Chicagoland Chicago Tribune



Mary Schmich

In mayoral race, forget high school

We can all agree that certain kinds of people are unfit to be mayor of Chicago. Crooks. Wimps. Anyone who can't at least pretend to love bas ball.

all. And how about people who ent to high school on the North hore?

And now about people who went to high school on the North Shore?
When the rivals to replace Mayor Richard Daley met for a debate Thursday, Gery Chico suggested that Rahm Emanuel doesn't pass mayoral muster because of where he's from. "He comes from the wealthy North Shore, I come from the Back of the Yards," Chico said, talking with the media after the debate. "If you come from the South Side, you think of Chicago like a South Side, you think of Chicago like a South Side, you think of Chicago like a South Side, wo think of Chicago like a South Side. He's North Shore wealth, entitlement and privilege."
Chico pointed out that Emanuel attended "the wealthiest high school in the state of Illinois."
That's New Trier in Winnetka. "If you come from Wilmette, Winnetka, Lake Forest, that's what you think like," Chico said. "I didn't go to some elite high school. I went to Kelly High School. I went to Kelly High School."
Chico is partly right. The North Shore is different from

school. I went to Kelly High School."

Chico is partly right. The North Shore is different from Chicago.

The city is fast, vast, rich, poor, bleak, gorgeous, multicolored. The lakeshore towns to the north are small, clean, green, serien; if you lived there and never ventured out, you might have trouble fathoming Chicago.

Emanuel, of course, has ventured beyond the North Shore. He was born in Chicago, moved back as an adult, and from 2003 until 2009, when he went to Washington as President Barack Obama's chief of staff, represented a varied swath of the city in the U.S. Congress.

Pet Chica is right about morth.

ied swath of the city in the U.S. Congress.

But Chico is right about another thing: He and Emanuel are different kinds of Chicagoans. Chico was bred in the city, in a time when neighborhood identities were even stronger than they are today.

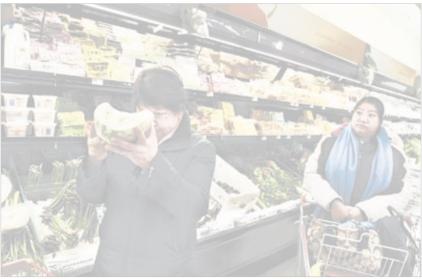
When he questions Emanuel's city cred, he's appealing to a certain Chicago tribalism, the belief, held especially by some longtime natives, that only those who rise from Chicago's grit can understand or claim the city. He's also tapping into the fear that anyone who grew up rich can't care about the rest of us.

But I'm guessing that Chico is doing more than just playing the politics of class and place. Though he's a wealthy lawyer now, he's still a guy from the Back of the Yards. When he talking about something personal.

I grew up as the daughter of a struggling house painter. If you grow up without monied privilege, you'll always see life through the lens of that upbringing, even if your circumstances change. You'll always see see than gent of the control of the control

They'd both, probably, make decent mayors.
And Chico's right about another thing, Social class does matter in Chicago, just not in the way he suggests.
The city remains deeply segregated, racially and economically. Its mansions and skyscrapers are surrounded by neighborhoods where jobs are scarce, guns are abundant, schools are chaotic and it's hard to buy a fresh vegetable.
The candidate who sees those divisions clearly, and has the best plan for repairs, is the one to vote

plan for repairs, is the one to vote for, regardless of where he or she went to high school.



Super shoppers come long way for suburban Asian groceries

Specialty stores

"You wouldn't get it

Pet shelter's owner accused of neglect

Dead and sick animals



In mayoral race, forget high school

By Mary Schmich

Sunday, February 13, 2011

We can all agree that certain kinds of people are unfit to be mayor of Chicago.

Crooks. Wimps. Anyone who can't at least pretend to love baseball.

And how about people who went to high school on the North Shore?

When the rivals to replace Mayor Richard Daley met for a debate Thursday, Gery Chico suggested that Rahm Emanuel doesn't pass mayoral muster because of where he's from.

"He comes from the wealthy North Shore, I come from the Back of the Yards," Chico said, talking with the media after the debate. "If you come from the South Side, you think of Chicago like a South Sider. He's North Shore wealth, entitlement and privilege."

Chico pointed out that Emanuel attended "the wealthiest high school in the state of Illinois." That's New Trier in Winnetka.

"If you come from Wilmette, Winnetka, Lake Forest, that's what you think like," Chico said. "I didn't go to some elite high school. I went to Kelly High School."

Chico is partly right. The North Shore is different from Chicago.

The city is fast, vast, rich, poor, bleak, gorgeous, multicolored. The lakeshore towns to the north are small, clean, green, serene; if you lived there and never ventured out, you might have trouble fathoming Chicago.

Emanuel, of course, has ventured beyond the North Shore. He was born in Chicago, moved back as an adult, and from 2003 until 2009, when he went to Washington as President Barack Obama's chief of staff, represented a varied swath of the city in the U.S. Congress.

But Chico is right about another thing: He and Emanuel are different kinds of Chicagoans. Chico was bred in the city, in a time when neighborhood identities were even stronger than they are today.

When he questions Emanuel's city cred, he's appealing to a certain Chicago tribalism, the belief, held especially by some longtime natives, that only those who rise from Chicago's grit can understand or claim the city. He's also tapping into the fear that anyone who grew up rich can't care about the rest of us.

But I'm guessing that Chico is doing more than just playing the politics of class and place. Though he's a wealthy lawyer now, he's still a guy from the Back of the Yards. When he talks about Emanuel, he's talking about something personal.

I grew up as the daughter of a struggling house painter. If you grow up without monied privilege, you'll always see life through the lens of that upbringing, even if your circumstances change. You'll always sense that people who grew up with money have a different lens.

So, yes, Gery Chico undoubtedly understands some things about Chicago that Rahm Emanuel doesn't.

But that doesn't indicate who can best manage this city. Governing a city requires seeing it on many levels, and sometimes an outsider's eye is the clearest one.

Emanuel, insider and outsider, is the front-runner in the mayor's race. Chico is his closest rival. They'd both, probably, make decent mayors.

And Chico's right about another thing. Social class does matter in Chicago, just not in the way he suggests.

The city remains deeply segregated, racially and economically. Its mansions and skyscrapers are surrounded by neighborhoods where jobs are scarce, guns are abundant, schools are chaotic and it's hard to buy a fresh vegetable.

The candidate who sees those divisions clearly, and has the best plan for repairs, is the one to vote for, regardless of where he or she went to high school.