

The atom of distinction

Business



Though I have enjoyed the benefit of being wealthy for much of my life, I never truly appreciated it. I never considered that a person's economic status could influence and affect how people interact with each other. My preoccupations up until high school were simply material, what new videogames to buy and the occasional glance at a textbook. However, it was not until 9th grade that I realized the effect of wealth had impacted me and the manner in which I treated others really popped into my big watermelon of a head.

The atom hit me on the head and turned me like a rock when I discovered that it had the ability to change almost every aspect of a person's life with a simple poof of a wand. Thus I can say by experience that I was introduced to the sorcery displayed by the wand the day I walked into my new school during the fall of 9th grade. The experiences I soon endured profoundly changed the way I perceived people and life. I soon understood that the atom, which was invisible yet always present was not only an economic factor in my life but also sociological. As I stepped out of the cab with my bag of knowledge I started the trek to my first day of high school. As I walked I imagined myself traveling down a never-ending path; a path so long, so narrow moving till infinity.

Then all of a sudden I was pulled away from my fantasy realizing that even though my subconscious begged me to turn back, my adventure was over and I had reached the big 101. The big 101 looked down upon me gleaming artificially, signaling to me that once I entered I would never be able to leave. I decided to challenge its authority and stepped through the doors to a new school year. As soon as I entered I was bombarded with new faces of

which I could identify only a handful. This handful of individuals was the new friends I had made during my time at the turf party the week before.

While I walked towards them I could feel the myriads of eyes darting at me from behind, staring me down as if my presence threatened the integrity of their reunion. I paused, contemplated my situation, shrugged, and continued walking. My friends and I exchanged stories mostly directed at me concerning what my school was like and if it really was as stressful as every student had described. I was just about to reveal the truth when the clock hit 9: 15 and we were thrust into community time. As I hurriedly walked out of my classroom during 5B (Lunch period), recuperating from the 45 minutes that just passed, I once again made my way to my new group of friends.

Significantly it was what happened in these next 5 minutes that drastically changed my life forever. As I approached my friends without thought I blurted a question out not even thinking or considering what dangers it could expose. I simply asked the question “ Hey, do you guys want to go out and eat lunch,” it was followed by a timid “ no”, I then asserted “ do not worry guys we can go and be back before class starts,” I still got the plain “ no,” I then said “ why not” and they replied “ Cuz we have no money.” I had an epiphany, BANG! as if a gun had been fired next to my ears. I suddenly felt like I was in one of those cliché movie scenes when a person suddenly figures out the truth, leaving his mind and thought shattered.

As my knees started to give out the only thought that raced through my mind was “ what do you mean.” It was not until the end of the day after hours of reflection that I truly understood what happened. It was as if

something in my subconscious that was dormant throughout my whole life was suddenly activated. During my cab ride back home I pondered the revelations that were unveiled during my hours of reflection. I had come to the understanding that my friends were less fortunate than me, however, I sensed that I was at fault; because I knew I had made a mistake. All of a sudden images and memories flooded through my mind of experiences prior to ninth grade and I realized the countless advantages that I had every day, which I did not appreciate.

I never really took the bus, the train... you name it and I started to obtain a certain respect for all those who I never knew struggled throughout their lives. Over the next few months I started to grasp that wealth distinguished me, but in a bad way because I felt awkward in specific situations like during the episode that occurred on my first day of high school. I started to become wealth conscious, concerning the way I acted and presented myself in society. I understood that I could not wear flamboyant clothing while at the same time realizing that I had to value the expensive clothing that my parents had bought me. There were days when I would wake up early, so I could choose my clothes, careful not to break the barrier of snobbishness.

The reason I became so wealth conscious was because the one thing that I wanted people not to view me as a snobby little brat. People may ask me how on earth an educated boy who has traveled to India countless times was completely oblivious to the social distinctions that were present around him. It was only after my brief encounter that I realized that it was due to my experiences in India, which had shrouded the atom from my subconscious. When people come to India they say its one of the most beautiful and most

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horrible places in the world, as the poverty line almost stretches as far as my never ending path stretched. However, many Indians have learned to compact and hide their emotions deep within the contents of their minds. Even though we see poverty every step we take we label it as a simple part of life and slowly walk away.

We Indians are forced to leave the guilt to the foreigners because if India felt the guilt that I did after my first day of high school India as a whole would not be able to function. The lesson I learned during my first day of high school will act as a small reminder of my guilt oozing out of the abyss where it has laid for years. I will hold this small, but significant memory close to my heart as a symbol of how the atom changed my life forever.