

S. high: josten's manchurian candidate

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Senior year, fall pictures, graduation, and other school events are great times for students, but not as great as the companies who sponsor them. Who would have thought that a few sheets of pictures and some accessories would cost hundreds of dollars? Since there is no alternative, it seems that students must settle for outrageous prices if they want to remember their high school memories forever. Or do we? The control that these companies have over schools, particularly that of J. over my High School, stems from a very basic economic term; monopoly. Students cannot easily go anywhere else for senior pictures, and are simply not allowed to if they want their picture in the yearbook, so it is hard to avoid the hundreds of dollars J. seems reasonable. Why, though, do so few people complain about these prices and why do so many people continue to buy these ridiculously priced items? The answer is the same reason why so many parents buy their kids food whose nutrition facts are best left avoided, or clothes which are not worth their price tag; advertising. If most of the cereals found in your grocery aisle were not household names in families across America due to advertising, very few of them would ever be purchased due to price and health issues. In particular, it is advertising to children that puts the pressure on parents to buy something they normally would not. Whether or not they agree with the price, few parents would like to start a fight with their children.

Sound familiar? If not for the extravagant presentations that students are constantly exposed to, the extravagant prices they conceal would likely be a lot less attractive. I challenge you to find one price value in the next J. assembly you are pulled out of class for. Just like the Trix bunny's enemies

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constantly convince children that Trix are for kids, J. representatives convince us that not only do we need the cap and gown package, but also pictures, invitations, and stickers to seal those invitations. What the Trix bunny and the J.

spin doctors conveniently leave out of their respective brain-washing sessions are the prices to their products. Let's leave that for the parents to discover when the 8-year old is tugging at their pants in the grocery store. Or the 18-year old who comes home with all his graduation accessories circled, simply needing mommy and daddy to sign the check. Would J. continue charging these prices if students, excuse me, parents stopped buying them? Surely not. But in 2007, when the sub-prime mortgage crisis had already begun and gas prices had begun to shoot up, a time in which most parents should really not have been pouring hundreds into marginally useless products, J.

's parent corporation made 12.8 billion dollars of gross profit. A record, no less. We can make several conclusions from this figure. The first one is simply that we are falling for their scheme.

J. threw its hook, concealed by the tasty worm of a happy graduation or memorable school pictures, and students obediently clamped down upon it. The second is these companies could care less how families are doing financially. Mom and Dad could surely use that money they spend to help pay for the bills and gas for, but seeing a sad face on their children is a hard thing to cope with as a parent. J.

could have lowered their prices, maybe settled for 800 million dollars of sales instead of 850. But they milked their consumers for all they could, using happy kindergarten to 12th grade students as their marketing assistants. The Trix bunny dressed up in a suit, tie, and J. nametag, and the five-dollar box of cereal dressed up as a 600 dollar graduation package. We all remember getting our pretty school pictures in a packet to take home in elementary and middle school.

Some of us also remember the disdain when we had to return those packets, our parents having decided that the prices demanded by L. were unreasonable. Wait, though. Is there not something wrong here? The pictures are already printed. This means that L. is making so much profit from the percentage of students that buy the pictures, they can afford to literally throw away those that do not.

The company prints all the pictures that are taken, even the keychains and accessories, knowing that the prices on them are high enough to make up for any loss. Could L. lower the prices, making a bit less profit while allowing many more families to enjoy these wonderful pictures? Could they put less pressure on the parents whose children had been showing the pictures off at school and were eager to frame them? Could they put the good of the customer before that of their CEO's? Of course. But capitalism is the pursuit of wealth, not the pursuit of general welfare. That's socialism, remember? J. and L. are multi-million dollar industries just like those on Wall Street, only more personal in that they advertise to us directly instead of on television or otherwise. I asked Ms. T..

., yearbook director at our school, if there was any change in sight. “ No,” she replied, “ J. is just the best value.” But if we were to bring other companies into the situation instead of simply switching companies, there would be price competition, both companies grappling for the most customers.

Naturally, if high school gives J. exclusive rights to graduation packets, or L. exclusive rights to senior pictures, both companies will charge whatever they desire, whether or not people can afford them. Just like with the pictures students received in elementary and middle school, the money companies make from those who buy the products makes up for the loss of customers. It is not likely that these companies will lower their prices out of prudence or kindness, so introducing other companies is the only other option.

Whether it takes a petition or talking to other companies about our situation; anything could help. These prices are truly despicable, and many reasonable parents are unable to buy the products their children would like not because they are actually too expensive, but because J. or L. choose to make them so. Senior hoodies are not worth thirty dollars.

And a free t-shirt does not make a 250-dollar graduation pack “ the best value”, either.