The Meaning of Education to Me

Growing up I was raised to believe that knowledge is what makes a woman beautiful, not her looks. While most girls my age during adolescence were obsessing about hair, make up and clothes my nose was usually stuck in a book. Librarians knew me by my first name and I was (and still am) one of the first students with my hand in the air to answer a question. Now that I have my own children I am teaching them the same as my mother taught me – knowledge is beauty. Education ranges on so many levels that to try to categorize education as a learned science of retaining information from books is antiquated. Education is everywhere. It is in our social interactions, it is in our families and in our everyday discoveries.

My children educate me everyday. They teach me patience, kindness, forgiveness and how to love unconditionally. They inspire me to always learn and to teach others what I have learned. My children’s discoveries enlighten and delight me. My son began to read last year in Kindergarten and I was overwhelmed with pride. When they learn the difference between an acorn and a walnut or a mockingbird and a sparrow, the sparkling comprehension that awakens their eyes teaches me what wonder is.

My pure delight when I learn something new is what drives me the most. I have taken a Piano I course this semester with Dr. Hughes. Watching my dad play piano and guitar for me, I was always amazed at his capabilities and understandings of music. For Christmas I am planning on playing music for him as a surprise – he has no idea I have been taking music lessons. It is truly a gift to learn.
As I have become older and have returned to college my shyness has disappeared. I am no longer the person who sulks in the back of class because I don’t want to hear the rolling sighs throughout the classroom because I have yet again raised my hand. I have become in awe of learning again and am not afraid of what others might think of my straightforward approach for learning. My education and dreams for my future push me past any social insecurity I may carry. I am here to learn. I am here to be educated.

Last year I was working at a diner in Hackensack. I told my boss, who is the owner and operator of the diner, that I wanted to return to college so I could one day open my own restaurant. He scoffed, not at my dream (he knew I was capable), but at the thought of a higher education. He told me that it was a waste of money and he could teach me everything I needed to know. While it was a nice gesture I know the value of a formal education. Yes, he could educate me on a hands-on basis, but that could never account for an actual educational experience in which more guidance and opinions are given. If you only ever learn from one person, you will never learn enough.

At any given opportunity when I am conversing with young ladies from my classes I gently let them know how important this all is. They laugh at me when, through flash cards, notes and the desire to give up, I begin to chant “I want an ‘A’; I want an ‘A’; I want an ‘A’.” They’ll usually rub their eyes, let out a sigh and say “Ok, let’s keep going.” I do it because I know that when the tests are done and the ‘A’ we’ve been working for slides across our desks, it will all be worth it. Then I can go home and play a waltz on the keyboard for my children.