Over break, I met a taxi driver who is licensed to work as a pharmacist.

A taxi driver... Licensed as a pharmacist.

Does that make sense to anyone?

A grown man with a degree was working as an Uber driver in Florida. Why? Because every job he applied to in the state required that he already have at least a year of work experience in a pharmacy. How was he supposed to get that experience? Through an internship program which, like 90 percent of all internships, was not paid or paid less than minimum wage. He was supposed to have done this during college, however he and his family were too poor for him to go to school without aid. He needed an actual, paying job in order to even stay in college and thus did not have the time to be an unpaid intern. Now he has student loans to pay off and, guess what? He needs a paying job to keep his head above water and still cannot get time for an internship and he’s 26 years old. For him, there’s no clear end in sight.

This is a recurring theme we’re running into every day as college students.

My father told me about how internships have been around for a long time. When he was an intern, though, the title simply meant an entry-level position that the employer was not obliged to maintain. That meant that he and his fellow interns got an entry-level (i.e. LIVING) wage while learning the ropes. What we see now is free labor from college students to whoever wants it. What we see now, well, it’s indentured servitude.

Actually, scratch that. Indentured servitude provided room and board.

This is just exploitation.
I mean, yes, the U.S. is a capitalist country, and I think that capitalism has its uses in moderation, just like anything else, but this is absurd. The way this system works, only those who are already wealthy enough to take internships can make use of their degree in a paying job after school. If anything, that defeats the purpose of getting an education!

Now, how do we fix this? We vote for the right people or run for office ourselves.

Laws are passed not just by presidents, but by members of Congress, proposed by state representatives, and influenced by governors, mayors, and pretty much any other public official you can think of. If we want to see a country where education is not just an empty pursuit, we need to elect people who will make it feasible for less-privileged people to exercise their education. We’re millennials, yes, but we’re not looking for a handout. We’re just looking for a shot.

Song of the Week: In honor of that taxi driver who, despite it all, was cheerful, friendly, and optimistic. Keep up the fight, my friend!

“Poor Boy Down” by Mike and the Mechanics.

Blog Column: Love, The Old Man

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