

How many colleges did you apply to?

One. Oh wait, no. Technically, five.

And what was your top choice when you were thinking of these colleges?

Dartmouth.

I assume you applied ED?

Yeah.

And why was Dartmouth your top choice?

It seemed like they had – obviously it's a really good school – and it seemed like they had really strong departments in what I was interested in studying, because I wanted to go to law school. And I also didn't want to be in the city.

What other schools were you contemplating? You can be as honest as you'd like here.

I had a list of about 16 that I didn't apply to, and I don't exactly remember. My school had this software of likely, target, reach, and unlikely, and they made us rank them, so I don't remember everything that was on the list. I also never submitted anything on that list.

And how much did your race or your identity factor into your college choices and how did it shape your application?

I mean I think it was definitely something I thought about when I knew that I wanted to apply here [Dartmouth] early, because obviously I know that Dartmouth is a predominately white institution. So I did try to talk to current students about how much that affected their time here and if there's like...[laughs] racism, basically.

That was an important thing [factor] when I was touring colleges as well. Like, 'how accepting are people here?'

Like, I would try and always go – whenever I toured any college, I would go for the tour guide that was not white, if possible, and then ask them, 'Do you think there are problems here?' But I don't think it really – I probably mentioned it on my application, because I was involved with the Asian Cultures Club and the Asian/Pacific Islander/Desi American Student Council in my school.

Did you try to play it up, play it down... what was your opinion on it during the process?

I don't think I played it up or played it down. I think I didn't really think about it as affecting me that much, because I didn't think it was really the best part of my application. So I guess I played it down? I don't know [laughs].

And how much do you know about the end of affirmative action and what are your feelings on it? You don't have to take a stance on this. I just want to hear your thoughts.

I feel like it didn't really affect my college process in a way that I ever really thought about. I feel like its ending kind of probably impacted me the same amount that SATs, standardized testing, impacted me, which is to say that I know it impacts other people a lot more but it didn't personally affect me a ton.

And from your answers here, can I guess that you kind of grew up in an environment where your identity was very neutral?

I went to a predominantly white high school, so I don't know. I guess no... I don't know [laughs].

[laughs] It's okay, answer however you'd like.

There were definitely other people of color and other South Asian students, but I think my twin sister and I were the only two Pakistani

Americans in our high school for a few years until this one kid came to high school. I think two. And they started a big club. But like [laughs] I think in terms of that, I don't know, but there were other South Asian students.

And how do you feel about Dartmouth reinstating the standardized testing requirement? Because I know it's been a hot topic on campus lately.

I think that... I don't know. I feel like it's really complicated, because I see how it could be good to have it be reinstated. I understand the idea of that, but I also think that when you get down to it, they say it's an aptitude test, but there's also so many studies that say 'It's a test you can study for, so if you prep you can do better on it'. So I get the idea behind it, but I think in practice it's kinda not... I don't know.

Yeah, there's a lot of other factors that the studies don't take into account. You can answer this question however you'd like. Where are you from?

I'm from New York City, but I was born in San Francisco, and my parents are from Pakistan.

And did your parents attend college in the US?

Yeah. They both immigrated to America for college.

Do you feel your identity has impacted you in significant or day to day ways at Dartmouth? And can you name a specific occasion if so?

I think honestly, something that really excited me about coming to Dartmouth – or not coming to Dartmouth, because I didn't think [know if] this would be true – is that I met other Pakistani Americans who are my age. I don't think I ever had that [laughs] in high school. My mom drove us two hours away – or not two hours, maybe bad traffic – she drove us to New Jersey for this Pakistani American thing, but I don't know. But yeah, that was something that pleasantly surprised me.

Yeah. Finding that community. And do you think spending time around a community of people who you can relate to and kind of have similar life experiences – has it helped you reckon on your own experience as a Pakistani American?

Yeah. I think it has. I think I'm a lot more comfortable than I was in high school. Or ever in my life.