Opinion

The burden of knowledge is a privilege to bear

By JOANNA FARRELL
Opinion Editor

I've been to college three times. Yeah, you read that right, Quinnipiac is the third college that I've attended. And throughout my time here I've realized one overarching issue… nobody seems to care about the learning part of college.

My first try was a skill issue. I came out of high school at 17 years old and had no clue what I wanted out of life, but I made the decision to go to college.

From there, I had family issue after family issue. My dad and grandpa were in and out of the hospital my first semester, and my grandpa passed away during my second.

In between all of that, I was partying my heart out, all while trying to deal with being three hours away from home while processing the death of my grandfather, which I was given three days off from classes to deal with.

After that year, I decided I wasn't cut out for college, so I dropped out. To this day, I still get a pit in my stomach when I think about what could have been if I had stuck it out and just stayed where I was.

But shortly after that, I got my first full-time job. Don't get me wrong, the people I worked with were nice, but the job wasn't something that I could see myself doing for the rest of my life.

I would always think to myself: "Is this it? Is this all I'm supposed to get out of life?"

Newsflash, it wasn't. So I made the jump to go back to school. I enrolled in online classes at my local community college. I worked a 40-hour week and did school at night. It was tough, but I managed.

I eventually went part-time at my job so I could focus on school and started going in person. That's when my life really started; I drove to class day in and day out to dig myself out of a hole of my own creation. I wouldn't allow myself to be buried by my own mistakes.

As I started to come close to my graduation for my associate degree, I thought, "Why stop here?"

And because of that thought, I landed here at Quinnipiac. That's why I'm writing this article for you all to read.

Some part of me is grateful. Grateful that I had to struggle, grateful that I had to endure the hardest parts of my life away from my family and grateful that I was able to gather the courage to drop out of college, even if I will never get that money back. Some part of me wishes I never had to. But it was a lesson worth learning, one that no college course could ever teach me.

Let me be clear about what this article is not. This is not some "holier than thou" preaching to you from my soapbox about why college is the best thing ever and why everyone should care about my struggle, as if I'm the only person who has ever struggled. I want this to be a wake-up call for many of my classmates, to stop taking for granted the opportunities that are being presented to you. Many of these opportunities you will never see again.

But I hear your complaints; I do.

I hear the: "Can you believe how much work she's giving?" "I'm just going to put it into ChatGPT." "Did you do the assignment, I'm probably not going to." "So what if I get a C, at least I passed."

And I get it; it's frustrating to feel overwhelmed with homework and studying. It's so much easier to take the path of least resistance when you've got 10 assignments sitting on the back burner that you've been too stressed about to even look at.

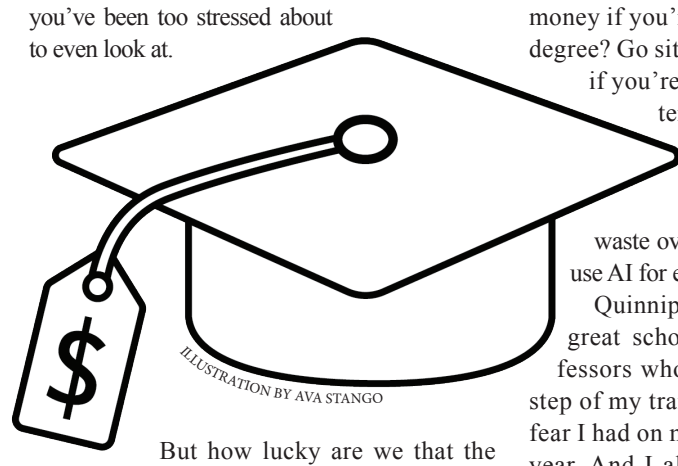


ILLUSTRATION BY AVA STANGO

But how lucky are we that the biggest concern in our lives is what assignments are due at 11:59 p.m.? How lucky are we that our plates are so full when the entire goal was to eat?

It is a privilege to get to go to school; it is a privilege to learn, to read, to think freely surrounded by your peers, to network, to study, to do homework, to have a job. It is a privilege that our biggest stressor in life is school. There are so many people whose struggles outnumber ours 100 to one. Remember that the next time you decide that a professor hates you because they're pushing you to be the best version of yourself, to be someone worth hiring.

I was lucky enough to get a second chance, but many people aren't even lucky enough to get their first.

So why sit here and waste your parents' money if you're just going to get a ChatGPT degree? Go sit at home with no student loans if you're just going to write prompt after prompt begging an artificial intelligence bot to get your degree for you.

I mean, really, why sit here and waste over $100K if you're just going to use AI for everything?

Quinnipiac, for what it's worth, is a great school. We have wonderful professors who have supported me at every step of my transfer journey. I remember the fear I had on my first day of classes just last year. And I also remember the pride I felt in myself at the end of the semester when I realized that I did it, and I didn't fail again.

So if I can give a piece of advice to you, as a classmate and as a friend: college is a privilege; stop treating it like a burden.

Trump wants to fence off your rights

By MICHAEL MCGRAIL
Staff Writer

Lafayette Square is a 7-acre public park located directly north of the White House, its location being the closest a pedestrian can get to the president's place of work. It boasts a reputation of being a historic site in U.S. history, having hosted countless civil rights, anti-war and pro-impeachment protests. And now, in 2026, the Trump Administration has put plans in place to fence off the entire plaza.

The proposed fence would be roughly 8 or 9 feet tall, wrapping around the entire park and blocking off the surrounding streets. There would be two large gated entrances, located at the north and south ends of the square.

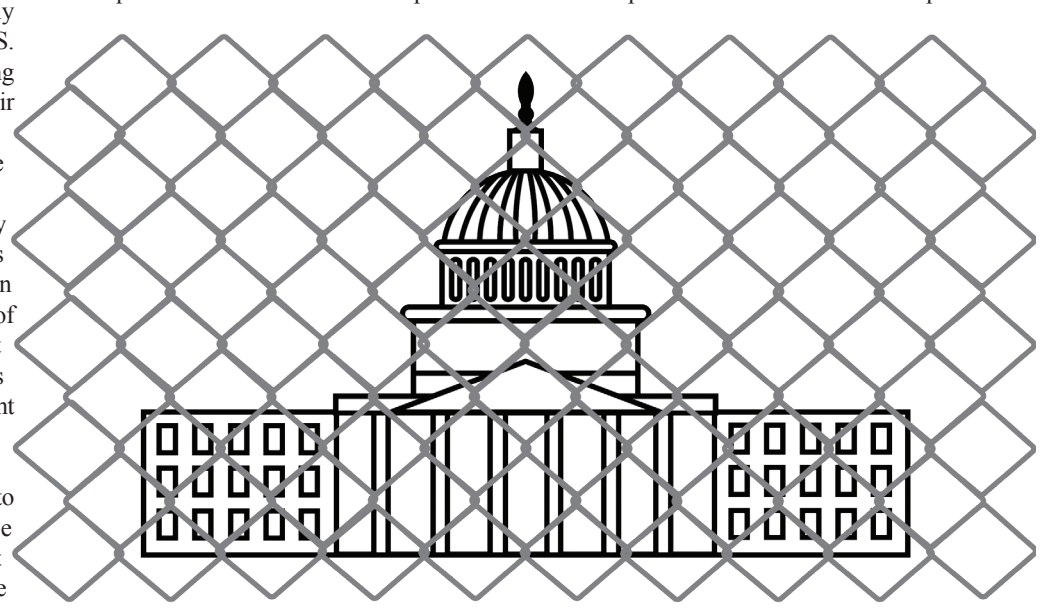
This construction proposal has stirred up a lot of discourse in Washington, particularly regarding how it pertains to the average U.S. citizen's right to protest. Many right-wing politicians have reassured the public that their First Amendment rights are not in question, failing to see how the fencing of Lafayette Square could have any negative implications.

"I don't think the Secret Service has any intention of shutting this park when there's peaceful protests," claimed Commission Chairman Mark Paoletta, an appointee of President Donald Trump, during his first meeting as chairman. "So this idea that if there's a fence up we're losing our First Amendment rights, I don't accept. OK — time, place, manner. People can come to the park."

Although the gates would often be open to the public, the Trump Administration would be able to close them at any time. This means that any planned protest outside the White House which goes against the whims of the president could be closed down with nothing more than a swing of a gate.

According to a public letter written by the American Civil Liberties Union, people have additionally worried that this proposed fence could trap people inside should a protest violently escalate due to local authorities, as it did during the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. Taking both of these factors into consideration, it is clear that the installment of this fence truly only serves one purpose: dissuading people from protesting outside the White House.

The importance of Lafayette Square lies almost entirely in its location. Its proximity to the White House serves to hold the executive branch accountable, the protests located there being a physical, audible consequence of the decisions the president makes. People have historically gathered there so that their cries can remind the person they voted into office that they are nothing more than a servant of the people.


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It is blatantly obvious that Trump refuses to listen to the needs of people who don't blindly worship him as a god. The First Amendment, in his eyes, is seemingly only applicable if citizens exercise it to present opinions aligned with his own.

We saw Trump act on this belief when he announced his ban on CNN, MS NOW and Politico from covering both the executive branch's press briefings and White House grounds. When prompted by TIME to explain why he banned three left-leaning news outlets from covering the White House, Trump claimed "it's just bad story after bad story."

Our president is under the impression that any news which depicts his intensely controversial presidency in a negative light is a "bad story" and deserves to be banned from covering him. He responds to protests against his beliefs/policies by fencing off a historical protest site directly outside the White House. Not only does Trump not respect the right to freedom of speech, but he's actively fighting against it.

Trump has used punishment and fear to exercise control throughout his entire political career; it's nothing conceptually new. The concern behind his actions lately lies in how blatant they've become. He's arrested and deported a large number of legal U.S. citizens for nothing more than attending a protest or posting on social media, cementing the idea that any public objection to his presidency could be life-ruining.

Lafayette Square is a symptom of a larger, ongoing problem. The park has been blocked off for long stints under Trump's presidency before; the installation of a permanent fence is nothing more than a message that will echo even into the next president's term. The intent is clear: anything that does not align with Trump's way of thinking will not be permitted.

This recent boldness in Trump's blatant crusade against free speech is purely reactionary, an indicator that the American people have caught on to the lies and hate speech Trump has been peddling his entire political career. With 68% of Americans disapproving of the way our president is running the nation as of Oct. 8, Trump has no choice but to forcibly cram his ideologies down our throats by eliminating any form of disapproval, one critic at a time.