

SECTION I: The Challenge

02 The Millennial Challenge

For 5,000 years, humans lived in the past tense: "Yesterday was the same as tomorrow." For the next 500 years people lived in the present tense: "Today can be whatever we want it to be." But now, for the next 50 years we must start living in the future tense: "Tomorrow's social, economic and political constraints must become today's reality."

"The future is no longer an incremental transition over many generations. This time it is an abrupt change over a single lifetime. It is one in which Boomers and Millennials will both bear witness as the principle participants on either side of the great divide of the 21st Century."

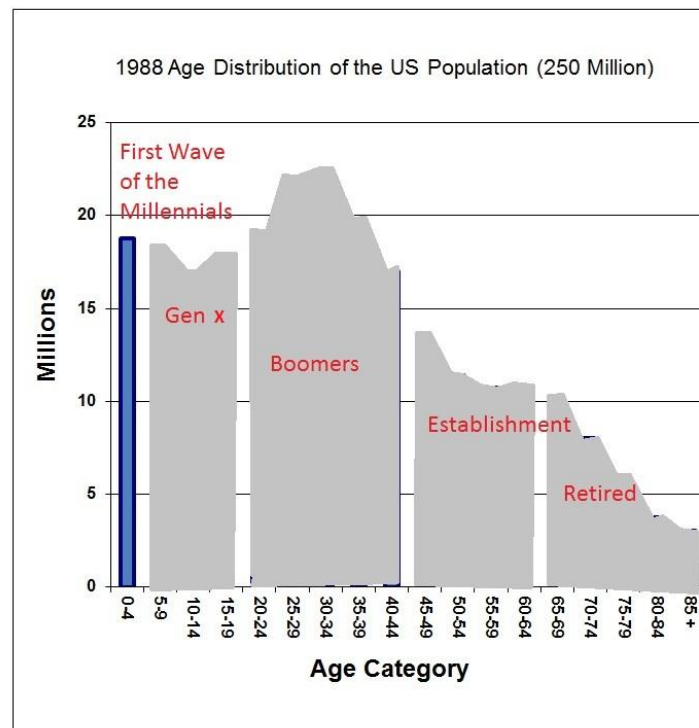
Forums for a Future

In 1988 the very last of "Baby Boomers" joined the labor force. As a generation they had an open path to the future.

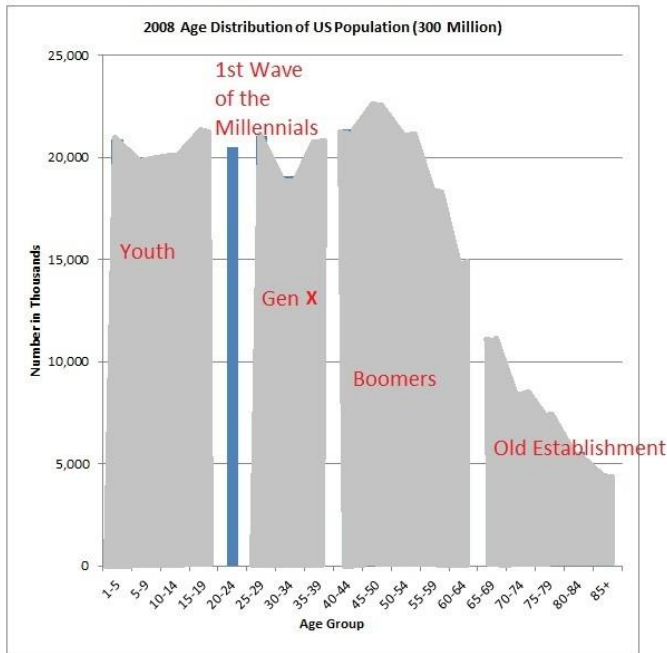
The Establishment was receding into the background. There were relatively few dependent old people and a large number of dependent children.

It was the culmination of the Modern Era. The wave of Boomers exemplified living in the present tense: Anything was possible, now. As a nation we lived as if there was no tomorrow.

Although we did not know it at time, the first of what would become the Millennial Generation was also born. They would be separated from the rest of the population, not just by age, but also by a digital divide. For them, the world as they know it has always been digital.



By 2008 the population of the United States had increased by 50 million people, and the first of the Millennials were ready to start claiming their future. They were in the same position as were the last of the Boomers 20 years earlier, except for one big difference: There is a demographic wall in front of the Millennials.



They do not have the open opportunity that the Boomers enjoyed.

The Millennials will inherit from the Boomers the legacies of their cumulative environmental impact and a large financial debt.

The stark reality is that the environmental and fiscal deficits that enabled the false prosperity of the Modern Era are not sustainable. If they are not reversed within the next several decades it will be too late to escape their toll.

However, the youth of today cannot secure their own future without the cooperation of the adults in front of them. Nor, can they wait until they are the ones in charge because of the limited timeframe available for

creating a new sustainable way of life.

With a cap on future growth imposed by the limits of nature, eliminating the ecological deficits and reversing the financial debit can only be achieved by a reduction of past excesses through a decline in the Millennial's standard of living. This is their price for surviving in the 21st Century.

The difficulty is the Boomers, and Generation X waiting to take their place, have a vested interest in protecting the wealth and authority afforded by the very political, social, and economic practices that produced climate change and world financial instability.

The solution has to be a joint effort between the Millennials and the Boomers. Bridging the generational digital communication gap is an urgent responsibility for all of us:

The Boomers need to understand they cannot take "America Back" ideologically. Today's vision must be global, digital and evolving (not national, written and definite). Creating a new "American Dream" must be based on premises that reflect that vision.

<p>"A quote"</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Author and source</p>
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Generation X needs to stop waiting in line behind the Boomers for their chance, finally. They need go to the head of the emerging numbers of Millennials and help to lead the way. Their hope for a future is behind, not in front, of them.

Millennials in the United States need to become audible to their parents and grandparents, not just digitally to each other. That is what their age cohorts in the rest of the world are doing.

This is the Millennial Challenge. It is for all of us as participants. Being an unaffected innocent bystander is not an option.