

LAU: Here for Us

Lara Younis

Dear Editor,

I'm jealous of people who can afford good shoes. You can tell a lot about someone by the shoes that they wear. Sometimes I'm afraid that if someone looks down at my shoes, they'll read me like a book. The peeling leather, the broken soles, the stains that refuse to be removed. I know they can smell what neighborhood I come from, that the roads I grew up in have been less than kind, that the education I received was less than average, and, worst of all, that I don't belong at LAU.

The Lebanese American University has always been a prestigious institution. Classy instructors, classy students, classy education. But for someone who's only ever seen the insides of tattered public schools, I burn with jealousy of those who feel like they fit in.

I'm jealous of people who can afford laptops; I still remember how, in ENG 202, my old HP laptop which was nearing the end of its life shut down in the middle of an exam. I was driven to tears. Surrounded by Macs and iPads, I learned what privilege was like, and I learned that I would never have it. How would I explain to my instructor that I had lost all my progress? What would I say?

I'm jealous of people who can afford phones; in my sophomore year at LAU my phone's screen fell off and was held together by two rubber bands that I had tied it with. I remember saving up all my money for a new one, only to have to pay all of it for my Fall 2023 deposit. My chest grips in anger at those who have never had to feel the shame of poverty in their life.

I turn greener and greener every day. I might be able to afford LAU, but I am by no means comfortable. I am by no means equal. My achievements should be worth more than what LAU gives me credit for. I fought tooth and nail for my secondary education, I stalked online platforms, and I hunted for used guidebooks and old students' notes. When my teachers were on strike other's teachers were spoon-feeding them information. I worry that they can see it on my face; the pent-up exhaustion, the internalized shame, the bitterness that threatens to come out at any instance. Everything I've ever gotten I've had to earn, bared teeth and all.

I still recall a conversation I had with a friend in grade 12.

"You should apply to LAU," I mentioned.

"Nah," he shook his head.

“Why not?” I questioned. “You’re the smartest guy I know.”
“LAU isn’t for people like me.”

I think this is the world we live in. I think of unequal opportunity; of how others, who might be smarter than I am, cannot even read admissions applications to begin with. That somewhere, a girl, hidden in the folds of Sabra’s alleyways, dressed in rags and clad with crocs, mops the floors of her home, and never learns of her true potential all because “education isn’t for people like her.”

The structural barriers that oppose individuals when on their path to attaining education, be it higher or secondary, must not be overlooked. If we are to rebuild this country to its former glory, then we must address the class issue that prohibits many from their right to an education.

I know that universities run on student funds, but I thought that LAU was “here for us.”
Prove it.

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