# The Kids Are Alright — It’s the Boomers Who Forgot

We had union jobs and affordable housing. They inherited a climate crisis and debt. And still, they rise.

A few days ago, I came across a Facebook post by a disgruntled journalist (who shall remain nameless). He opened with something like:

“Have you ever encountered a Gen Z cashier in a supermarket or retail store — the youngster rings up your order without ever looking you in the eye or offering a simple greeting? Well, I have, just this afternoon.”

He went on to list what he saw as the many flaws of “this cohort,” as if one impersonal checkout experience gave him license to judge an entire generation. I’ve seen and heard similar complaints, mostly from fellow Boomers — amnesiacs or folks with selective memory. And frankly, it irks me to no end. So here is my reply:

“I’m tired of hearing people my age trash younger generations. It’s not only unfair — it’s lazy thinking. Boomers had doors opened for them: affordable college, union jobs, and housing prices that didn’t require a lifetime of debt. Many of us walked into decent-paying careers with just a high school diploma. That’s not the world Gen Z inherited.  
  
The young people I know are intelligent, empathetic, and socially aware. My granddaughter is an ER nurse. A young man I helped raise earned a degree in business, acquired his Series 7 license, and now works in finance. My nephew is an architect. All are in their twenties, and they’ve already demonstrated more emotional intelligence and moral clarity than many older adults who presume to ‘know better.’  
  
Boomers have short memories. So let me ask: What were you doing in your twenties, the age Gen Z are now? Maybe it’s time we stopped complaining and started reflecting. The world changed — but we’re not always honest about the advantages we had.”

Let me speak plainly: when I was in my early twenties, I was hired by AT&T as a Central Office technician — without even a high school diploma. All I had to do was pass a basic entrance exam covering reading comprehension and senior high school math. That was enough to land me a union job with excellent benefits.

Today, that same job requires an associate’s degree in Computer Science or a related field. The work itself hasn’t gotten harder; the bar has simply been raised. Why? Because with automation and technology, fewer workers are needed to do what once took many hands.

We Boomers came of age during a time of economic expansion and abundant opportunity. Things began to change in the 1980s — but that’s a topic for another essay. The truth is, many of the advantages we had are no longer available to Gen Z. Yet despite that, many of them have overcome significant obstacles and found ways to thrive.

They deserve our respect, not our resentment.