other than in a club or something.

Ayo Akinmoladun: Man, okay. So one time freshman year, I was doing laundry, right? And then, you know, when Georgetown has this thing—that machine where you swipe the card and then it shows the price?

Son...

I knew this place was rich when some dude swiped the card and it must say five thousand dollars. I'm like five thousand on a go-card! I'm like, come on now. This has got to be absurd. You look at my go-card man, and you see day-to-day, like four dollars. You know what I'm saying? Just enough. But, I'll be real with you.

And then another circumstance was my friend, Jack. I went shopping with him one day and this dude was offering to buy me shoes. I'm like, "What in the world?" This dude bought ten shoes. Like, most people in Georgetown haven't heard of shit-shopping. You know what shit shopping is? You see me, I'm a type of person

where it's like, you might go shit shopping with me because sometimes I don't like to buy something. You'd be like, "Hey Ayo, can I get that?" I'm like "Shit..." because I just can't afford it. You know what I am saying?

So, it's like... I mean, that's just my reality, so... [laughs]

Interviewer: Do you have any more thoughts?

2nd Interviewer: — Yeah, do you have other

Interviewer: About the divide?

2nd Interviewer: —I guess, that is perceived here.

Anna: Oh. Well, one thing I really think is that people at Georgetown are obsessed with diversity, but they often only see it in the way of race or what country you're from. They're like, "Oh, we have people from all these countries." And you're like, "Yeah, but those are only the people in the top one percent who could afford to come here." I mean, especially because it's hard to give aid to international kids, I feel like we have diversity, but we often overlook socio-economic diversity. So that's just how I see it at Georgetown.

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