



1. *The Exponential Unhappiness of Gen Z: Part I*
2. *Opinion: Salem on the Hill*

# The Exponential Unhappiness of Gen Z: Part I

By PHILIP CHIVILY  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Over the summer, I was texting with a friend about life and the culture on campus. This friend and I often get into deep conversations about politics, philosophy, and the Hamilton community, and this time we discussed the social climate. We came to the conclusion that there is a pervasive sense of unhappiness and even nihilism in almost every young person at Hamilton College. We could think of only one student, a recent alumna and mutual friend of ours, who seemed to be free of such unhappiness. As our conversation petered out, I began

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to ponder: why are so many of my fellow members of Generation Z unhappy, nihilistic, if not downright self-hating? I thought that if I could put my thoughts into words, even if they might seem rambling and incoherent, I might better understand why. Furthermore, I realized that if I wrote this piece, then perhaps I could discredit that awful and hurtful insult, “snowflake,” that people on the right launch at members of Generation Z, and show that our unhappiness comes from a concrete place.

I am not a mental health expert, and have no degree or certification in any field related to mental health. I am merely sharing my perspective on what I’ve seen of Generation Z as one of its members, my firsthand experience of its unhappiness. We are members of it, and all my friends are. And let me add that writing for *Enquiry* does not mean I have some political or other identity, as some people have imagined. If I receive any harassing messages on social media or elsewhere, I will contact the appropriate channel or channels of authority.

Donna Brazile’s tenure at Fox News did not make her a fascist, and J.D. Vance’s at CNN does not make him a communist, no matter what leftists or rightists on Twitter may say.

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down to this: over the past twenty years, rapid technological advancement has destroyed the bonds of community to such a point that young people cannot hold onto a stable identity or place. This erosion of confidence and security has led to rampant unhappiness.

Consider this allegory: A runner on a treadmill in the gym. All the runners before him have followed an old treadmill regimen, ordered by their trainers, of running at the same consistent pace. But this runner is new and has a new trainer, who modifies the pace, increasing it to maximum speed.

At first he runs without difficulty, but the pace grows until he is struggling to keep up. He becomes exhausted and his legs begin to wobble, but he keeps running, trying to stay balanced by gripping the handlebars.

Imagine it: sweat drips from your body and loosens your grip on the handlebars. You fall down, scraping your knees. After a few minutes resting, you begin to notice everyone else still working out, while your workout is incomplete. So you keep on running, and persist to the workout’s end, but you’re scratched-

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up and exhausted when you finish.

My point is that Generation Z grew up in an environment of such fast-paced technological and societal change and advancement that we have been unable to settle down and grow comfortable with the community or set of values we find ourselves in.

In the second half of this piece, I will discuss it further.

# Opinion: Salem on the Hill

By MARGARET WRIGHT  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

On August 19, 1692, my first cousin, Martha Ingalls Allen Carrier, was hanged as a witch in Salem, Massachusetts. Today, more than 300 years later, we still seek to understand the Salem Witch Trials. Based on wild accusations, unsupported assertions, unreliable hearsay, mere anecdotes, and flawed surmises, more than 200 Puritans were accused of witchcraft and 20 of them were convicted and executed. Why were the accused chosen? Why were the accusers believed? Why were the accused convicted? What happened in Salem in 1692, and why? We may never be able to fully answer these questions, but we must endeavor to learn from history so as not to repeat its mistakes. This has never been truer in America than it is today.

Martha was the daughter of Andrew Allen, a founder of Andover, and Faith Ingalls, a daughter of the founder of Lynn, both in Massachusetts. In 1674, Martha married an immigrant by the name of Thomas Carrier. They settled in nearby Billerica, but during the 1680s, Martha returned with her husband and four children (two had died from smallpox) to Andover. In 1690, an outbreak of smallpox occurred. While afflicted, Martha nursed her father, two brothers, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, two nephews, husband, and four children. Only she, her husband, and their children survived. Upon the death of the male members of the Allen family, Martha became a landowner. Thirteen people in Andover, seven of them in the Allen family, perished. The people of Andover blamed Martha for having brought smallpox from Billerica, but since the smallpox epidemic began in Boston in late 1689, new settlers in the colony might have done so.

Martha was a Puritan who didn’t live a Puritan life. Before she was accused of witchcraft in 1692, she was guilty of four great sins according to the New England mind. First, she was a woman in a society with a hierarchy that placed God at the top, men just below God, livestock at the bottom, and women just above livestock.

Second, she was an independent woman in a society where women didn’t own property in their own right. Third, she was a free-thinking woman in a society where the congregational leaders believed women were the weaker gender, more easily subject to possession by the Devil. Fourth, she was an outspoken woman in a society in which men controlled women’s speech and more. Martha may have been the first American feminist.

In 1692, there was another smallpox outbreak in Salem. Joseph Houlton and John Walcott filed a complaint against Martha accusing her of acts of witchcraft against Abigail Williams, Mary Walcott, Mercy Lewis, Ann Putnam Jr., and others who became known as “the Salem Girls.” My distant cousin, Magistrate John Hathorne, and Magistrates Jonathan Corwin and Bartholomew Gedney examined Martha. During the proceeding, the Salem Girls accused Martha of having tried to force them to sign the “Devil’s book.” Martha denied their accusations. Yet the cries and agonies of the girls, from the tortures allegedly inflicted upon them by Martha without her laying a hand on them, were

*continued on back*



so great that the magistrates had Martha bound hand and foot, taken to Salem Prison.

On August 2, 1692, the trial began. A neighbor, Benjamin Abbott, testified that after a land dispute with Martha about a year earlier, he'd developed a pain in his side that later had become a sore which, when lanced, had given way to gallons of corruption, and that after her arrest, his health had improved and his sore healed. Another neighbor, Samuel Preston, testified that he had a quarrel with Martha and afterward his cow had died mysteriously. Her nephew, Allen Toothaker, testified that after a disagreement with Martha, some of his farm animals had died mysteriously. He also said Martha had told him a four-inch-deep wound he'd received in combat would never heal, and that after her arrest, his wound had begun to do so.

On and on it went. The magistrates admitted into evidence unreliable hearsay, unsupported assertions, mere anecdotes, and flawed surmises to prove wild accusations, none of which would be permitted today. In the courtroom, the Salem Girls screamed out that they could see the ghosts of Andover's thirteen smallpox victims, and one accused Martha of murdering them all. Several local ministers voiced their concerns about the proceeding, but the magistrates wouldn't be swayed by them, or by logic and reasoning. The magistrates could see nothing beyond their ultimate goal: the conviction and execution of Martha for witchcraft.

Martha had no legal counsel, couldn't have witnesses testify on her behalf, and had no formal avenues of appeal. But she could speak for herself, and did. She remained defiant, refused to confess to witchcraft, accused her accusers of being out of their

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wits, accused the magistrates of conspiring and plotting against her, and otherwise challenged the male authority of the magistrates and others. On August 5, Martha was convicted and sentenced to death. Two weeks later, she was transported through the streets of Salem. No reason, no logic, no justice would prevail to save Martha from the gallows. She was hanged and buried in a shallow grave in unconsecrated ground.

Today, the witches of Salem are no more, but the witch hunt in America continues. On September 20, 2021, the ghosts of Salem came to Hamilton College. The wrongfully accused was a student nominated to the Judicial Board of the Student Assembly. The examination of the accused was a questionnaire different in substance for this one of the ten nominees. The indictment came in the form of an agenda with a pre-determined denial for this one of the ten nominees. The evidence of witchcraft came in the form of defamatory statements driven by discriminatory intent, including a demonstrably false characterization of the Alexander Hamilton Institute. An equivalent of Salem's concerned ministers were two brave Student Assembly officers

who abstained from the confirmation vote. And the self-righteous magistrates were the Assembly officers who voted not to confirm the nominee, even though the confirmation of Judicial Board nominees had been a mere formality in the past.

It is also notable that some Student Assembly officers had initially sought an in-person proceeding to make the confirmation more of a show trial than the standard livestream. This is yet more evidence of discriminatory intent against the nominee — a fellow Hamiltonian who, let us consider, they might expect to see as a student and alumnus on the Hill, now and perhaps in the future: at graduation in 2022, a 25th-year reunion in 2047, or a 50th-year reunion in 2072. In the aftermath, one of the Student Assembly officers was heard proposing to threaten the nominee with further defamation in order to intimidate him. But the nominee refused, and still refuses, to be silenced. If this student can be silenced on campus, any student can be.

According to the college's Mission Statement: "[T]he College emphasizes intellectual growth, flexibility, and collaboration in a residential academic community. Hamilton students learn to think independently, embrace difference, write and speak persuasively, and engage issues ethically and creatively. One of America's first liberal arts colleges, Hamilton enables its students to effect positive change in the world." So where were the intellectual growth, flexibility, and collaboration among Student Assembly officers and members? Except for the two brave students who abstained, where was anyone else who has learned "to think

independently, embrace difference, write and speak persuasively, and engage issues ethically and creatively"? Apparently, they were nowhere in sight on September 20.

And, what of Hamilton's Harassment and Discrimination Policy and Code of Conduct? Under the policy, "[a]ll members of the Hamilton College community are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not infringe upon the rights of others ... The College prohibits harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, veteran status, or any other characteristics protected by law, in its programs and activities. In addition to being antithetical to Hamilton's community values, harassment and discrimination are prohibited by this Policy ... and by state and federal laws." Under this code, "[p]rohibited student actions" include a "[v]iolation of published College policies, rules, or regulations." Further, according to the Hamilton Student Handbook: "All student organizations [including the Assembly] are subject to Hamilton's policies, including but not limited to the ...

Harassment/Discrimination ... policy." Are the Assembly officers so unknowledgeable, or obtuse, that they think the protections of these policies apply to them but not to everyone? If so, what kind of representation do they provide for the Hamilton student body? Seemingly, they believe in no freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, or freedom of religion, and no principle of diversity, inclusion, or justice, for disfavored students.

About a week later, certain Assembly officers published a sanitized transcript of the September 20 minutes on the Hamilton website. Apparently they'd been keen to publish the full transcript, but the administration warned them of potential liability if they did. So, willing to further defame the student, and chafing against the relevant Hamilton policy and code, they published a sanitized transcript of the minutes along with a self-serving statement claiming the Assembly had been silenced. But freedom of speech doesn't include a right to make slanderous or libelous statements, doesn't shield one from the consequences of making such statements (especially when done with discriminatory intent), and doesn't exempt one from Hamilton's Harassment and Discrimination Policy and Code of Conduct.

In this day and age, due to the reach of the internet, wrongdoers' acts last forever and the harm is often exponential to a wronged individual. No wonder the livestream of the September 20 meeting was taken down. No wonder the unsanitized transcript wasn't published on the Hamilton website. No wonder a sanitized transcript was ultimately published. No wonder the nominee has lawyers. No wonder some Assembly officers might have to engage lawyers. No wonder

some Assembly officers have resigned. No wonder other Assembly officers have approached the nominee to ask whether they might be named in a complaint.

The nominee is an Undergraduate Fellow of AHI and an editor of *Enquiry*. Hamilton students affiliated with AHI or *Enquiry* are, and have been for years, under attack in violation of Hamilton's Harassment and Discrimination Policy, Hamilton's Code of Conduct, and Hamilton's Student Handbook. The defamatory statements made with discriminatory intent against the nominee at the Assembly meeting, and the retaliatory conduct proposed by one of its officers against the nominee in the aftermath, will be a permanent and indelible stain upon Hamilton, its history, and its mission ... and further, perhaps will become a cold and cruel portent of the failure of a nation, its future, and its promise.

Rest in peace, Martha Ingalls Allen Carrier. Stay strong, nominee.

*Note: Margaret Wright is a friend of Hamilton College who is not affiliated with either the Alexander Hamilton Institute or Enquiry.*

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## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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