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When I was Young and Dreamed of Glory....

At the beginning of his namesake musical, Hamilton's character is unconcerned with his lifespan or his future plans. He plans to ride into battle and die for his cause and instead had to learn to channel that energy into building a government. Hamilton's story resonated with so many people- so many *young* people- because they saw their own youthful passion reflected on stage, and got to watch that reflection grow and succeed like they somehow hope to. This is not a new story. Every generation of young people is full of blind optimism and hope like Hamilton was, and how my generation is now.

The twenty-first century is an era of vastly greater knowledge than any era before it, with worldwide information technology established as the new normal. It may appear, to the casual observer, that the need for higher education has disappeared as a person can learn nearly any skill in 15 minutes or less on YouTube. Yet, higher education stays foremost in the minds of young people. It may be that we are stumbling upon the true value of education only by subtracting its necessity. In the twenty-first century, a liberal arts education teaches a student not only what they are learning, but the value of that knowledge. A multifaceted approach to education forces young people to think from different perspectives. For example, a humanitarian studying the sciences may discover that the best way to preserve human life is to study medicine and dedicate themselves to becoming a doctor. A scientific mind may experiment with the arts, and discover

that painting with no rhyme or reason relaxes their analytical mind. Thinking from different perspectives provides richness to the study of any field, making it more valuable.

Members of Generation Z do not have to cross the ocean to receive their education the way Hamilton did. In fact, members of Gen Z probably know more about the world around them at ages 8-23 than Hamilton did when he died at 47. Still, we continue to go to universities. We go not to read facts and prepare to live as scholars, but to give meaning to those facts and create better lives. Generation Z must take advantage of the significant advantage we have been given, and learn about our world to make the best-informed decisions we can. As I approach the age where I begin to make big decisions about my life - such as where to live, what politicians to follow, whom to love - I must use the knowledge that people like Hamilton worked to give me. I must engage in life as a Liberal Arts Scholar, using my vast knowledge to create thoughtful, informed choices. I think often about the context of the lines spoken by Hamilton partway through the first act during a presidential cabinet meeting:

A civics lesson from a slaver, hey neighbor

Your debts are paid cause you don't pay for labor

"In Virginia we plant sees in the ground. We create" Yeah, keep ranting

We know who's really doing the planting

Here, the actor portraying Hamilton usually receives very raucous applause. However, the musical often sings Hamilton's praises (literally) at the expense of acknowledging his mistakes. Real Hamilton, in his time, was not the social justice warrior he is portrayed to be. He was just another politician, albeit a very bright one, and he chose to ignore slavery for the benefit of the

economy and his political career. After his life was put in the limelight, he faced renewed criticism from modern people who say he doesn't deserve the glory. In the end, even his brilliant mind and education could not keep him from making what is largely known as one of America's worst mistakes.

The life of the mind program at Heidelberg is one of the first places I have had to reflect on what my education means to me. As I have gone through the first honors course, my mind has returned time and again to the issue of climate change. I firmly believe that this is the greatest challenge our generation will face, equal to slavery in the eventual despair it will cause. However, Climate Change does not discriminate. It cannot be dismissed as a mere social issue, as I'm sure Hamilton called slavery, because it belongs to all aspects of education. It is scientific, of course, because it was discovered using data analysis and careful experimentation. But it belongs to the humanities as well, as we expect participation from humankind as a whole to begin recycling and reducing our waste. It is also artistic, as ad campaigns and media influence spread the importance of this issue to the public. With my education in all facets of the scholar behind me, I will not be blind to this issue as Hamilton was blind with slavery. I will use the foresight my education gave me to encourage the rest of my generation to fight climate change. Hamilton didn't know if he would live to see the effects of the revolutionary war, and yet he fought in it. I know, scientifically, that I will live to see the effects of climate change, and I cannot afford to run from it. The eventual rise or downfall of Gen Z rests on our ability to google, remember, and never repeat the mistakes of those before us.