

"THERE'S A NOVEL IDEA: YOUNG PEOPLE BITCHING ABOUT MIDDLE-AGED FARTS. IF ONLY WE BABY BOOMERS HAD THOUGHT OF THIS WHEN WE WERE 25."

My fellow baby boomers, I have disturbing news from the colonies: Generation Y is revolting. And the Xers aren't too pleased with us either. We have been accused, tried and found guilty in absentia of crimes against humanity, or at least of crimes against younger generations.

Apparently we baby boomers did knowingly and with malice aforethought snare fee-free tertiary education. We also contorted the property market to serve our own wanton residential desires. And we waltzed into high-paying jobs from an early age, thereby blocking the rise to power of talented and righteous young Xers and Gen Ys. Oh, and we also caused global warming. You see, it's all our fault; if only the younger generations were in control the world would be a better place.

Leading the anti-boomer charge is 25-year-old Gen Y bad boy Ryan Heath, whose recent book *Please Just F*** Off, It's Our Turn Now* (Pluto Press, \$26.95) sets out the case against baby boomers. I think the title is meant to offend, so if you bump into Ryan do remember to feign offence at his daredevil use of the F-word.

But Ryan's anti-boomer tirade is nothing new. Generation X author Mark Davis kicked things off in 1997 with his book *Generation X* (Allen & Unwin, \$25.99), which meticulously – in fact, kind of weirdly – documented instances of boomer bias in the Australian media. Generation X comedian Tony Martin commented about the boomers on the cover of Davis's book: "Let go of the wheel, you old farts, and let someone else have a drive!"

The contention is that Generation Y is different from all preceding "young" generations in the history of mankind. Apparently, Generation Y is smarter and cooler and sexier than anyone previously

could have imagined. The problem with baby boomers is we just don't appreciate the depth of their talent and intellect.

Now there's a novel idea: young people bitching about conservative middle-aged old farts. If only we baby boomers had thought of this when we were 25; here is proof positive of exactly how switched-on Gen Y really is.

Compared with boomers, Ys are better educated. They are also more technologically savvy and are less inclined to follow established career paths. They have also rejected the notion of corporate loyalty. Gen Y's ultimate workplace weapon in dealing with baby boomers is abrupt disengagement: "I don't like working here any more. I think I'll leave. Goodbye."

To some extent I think both Ryan Heath and Mark Davis are right. We boomers do control business (and probably the media, too) and we have acquired real property wealth. We did have fee-free tertiary education, but then boomers came from large

families where limited resources were shared. Ys on the other hand are the self-absorbed, often single children of rich, guilty (because both parents work) and indulgent baby-boomer parents whose wealth has been liberally spread over this generation for 20 years.

My point is that there are pluses and minuses to having been born within any generation. The anti-boomer brigade wants the best of both worlds without having to put in the commitment that baby boomers had been investing since their early 20s.

You too, Generation Y, can acquire real property wealth and corporate power by the time you are middle-aged if you are prepared to commit to a mortgage and career before you reach the age of 25. If you are not prepared to pay this price, then you have no right to whinge about those who did.

It's all our own fault. If the YOUNGER GENERATIONS were in control the world would be a better place.



THE WAY WE LIVE

Smart cities

Which Australian city is the brainiest? You might think it is Canberra; after all, this city's public service has drawn in the intellectually gifted for almost a century. Surely by a process of selective breeding Canberrans are now much smarter than your average Aussie bear?

This would seem to be the case. Barely 0.5 per cent of Canberra's adult population had never been to school at the time of the 2001 census. This figure skyrockets threefold in dim-witted Sydney and Melbourne.

But the smarty-pants city of Canberra has been usurped by a city of even grander intellectual proportions, Hobart, where less than 0.5 per cent of the adult population had never been to school.

Most of the 150,000 Australian adults who have never been to school are, of course, recently arrived migrants. The never-been-to-school hot spot in Australia is Sydney's Cabramatta, where 15 per cent of adults report no formal education.

Other new migrant areas also figure prominently: Melbourne's Springvale (9 per cent) and Sydney's Willawood (8 per cent). Unfortunately, many Aboriginal strongholds also dominate this list, such as South Australia's Stuart Creek (11 per cent) and West Australia's Fitzroy Crossing, as well as Alice Springs (both are 9 per cent).

Proportion of people 15 and older who didn't go to school

Sydney	1.8%
Melbourne	1.8%
Darwin	1.0%
Adelaide	1.0%
Perth	0.8%
Brisbane	0.6%
Canberra	0.5%
Hobart	0.4%
Australia	1.1%

Source: IPMS, ABS, 2001 Census

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