

MP - DS 4 - SYNTHÈSE DE DOCUMENTS type CENTRALE

DURÉE : 4 heures

4 mars 2024

Rédiger en anglais et en 500 mots ($\pm 10\%$) une synthèse des documents proposés, qui devra obligatoirement comporter un titre. Indiquez avec précision, à la fin du travail, le nombre de mots utilisés (titre inclus), un écart de 10 % en plus ou en moins sera accepté.

Ce sujet comporte les 4 documents suivants :

Document 1 - un graphique publié dans *The New York Times* en décembre 2014

Document 2 - Un article paru dans *The Economist* le 5 octobre 2019.

Document 3 - Un éditorial paru dans le *L.A. Times* le 11 septembre 2020

Document 4 - Un dessin humoristique publié dans le *L.A. Times* en 2014

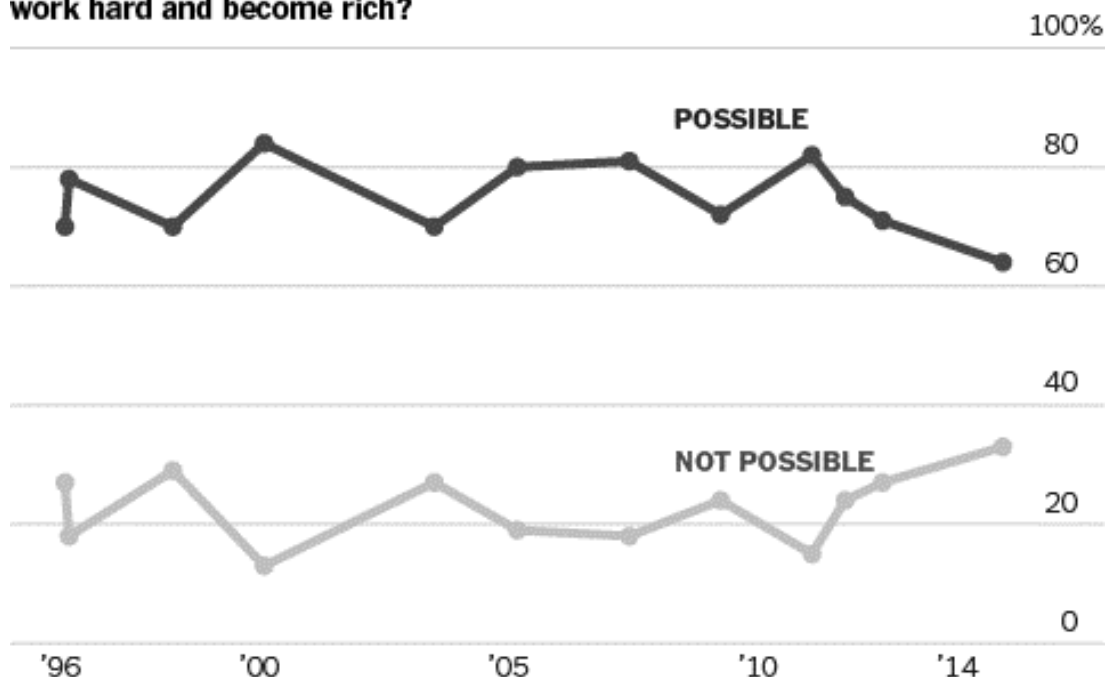
Document 5 - Un article paru dans *The Atlantic* le 4 septembre 2019

L'ordre dans lequel apparaissent les documents ne revêt aucune signification particulière.

Document 1 -

The New York Times Poll

Do you think it is possible to start out poor in this country, work hard and become rich?



'96 refers to 1996

Document 2 - A judge finds there is nothing wrong with Harvard admissions

The Economist, Oct 5th 2019

THE WORLD'S most prestigious universities are primarily in two countries: America and Britain. Strangely, though, the more aristocratic, less meritocratic system of admissions is found not in the country with a House of Lords and a hereditary monarchy, but in the land of rugged individualism. The American system is under attack, however. In a closely watched case that began in 2014, a group of Asian-American students are suing Harvard, claiming

discrimination relative to whites. This has shed light on the inner workings of the admissions process, which has been tightly guarded by Harvard.

Many of the disclosures, such as the preferential treatment given to mostly white and wealthy “legacy students” (those with relatives who attended the university), look embarrassing. Yet on October 1st a federal judge in Boston ruled in the university’s favour. This will be merely the prologue to a long legal battle.

Most of the interest in the case stems from the possibility that it could up-end the system of affirmative action for “under-represented racial minorities” (chiefly blacks and Hispanics) at elite American universities. This certainly seems to be the goal of Edward Blum, the conservative legal activist funding the case, who has brought other high-profile challenges to the reigning system. The Supreme Court has previously held that universities may engage in affirmative action—though it bans quotas—in the interests of promoting a racially diverse body of students. Mr Blum’s aim is plainly to appeal the case all the way to the highest court.

The most interesting thing that has come out of court documents is detail on the programme of preferential treatment for wealthy students maintained by Harvard and other universities of its stature. A recent working paper by three economists shows that 43% of white students attending received some sort of preferential treatment in admissions (because they were legacies, recruited athletes or the children of faculty). They estimate that most of these would not have got in otherwise.

The boost for these applicants is as high as the one given to blacks. Asian-Americans, who receive the fewest admissions preferences, are squeezed as a result. A white student who is in the middle of the pack academically, but has legacy status, has a higher chance of getting in than a typical Asian applicant in the top tenth.

Race-conscious admissions programmes are constitutionally valid only if they are the least obtrusive means to attain diversity. Allison Burroughs, the judge in the case, acknowledged that removing the preferences would increase the number of non-white students. But she concluded they could still remain because “Harvard would be far less competitive in Ivy League intercollegiate sports, which would adversely impact Harvard and the student experience” and that top-notch faculty may not join without a promised leg-up for their progeny. Judge Burroughs displayed a remarkable level of deference to the university’s argument. The Supreme Court, should the case make it there, probably will not.

Document 3 - Endorsement: Yes on Prop. 16, because the U.S. is not a meritocracy

L.A. Times (The Times Editorial Board) Sep. 11, 2020

Americans like to believe that the U.S. is a singular bastion of equality where anyone can excel if they have sufficient grit and tenacity, no matter the circumstances of their birth.

It’s a nice story, but it’s largely a myth. Sure, diligence can take one far in life, but plenty of hard-working people find themselves toiling in dead-end jobs. Starting life in a family with money, property and connections is a better indicator of future success. The odds of having those starting advantages decrease precipitously if you were born female or with brown or black skin. Social mobility even across generations is on the wane, which helps explain some of the anger and anxiety being felt across America.

The death of George Floyd, yet another unarmed Black man killed by police, and the COVID-19 pandemic’s disproportionate toll on Black and Latino Americans have been a wake-up call for this country. We must act to dismantle the racism baked into our institutions, and voting yes on Proposition 16 on Nov. 3 will help.

Proposition 16, placed on the ballot by the California Legislature, would repeal Proposition 209, a ban on affirmative action programs in public institutions that voters adopted in 1996. The ban set back the state’s efforts to promote diversity. Getting rid of it will allow — but not require — the state’s public universities and government agencies to consider race and gender when admitting students, recruiting faculty and hiring staff. That’s all it does, despite what the opponents may say.

Indeed, there's been a fair amount of misinformation regarding this measure, so it's worth noting upfront what Proposition 16 would not do. First, it would not institute quotas. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled quotas unconstitutional in 1978, long before Proposition 209 came along. Nor would Proposition 16 mean that UC Berkeley, UCLA or other high-demand public universities will throw open their doors to unqualified students whose only qualification is their race or sex.

Opponents of Proposition 16 claim that a repeal is unnecessary because the state has done a fine job of promoting diversity through race- and sex-neutral hiring and admission processes. To make their point, they note increases in admission for Black and Latino students at the University of California since 1996 — due in part to the University of California adopting a more holistic admissions approach and targeting low-income students, who tend to be nonwhite.

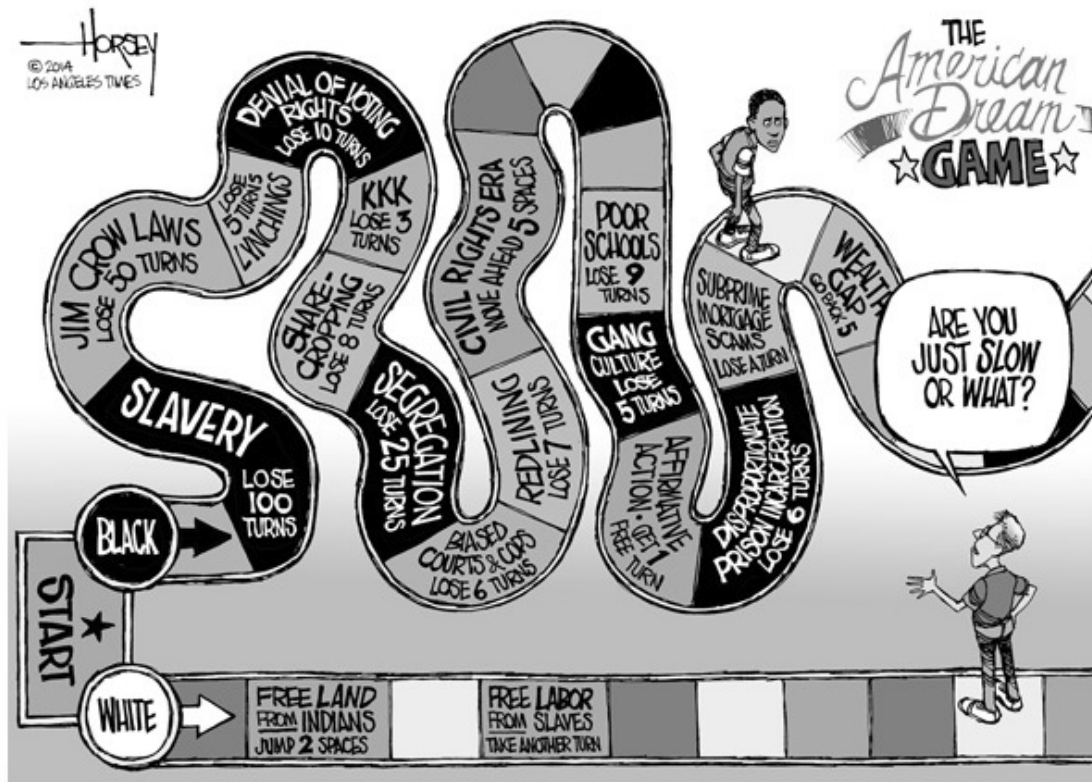
It's true that more Black and Latino students have been admitted to the UC system since 1996, but not at a rate that adequately represents the state's diversity. The disparity among UC faculty is worse. In 2019, less than 3% of the faculty was Black and only about 7% were Latino. That's no big surprise, as Proposition 209 prohibited targeted outreach and hiring practices.

Repealing Proposition 209 isn't only or even mostly about diversity of the UC student body. The affirmative action ban also halted programs to give preference in government hiring and contracting to underrepresented groups. Businesses owned by women and underrepresented racial and ethnic groups often lack the same access to capital and connections as other firms. One study concluded that when state and local government were forced to abandon their preferential contracting programs, it cost businesses owned by women and nonwhite people about \$1 billion a year in revenue.

We think there's a tremendous societal benefit to supporting entrepreneurship within disadvantaged communities. Financial success is one effective way to counter systemic discrimination. We believe that everyone benefits from a society in which institutions that train future leaders in business, law and the sciences are racially diverse, and we advocate a continuation of holistic admissions that take into account indicators of disadvantage.

If we want to live in a country that better reflects our national narrative of equal opportunity, we have to build it. That means using the right tools, such as affirmative action. Vote yes on Proposition 16.

Document 4 -



Document 5 - How Life Became an Endless, Terrible Competition

Meritocracy prizes achievement above all else, making everyone—even the rich—miserable. Maybe there's a way out.

The Atlantic, 4 Sept. 2019 Daniel Markovits, Professor at Yale Law School and the author of *The Meritocracy Trap*

In the summer of 1987, I graduated from a public high school in Austin, Texas, and headed northeast to attend Yale. I then spent nearly 15 years studying at various universities—the London School of Economics, the University of Oxford, Harvard, and finally Yale Law School—picking up a string of degrees along the way. Today, I teach at Yale Law, where my students unnervingly resemble my younger self: They are, overwhelmingly, products of professional parents and high-class universities. I pass on to them the advantages that my own teachers bestowed on me. They, and I, owe our prosperity and our caste to meritocracy.

Two decades ago, when I started writing about economic inequality, meritocracy seemed more likely a cure than a cause. Meritocracy's early advocates championed social mobility. In the 1960s, for instance, Yale President Kingman Brewster brought meritocratic admissions to the university with the express aim of breaking a hereditary elite. Alumni had long believed that their sons had a birthright to follow them to Yale; now prospective students would gain admission based on achievement rather than breeding.

Today's meritocrats still claim to get ahead through talent and effort, using means open to anyone. In practice, however, meritocracy now excludes everyone outside of a narrow elite. Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and Yale collectively enroll more students from households in the top 1 percent of the income distribution than from households in the bottom 60 percent. Legacy preferences, nepotism, and outright fraud continue to give rich applicants corrupt advantages. But the dominant causes of this skew toward wealth can be traced to meritocracy. On average, children whose parents make more than \$200,000 a year score about 250 points higher on the SAT¹ than children whose parents make \$40,000 to \$60,000. Only about one in 200 children from the poorest third of households achieves SAT

¹ SAT : Scholastic Assessment Test : test standardisé d'entrée dans les universités américaines

scores at Yale's median. Meanwhile, the top banks and lawfirms, along with other high-paying employers, recruit almost exclusively from a few elite colleges.

Hardworking outsiders no longer enjoy genuine opportunity. Absolute economic mobility is also declining—the odds that a middle-class child will outearn his parents have fallen by more than half since mid-century—and the drop is greater among the middle class than among the poor.

Public anger over economic inequality frequently targets meritocratic institutions. The intense and widespread fury generated by the college-admissions scandal early this year tapped into a deep and broad well of resentment. Yet meritocracy itself is the bigger problem, and it is crippling the American dream. Meritocracy has created a competition that, even when everyone plays by the rules, only the rich can win.

But what, exactly, have the rich won? Even meritocracy's beneficiaries now suffer on account of its demands. No one should weep for the wealthy. But the harms that meritocracy imposes on them are both real and important. Diagnosing how meritocracy hurts elites kindles hope for a cure. We are accustomed to thinking that reducing inequality requires burdening the rich. But because meritocratic inequality does not in fact serve *anyone* well, escaping meritocracy's trap would benefit virtually everyone.

Elites first confront meritocratic pressures in early childhood. Parents sign their children up for an education dominated not by experiments and play but by the accumulation of the training and skills needed to be admitted to an elite college and, eventually, to secure an elite job. Rich parents in cities like New York, Boston, and San Francisco now commonly apply to 10 kindergartens, running a gantlet of appraisals and interviews—all designed to evaluate 4-year-olds. Applying to elite middle and high schools repeats the ordeal.

Such demands exact a toll. Elite middle and high schools now commonly require three to five hours of homework a night; epidemiologists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have warned of schoolwork-induced sleep deprivation. Wealthy students show higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse than poor students do.

These students nevertheless have good reason to push themselves as they do. Elite universities that just a few decades ago accepted 30 percent of their applicants now accept less than 10 percent.

The elite should not—they have no right to—expect sympathy from those who remain excluded from the privileges and benefits of high caste. But ignoring how oppressive meritocracy is for the rich is a mistake. The rich now dominate society not idly but effortfully. The familiar arguments that once defeated aristocratic inequality do not apply to an economic system based on rewarding effort and skill. The relentless work of the hundred-hour-a-week banker inoculates her against charges of unearned advantage. Better, then, to convince the rich that all their work isn't actually paying off.

Escaping the meritocracy trap will not be easy. Elites naturally resist policies that threaten to undermine their advantages. Building a society in which a good education and good jobs are available to a broader swath of people—so that reaching the very highest rungs of the ladder is simply less important—is the only way to ease the strains that now drive the elite to cling to their status.

How can that be done? For one thing, education—whose benefits are concentrated in the extravagantly trained children of rich parents—must become open and inclusive. Private schools and universities should lose their tax-exempt status unless at least half of their students come from families in the bottom two-thirds of the income distribution. And public subsidies should encourage schools to meet this requirement by expanding enrollment. A parallel policy agenda must reform work, by favoring goods and services produced by workers who do not have elaborate training or fancy degrees. Rebuilding a democratic economic order will be difficult. But the benefits that economic democracy brings—to everyone—justify the effort. And the violent collapse that will likely follow from doing nothing leaves us with no good alternative but to try.

Fin de l'énoncé