

BTS NRC

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The Debt Trap: How the Student Loan Industry Betrays Young Americans

Navient is the primary point of contact, or the “servicer”, for more student loans in the United States than any other company, handling 12 million borrowers and \$300bn in debt. But Navient also has more complaints per borrower than any other servicer. And these mounting complaints repeatedly allege¹ that the company illegally harasses
5 consumers.

Often, the most vulnerable borrowers are not those with the largest debt, but low-income students, first-generation students, and students of colour – especially those who may attend less prestigious schools and are less likely to quickly earn enough to repay their loans, if they graduate at all.

10 “There are populations who are borrowing to go to college or ending up without a degree, and ending up with meaningless degrees, and are ... worse off² than if they had never gone to college to begin with,” said Amy Laitinen, of the nonpartisan think-tank New America.

Many of the complaints and lawsuits aimed at the company relate to its standard
15 practice of auto-dialing³ borrowers to solicit payments.

Shelby Hubbard says she has long been on the receiving end of these calls as she has struggled to pay down her debt. Hubbard racked up⁴ over \$60,000 in public and private student loans by the time she graduated from Eastern Kentucky University with a basic healthcare-related degree.

20 “It consumes my every day,” Hubbard said of the constant calls. “Every day, every hour, starting at 8 o’clock in the morning.”

These days, Hubbard, 26, works in Ohio as a logistics coordinator for traveling nurses. She’s made some loan payments, but her take-home pay is about \$850 every two weeks. With her monthly student loan bill at about \$700, roughly half her income would
25 go to paying the loans back, forcing her to lean⁵ more heavily on her fiancé.

“He pays for all of our utilities, all of our bills. Because at the end of the day, I don’t have anything else to give him,” she said. The shadow of her debt hangs over every discussion about their wedding, mortgage payments, and becoming parents.

Daniel Rivero (341 mots)

¹ To allege = affirmer

² To be worse off = to be in a worse situation

³ Auto-dialing = automatic calling

⁴ Racked up = had to pay

⁵ To lean on = here : to count on