

Gen Z aren't 'intolerant': we're just poor, fed-up and want real change

*Based on an article by Sammy Gecsoyler, (2021/22 recipient of the Scott Trust bursary)***The Guardian 4.11.22**

Pampered, illiberal, woke snowflakes: the slurs that are made against Gen Z are so well-worn, so boring, yet they just don't seem to go away. ... Instead of this being seen as an indictment of a society that has betrayed young people, it is instead used to berate us as "fragile" or "entitled".

New research by Channel 4, which looked at more than 1,500 13- to 24-year-olds, sheds some fresh light on a debate that seems to go round in circles. It found that the cost of living, a lack of affordable housing and uncertainty about the future were Gen Z's top three concerns. Contrary to the belief that we spend all our free time doxing C-list celebrities who don't acknowledge their white, cis, hetero privilege, it turns out our priorities are fundamentally material.

It is little wonder why. As a 26-year-old, I'm on the older edge of the Gen Z cohort, having experienced what happens when you're on the other side of education. The job market is full of insecure, low-paid work, enabled by decades of union-busting. Flying the nest and moving out of your parents' home is a pipe dream for many, given the exorbitant cost of rent and house prices – and with interest rates set to rise... Addressing our concerns is seen as parliamentary kryptonite by both major political parties...

...While views among Gen Z are nuanced on this issue, and many believe that cancellations go too far, I think there is some truth to the notion that we have less patience in the realm of debate. It might be that the way social media structures our social lives – where people can be "blocked" – has bled out into real-world attitudes. We're also more used to following self-authored content, which can provide a front-row, empathic insight into the lives of others, rather than the Punch-and-Judy debates you might associate with TV...Being intolerant of intolerance is, for many of us, not a performative game of woke point-scoring, but is a matter of respect for ourselves and those around us.

The demands of Gen Z are pretty fair and simple. We want a world where we and those around us are treated with respect and without prejudice, and to live in a future where we could maybe put a deposit down on a studio flat before the floodwater is lapping at the

door. Is that too much to ask?