

✘ Marks the Whole Entire Fucking Generation?!

by Nicole M. Imbraccio

"It sucks." "I dunno know." "It's just an evil plot against us." "It's doesn't exist." "I was really upset when Billy Idol left the band."

These are some of the answers to the almighty question: "How do you feel about 'Generation X'?" It seems as though the term "Generation X" is being thrown around TV, radio waves, books, and articles more often than Pat Buchanan.

"Generation X" is an attempt to categorize a huge spectrum (14-34 year old) of individuals (yes, that's right, we're all individuals) into a neat little package of lazy "slackers" hanging out in coffee houses and bitching about their lack of a future. Okay, the part about the lack of a future could be right. Some will say that you create your own future. What needs to be remembered is that we didn't create the circumstances that have been dumped on us that inhibit our abilities to initiate that creation. We did not write our school curriculums, we did not vote for public officials, but we are the ones suffering.

"As a result," says amateur philosopher Forest Lee, "we are a reactionary, ill-informed, violent generation with nothing to focus our outrage on other than the people in our immediate surroundings. It is because of this that we have been labeled by the older generation that caused it."

In the past, this "older generation" has been categorized as well and now those nasty, overly-analytical sociologists are trying to compare the present generation to those preceding it. As Carin Morin says "One problem is that the hippies and other groups had something to rebel at, like a war; it seems like our generation is being identified as 'slackers' because we don't do political movements, or 'whiners' because they feel our struggles aren't important. I'm beginning to hope that some extremist will take office so we WILL have a 'real reason' to protest" (I'm emigrating if it does).

Kelly Murphy feels that "the Nineties are nothing. 50's = straight-edge, 60's = hippies + drugs, 70's = disco + drugs, 80's = Reagan + Madonna. Right now, all we do is go around having as much sex as possible (60's), doing as many drugs as possible (60's + 70's), and listening to the worst music available (80's)." But Elsa Berendes thinks "that a lot of people in our generation simply have different values than those of other generations. To say that climbing the corporate ladder is the only worthwhile goal in

life simply isn't true for a lot of us. I also think that community activism is an important thing to many of us." Susan LaRosa disagrees, "Generation X is deluded if they think that they can make any money and survive without using the traditional means such as climbing corporate ladder."

It all comes down to the reality that everything has been done before: the protests, the drugs, the music, the clothes. This generation has no desire to rise about the previous generation. Our parents are doctors and lawyers, there is no ambition. The only left-over is a shitload of cynicism which makes the possibility of change nearly impossible.

Besides those generations that precede us, there are also those younger. Although 14 year olds and beyond are considered part of "Generation X," it is difficult to think that your 16 year-old little brother Jimmy is sitting in a coffee house right now, bitching about his lack of a future. Those younger are quite different from us, as Michelle Treutledunn says: "I think most of them are dumb, but then I think that most of the human race is dumb, so that's no surprise. It's not their fault though. I think people should stop having kids until we have a healthy place for them to grow up." Jeremy Sarna predicts that "The younger generation is going to look at us the same way we look at the hippies. When we're all 50 you'll hear them say 'God damn those fucking slackers!'"

And what about those hippies? Well, now they are "Baby-boomers" (obviously we will never escape this stereotyping conundrum). Alumni Heather Sims says that Baby-boomers are "mostly okay. . . I work with them, they come to my aerobics classes, I was even raised by a couple of them. But they are definitely in a different phase of life than I am. The ones I deal with regularly seem to be 'amused' by me and my generation. They leave work and go home to their husbands and kids and do boring mother/housewife things, but they always ask me about the things I do and seem entertained by it. On the other hand, I'm really not all that interested in the things they do—baking and home repair stuff, book clubs, taking their children to soccer practice or dance lessons. Blah."

Yeah, well, those aerobized soccer mothers are our competition in the work place, and as "amused" as they may seem, they are pretty pissed that they're getting the pink-slip while we're getting \$6.25 an hour. Now, Baby-boomers are "mostly okay," hey, I call my parents every

week too, but they are also the ones that got us in the economic predicament, and we're going to be paying for their mistakes for a long while.

But does "Generation X" exist? Jeremy Sarna thinks that "every generation sets them self apart from the previous—no one want to be like their parents. We are all Generation X whether we believe it or not. There is something behind all this. You can call it nothing or anything—but it's there and so are you." Dave Bernstein (as if we all haven't heard enough from this reincarnated Jamaican gangster from the 1960's in the last issue) feels that "Generation X" are those idiots on "The Real World." To-be-accomplished bassist Zack Ordynans says that "People say that we're slackers—well, I can't deny it, I know I haven't done any work in the past week."

Jan Zukowski fully protests against the idea of a Generation X and feels that he is more a "Child of the Eighties" and raves that "heroine-induced 'Youngster' wannabes, with long hair and goatees, sitting on their asses in coffee shops trying to be deep and philosophical while bitching about their lives, just gives the rest of us a bad name. Hey, I knew Alanis Morissette when she was getting green slime dumped on her head on 'You Can't Do That On Television.'"

Susan LaRosa feels that the only thing that really makes Generation X a generation is that "we share similar media influences when we were younger. . . that brings us together." When asked if he considered himself a part of Generation X, Mike Dorrian, esteemed roadie of 486, replied "Only when I go to Loolapooloza."

Aspects of Generation X do exist. No one likes to be categorized, especially by a group of media-analysts, but like many things; there is truth behind the rumor. We are not all slackers, we are not all Beavis and Butthead, and Kurt Cobain is certainly not our "voice." But we do have an unique grasp of the world that surrounds us. Some news broadcasters will call it "apathy," but I call it "protected." "Question Authority" is a bit more that a bumper sticker to us. When you can't trust your government, the media, the Church, your family, you become very wary of what is on the plate in front of you. However, the neat and tidy idea of "Generation X" that Fruitopia commercials are trying to sell us attempts to give us a sense of identity, meanwhile all it accomplishes is supplying an identity crisis.

So how can we, as the deemed "Gen Xers," fight this

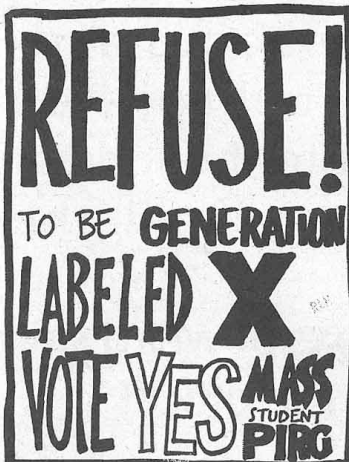
definition? Jeremy Sarna feels that power lies in the voting ballot, "given the turn of events in the government, it's even more important to vote in the upcoming presidential election than it was in '92." Forest Lee feels that "the more marketed our outrage gets, the more outraged we will become. Drug use, alcoholism, and violence in our generation are partly caused by the fact that there is absolutely nothing we can do anymore to piss people off other than self-destruct."

Which is figuratively what Greg Colvin, campus anarchist, suggests. "They can say we're apathetic and we don't give a fuck about anything, but maybe that's because we've seen the likes of the hippies and other such groups try and fail to change things. We know the government is fucked up by now and the only thing that can save the planet is total and complete revolution, but we don't know how to do it. We're all too concerned about ourselves because we have to be in order to get by in this fucked up, backward, evil, uncaring society. Anarchy now!!!"

Labels. Stereotypes. Name-calling. Self-destruction. These concepts have existed before this generation, and I can promise you that they will prosper in the future as well. But this time, there is nothing left to "believe" in anymore. Past generations have always had some sort of institution to look towards: the government, the Church, the family. Now that we've been presented with a plate of our own food, it looks stale, smells questionable, and makes our stomach turn. Meanwhile, we don't know how to cook.

Where do we go from here? With nothing to aspire to and nothing to put our trust in, perhaps we will all end up in coffee houses bitching about our lack of a future. (being an English major, I'll more than likely be sitting right next to you). But think on this: when I asked people how they felt about "Generation X" I have never seen people get so excited, enraged, and impassioned (except when they are approached by MassPIRG). Although there is no war that we feel we can protest, or a huge civil rights movement sweeping across the nation to participate in, there is the unjust and unfair categorization of twenty years of human life. Let the revolution begin.

[About the Author: Nicole Imbraccio has been spotted at various and sundry Clark media over the years, including The Scarlet, ROC-U, ClarkWeek, Clark News, and now here. Unfortunately, she's 87 years old, and the only generation she knows about contained suffragettes and speakeasies.]



"Refuse! To Be Generation Labeled X"??

Generational marketing is interesting to observe. I can only hope our generation is more immune to it than, say, the Baby Boomers, who scoop up hippie imagery, slogans, and memorabilia like they've been brainwashed by the Jihad to single-handedly keep Viacom in business. Generational marketing is perpetuated by the myth of a "generational identity," just like racial discrimination is perpetuated by the myth of "racial identity." Resist or die! —RM •

