Power & Poverty

Knowledge is power. That is what they have told us since we were children, that by going to school and learning we could do anything. My sister and my cousin, are the perfect example as to why the previous assumption is wrong. While my sister graduated high school with a 4.0 GPA; my cousin skipped so much school it was a miracle she graduated at all. They both have one child and a supportive family. However, my cousin is a college graduate and my sister is not. Why? The green devil, money. College is expensive, from the books to the classes, a Bachelor’s degree is going to cost you at least twenty grand, if not more. Unless you are a certified genius, without money there is not a way to move ahead in life.

My sister took college and AP classes throughout her high school career. She graduated with a 4.0 GPA and received an Honors scholarship for Valdosta State University. On the other hand, my cousin barely finished high school, and went to the community college for five years. However, scholarships do not pay for everything and my sister still had to work to get by. There were weeks she would call home begging for money, because she was starving. My sister even sold her prized collection of prime condition original Star Wars collectibles, which may not seem like a big deal to some but my sister had spent the better part of ten years scouring yard sales and flea markets to find her treasures. Most freshmen gain the “freshman fifteen”, however my sister lost nearly twenty pounds her first semester of college because she didn’t have anything to eat. Even though my sister’s grades suffered because she was working all the time, she still maintained a good GPA. On the other hand, my cousin did not have to work. Her father paid for her education, her bills, her food costs etc... She had all day to study and be a young adult. She had enough money to pay other kids to do her school work for her.

In the end, even though my sister had worked her butt off, nearly starved, and sold her prized collection; she could not take the pressure anymore. My sister ended up dropping out from the stress. She lost her will and want to learn. The child who had been reading books since the age of three, who always loved learning new things, lost her will to learn. You can now find my sister at the local bar waiting tables or bartending. She works seven days a week and still struggles to get by. My cousin on the other hand is about to get her Masters in Nursing, she hasn’t worked in the past seven years except for clinicals and the required one year. Her father still pays for her education and other bills. Knowledge isn’t power, money is. I am a hundred percent sure, if money wasn’t a factor my sister would be a lawyer or college professor by now. Power is generally defined as possession of control, authority, or influence over others. The green devil is why people have control and influence over one another, most people who are in positions of real authority are there because they have money. What they decide to do with that money can affect counties, cities, states, and even nations. Money and how much of it you have access too, decides where you are going to be at in life, no matter how smart you think you are.

Author’s Note: You are right there is nothing wrong with community college, I just wanted to point out the differences in intellect between my sister and cousin. My sister eventually attended community college for a year as well, that’s when she dropped out due to stress and disappointment. But she might have at least had a degree if she had started off going to Darton here and saved her money. Life is hard, but I know things will get better for her. Sometimes the expectations from friends and family are just too much. She was focusing too much on what everyone else wanted, instead of herself. I wish money wasn’t a factor in college though, not every bright person has the money or the ability to get grants. The price of a degree could be turning away the person with the next cure to cancer, the answer to world hunger, I just feel that college is unaffordable, definitely compared to how it used to be. Not saying I think my sister is some type of genius, but I think between herself and the college system, she was failed. A lot of it is the way the system is set up as well, she tried getting back into school last fall and her advisor basically gave her the run around. I don’t think they do it on purpose, but …..

Thanks for the words of encouragement, my sister would appreciate it if she knew. She hopes to one day be a college professor or a writer, maybe it will happen.