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Man who dropped out of school, spent time in jail turns life around, graduates from MDC

7 News WSVN

NORTH MIAMI, FLA. (WSVN) - A young man who dropped out of school and found himself in jail has turned his life around and is about to graduate from Miami Dade College.

Everyone's path to their diploma is different, but for 26-year-old Emanuel Coleman, that path included spending time in jail.

"I was like an A and B student as far as sixth and seventh grade, but then that's when things started to get a little shaky for me," he said. "Eighth grade, I got a little lazy. I became a C student."

Despite warnings from family and friends, Coleman said he dropped out of high school, and from there, things spiraled out of control.

"Eventually, I started following the wrong crowd, getting into trouble, doing things I wasn't supposed to be doing and I found myself incarcerated for a long time," he said.

Coleman was in jail for 15 months, but while inside, he quickly discovered that what he wanted out of life was different than those around him.

"I started picking up a trade," he said. "I got 840 hours of automotive technology, so I came home with a certificate, and also while I was in there, I got my high school diploma."

In 2015, Coleman enrolled at Miami Dade College North, where he became the vice-president of Minorities of the Future, where he would give his time to help others.

"I want to be able to speak to kids and try to intervene in some shape or form, because the route that I took, I know a lot of teens taking that same route," he said.

After all his hard work, Coleman was able to surprise his family with tickets to the ceremony — sharing the exciting news with those who never gave up on him.

"I was like, 'Here, open this.' So they open it and next thing you know, all you see is the sun shining. That's a moment they [were] waiting for too," he said.
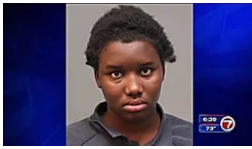
And with graduation on the horizon, Coleman can't hide his excitement — knowing he is blessed with the second chance life has given him.

"It's a huge, huge moment. It's a big moment. I don't even have the words for it," he said.

Coleman will be graduating from Miami Dade College with his Associate's degree in psychology on Saturday. He hopes to continue on and eventually get his Master's degree and work with at-risk youth.

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