

The Myth of Millennial Socialism

My old man tells me he left college in the 1970s and walked into a job for life. He tells me his first home cost twice the average salary. Then he tells me, without a *soupçon* of jest, “things were still pretty tough back then.”

His brow—unapologetically smooth for its 65 years, cheeks plumped fat and youthfully blooded from unbroken stretches of Boomer ease—fails to crumple with measured faux sympathy.

“They have it too easy,” he says, thumbing the newsprint importantly. “We didn’t have iPhones when I was 30.” Tough crowd.

What kills me about my reluctant status of being a Millennial nestles between the thickets of Boomer philosophy. My old man, a cosmic improvement on the genetic one, tells me how easy everything was back in his day, and how, conversely, such ease built indomitable “character.” My old man is [Schrödinger’s](#) Boomer.

Of course, there’s always a medicine cabinet teeming with nerve-smoothing cures for Millennial woes. We need to [save more](#). We should stop [buying avocado toast](#). We just need to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We need to carve our own slice of the world that Boomers built and broke and bestowed upon us.

Which is why research from a [British bank](#) metaphorically vomited on my smashed avocado and ethically sourced quail-egg brunch.

If we just tightened our purse strings, went the [research](#) from Barclays, we’d have \$4,000 per year to squirrel away for a home deposit. Go without, for 10 years, anything enjoyable to

salve this pointless realm, and: we'd have enough to start *thinking* about buying a home of our own. The average home now settles at [eight times](#) the average salary.

Perhaps the old man is right. We Millennials are coddled. But it shouldn't be too taxing an exercise to see why we don't think much of the current state of play.

The [death-list](#) of things we've killed burgeons gracefully by the day. We've derailed cabs, [sunk tuna](#). Smoked smoking. We've Uberized and filtered and unliked, unmatched and swiped left.

What galls Boomers most is our [apparent gravitation](#) toward socialism. Indeed, a [raft of polls](#) suggests Millennials are watching the clock—ready to smash capitalism, erect gulags, and imprison the corporate kulaks without trial. Not quite.

Perhaps the seeds of Millennial angst germinated during the 2007 financial crisis that plunged the world into wanton chaos, and foreclosed millions of American Dreams—most of them still unrecovered.

Like the cognitive imprint the Great Depression left upon the Greatest Generation, the Great Crash tattooed an indelible mark upon Millennials.

The fallout lingers. We are less well-off than [other generations](#) at the same age. We earn less, have fewer assets, more debt, and less wealth. Barely half of [Millennials earn](#) what our parents did at 30.

Which is why so many of my generation gravitate toward Bernie Sanders. And struggle to sympathize with shopworn “conservative” defenses of broken markets, monopolies, and the cowboy capitalism schlock as laudanum for our pains.

Bernie's prescription may lack. And, yeah, he dances with commies, but his diagnosis fits—offering a critique extending beyond that of the think-tank chant of: “That's the market.”

And he doesn't [sound too dissimilar](#) from President Trump. At least on the major issues of trade, (at one-time) immigration, and of a global rigged system devouring those that make it hum.

Which is why all is not lost. Millennials aren't *really* socialist. Dig into [the numbers](#). Though 51 percent said they did not support capitalism, just 33 percent said they favored socialism.

That number frittered when researchers asked what socialism actually was. The same Harvard study found just 27 percent thought the government should play an outsized role in regulating the economy. Just 26 percent said government spending helped increase economic growth. Less than a third thought government should take the helm in fighting income inequality.

This is hardly blood-red Communism. More a mindful rejection of a system President Trump was elected to destroy. What a conservative like Tucker Carlson or J.D. Vance could gallop en route to a new [American majority](#).

Someone needs to. Millennials are [swelling to the largest](#) voting bloc. And we are fickle.

Denouncing paid family leave as "Communism" to people with no memory of Communism isn't the sharpest of tactics. Neither is blathering about "free markets," when that market is so obviously unfree and rigged in favor of vanishingly few.

But some on the Right get it. A recent *First Things* [essay](#) by Daniel McCarthy illuminated a path worth cutting—economic nationalism, commonsensical immigration reforms—a steadfast rejection of what global elites insist is "inevitable."

In the twentieth century, the American dream became a thing to which every salaryman could aspire: a good job; enough money to buy a house, start a family, and retire; and the

chance to watch one's children rise to a higher station. In the twenty-first century, that dream has given way to delirium—feverish uncertainty about whether in midlife one will have to become an Amazon delivery man or a Walmart greeter, and anxiety about whether one's children will be tech-company winners or endlessly indebted gig workers.

That is what most Millennials call “socialism.” And what Boomers like my old man used to call America.

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