

“Generation Yes”

The Rev. Drew Willard
June 5th, 2016 ©
3rd Sun./Pentecost

I Kings 17:8-24

Luke 7:11-17

*And [Jesus] came and touched the [casket], and the bearers stood still. And he said,
“Young man, I say to you, arise.”
And the dead man sat up, and began to speak.*

Luke 7:14-15^a

Let us pray... O God,
Help us to recognize the truth in any given situation and
accurately assess the options.
May we always say, “Yes” to any good idea –
and responsibly prioritize to achieve them.

Amen

Both our scripture lessons today are good reminders about the role of young people
and the responsibility we have to minister to them – even help revitalize them.
Though the Prophet Elijah’s dramatic – yet immodest, method of bringing
the Sidonian widow’s son back to life is not to be recommended these days,
it appears to be an affirmation of young people
in a time of drought and famine.

Our Gospel lesson does not have the same context of social crisis,
but like Elijah, Jesus is portrayed as raising a widow’s only son back to life.
These parallel stories suggest an agreement between the Testaments
that God is concerned for the young people of the next generation...

A few years back in 1992, the name for that demographic group of Americans born
between the 1960s and 1980s, was labeled Generation X.

At the time, it seemed like a derogatory term – like Brand X,
especially in contrast with the Greatest Generation –
a term that was coined in 1998 for that generation of Americans
who lived through the Great Depression and WWII.

The ‘Boomer’ Generation was born after WWII
and have been alternately the ‘Now Generation’ – as in ‘What’s happenin’ now!’
or the more negative ‘Me Generation’
of self-involvement and self-improvement.

Following them are those who were born from the 1980s on into the 2000s
and they are called the ‘Millennials’.

This next generation coming up already has a name: Generation Z,
still remains to be subjected to evaluation – though it is a group tempered by
wars in the Middle East and the Great Recession.

The challenges of racial unrest and indiscriminate violence
in schools and the workplace are also formative influences.

Willard, p.2

Jesus was particularly critical of the generation of his own time as an ‘evil generation’, ‘evil and adulterous generation’, ‘adulterous and sinful generation’, ‘faithless generation’, ‘faithless and perverse generation’, ‘crooked generation’, ‘crooked and perverse generation’, and worst of all ‘*this generation...*’ in which he precedes to express his open-ended exasperation, for example:

And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said,

“Why does this generation seek a sign?

Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.”

Mark 8:12

We should be very concerned for the next generation and not just for the stagnated economics, political gridlock, and perpetual war, but for its capacity for a hopeful vision...

It so happened this week that National Public Radio, aired a series of reports called “Generation Politics” which was based on interviews with three generations of Americans:

25 year olds, 45 year olds, and 65 year olds – representing Millennials, GenXers, and Boomers respectively – though those terms were not used.

Each group was asked:

“What are the experiences that shape the views of people your age, the things that made you different from your parents or your kids?”

The 65 year olds came from an era of relative stability – even ignorance of some of the forces at work in society.

It was interesting that media influenced all three groups and for the age 65 group, TV shows like “Ozzie & Harriet” and “Leave It To Beaver” provided an impression – real or not, of a neighborly society that worked.

Walter Cronkite of CBS News was the ‘most trusted’ newscaster in America, and when he returned from seeing the Vietnam War firsthand he denounced America’s involvement – and that led to changing public attitudes.

<http://www.npr.org/2016/06/02/480487234/generation-politics-65-year-olds-share-experiences-that-shaped-their-views>

The 45 year olds were children during the Reagan Era – which was projected as an optimistic time.

Yet there was a change in how the news was presented – first of all through cable with a 24 hour format, which took on a more sensationalist or ‘tabloid style’, breaking away from the conventions of network TV.

The OJ Simpson murder case and the Clinton impeachment trial were examples of this new perspective –

along with the embedded 24 hour coverage of the First Gulf War.

<http://www.npr.org/2016/06/01/480335679/generation-politics-45-year-olds-share-experiences-that-shaped-their-views>

Willard, p.3

The 25 year olds grew up with 9/11 and the economic downturn of the Recession while the format of media communications has been transformed by cell phones and personal computer e-mail, the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter, all accessible on smart phones and even smarter phones no doubt as we speak.

The worldview and experienced reality for them is not of safety and sameness, but one that is dangerous and evolving.

<http://www.npr.org/2016/05/31/480183211/generation-politics-25-year-olds-on-the-experiences-that-shaped-their-views>

They do tend to know more about entertainment factoids like who the Kardashians are rather than who won the Civil War.

When asked what the ‘takeaway’ insight was from these interviews, NPR reporter Robert Siegel said,

‘... there are some things about how old you are that really make a big difference.

We learn about the world through media...

[and regarding the 25-year-olds, they]

Were really striking in their bleak experience.’

Siegel goes on to say,

I was really struck by it.

They're really little kids when 9/11 hits.

Then come... the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And then comes the recession.

They're just coming out of high school at that time.

And it really struck me that unlike me at age 68, where there's this time of great stability

and what felt like great prosperity and safety,

I don't think they experienced that.

When asked if ‘*the balance overall was tipped more towards positivity or disillusionment, is there one or the other?*’,

Siegel answered:

I didn't hear a lot of disillusioned people.

I heard people who were optimistic about things

but not [wedded] in the same way to what

our experiences of the past have been

because those experiences are very different

depending on how old you are.

<http://www.npr.org/2016/06/02/480487234/generation-politics-65-year-olds-share-experiences-that-shaped-their-views>

Willard, p.4

That is a very important – and hopeful insight about
the younger people coming up into the world.

I am reminded of an interview between Bill Moyers and
a modern Iroquois chief of the Onondaga Nation, Oren Lyons.

Chief Lyons said in words to this effect,

“Young people say to the older generation, that, yes, there are problems,
but we got this. We will handle them.”

This is in keeping with one of the principal ethics of the Iroquois –
who are also called the People of the Longhouse.

We who are living now are accountable for how our decisions
will affect up to the 7th generation to come.

http://www.ratical.org/many_worlds/6Nations/OL070391.html

Still, young people can't do it on their own.

The older generation needs to cooperate with them – and vice versa.

Older generations usually hold the positions that control access to resources –
and tend to respond to the new ideas of youth with,

“Well, we have always done it *this way*” – don't we...

Too often we put a period, where there really is a comma.

We need to say, “Yes” to the next generation. “Yes” to good ideas...

We need to revitalize our society, by bringing young people back to life
as the next generation of pioneers we need to persevere
on the frontiers of an evolving world.

The ‘powers that be’ often don't want to believe in this kind of evolution –
for example, those who refuse to accept scientific evidence
that our environment is at risk from our own neglect.

For that matter, they might as well believe that the world is flat or
that there is no such thing as evolution.

We need a fresh look at old problems and old ways.

It doesn't mean we throw the baby out with the bath water –
precisely the opposite! We have got to give that child a chance!

Young people see it all new and we should at least listen for their view...

Like Jesus stopping the funeral march and bringing the child back to life,
we have to bring the perspective of youth back into the process
and listen to what they have to say.

We have to do that if we are going to bring the creative potentials
of our society and world back to life...

Amen

Our lesson from I Kings 17:8-24 tells about the kindness of a woman who was a widow and impoverished, living in what is now Lebanon. She models traditional hospitality by welcoming a foreigner to her home – whom she discovers is the Prophet Elijah...

⁸ The LORD's word came to Elijah:

⁹ Get up and go to Zarephath near Sidon and stay there.

I have ordered a widow there to take care of you.

¹⁰ Elijah left and went to Zarephath.

As he came to the town gate, he saw a widow collecting sticks.

He called out to her,

"Please get a little water for me in this cup so I can drink."

¹¹ She went to get some water. He then said to her,

"Please get me a piece of bread."

¹² "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied,

"I don't have any food;

only a handful of flour in a jar and a bit of oil in a bottle.

Look at me. I'm collecting two sticks so that

I can make some food for myself and my son.

We'll eat the last of the food and then die."

¹³ Elijah said to her,

"Don't be afraid! Go and do what you said.

Only make a little loaf of bread for me first. Then bring it to me.

You can make something for yourself and your son after that.

¹⁴ This is what Israel's God, the LORD, says:

The jar of flour won't decrease and the bottle of oil won't run out

until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth."

¹⁵ The widow went and did what Elijah said.

So the widow, Elijah, and the widow's household ate for many days.

¹⁶ The jar of flour didn't decrease nor did the bottle of oil run out,

just as the LORD spoke through Elijah.

¹⁷ After these things,

the son of the widow, who was the matriarch of the household, became ill.

His sickness got steadily worse until he wasn't breathing anymore.

¹⁸ She said to Elijah,

"What's gone wrong between us, man of God?

Have you come to me to call attention to my sin and kill my son?"

¹⁹ Elijah replied,

"Give your son to me."

He took her son from her and carried him to the upper room where he was staying.

Elijah laid him on his bed.

²⁰ Elijah cried out to the LORD,

"LORD my God,

why is it that you have brought such evil upon the widow

that I am staying with by killing her son?"

- ²¹ Then he stretched himself over the boy three times and cried out to the LORD,
“LORD my God, please give this boy’s life back to him.”
- ²² The LORD listened to Elijah’s voice and gave the boy his life back.
And he lived.
- ²³ Elijah brought the boy down from the upper room of the house
and gave him to his mother. Elijah said,
“Look, your son is alive!”
- ²⁴ “Now I know that you really are a man of God,” the woman said to Elijah,
“and that the LORD’s word is truly in your mouth.”

Let us be challenged and guided by these words...

Luke 7:11-17

- ¹¹... [Jesus] went to a city called Na'in,
and his disciples and a great crowd went with him.
- ¹² As he drew near to the gate of the city,
behold, a man who had died was being carried out,
the only son of his mother, and she was a widow;
and a large crowd from the city was with her.
- ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her,
“Do not weep.”
- ¹⁴ And he came and touched the [casket], and the bearers stood still. And he said,
“Young man, I say to you, arise.”
- ¹⁵ And the dead man sat up, and began to speak.
And [Jesus] gave him to his mother.
- ¹⁶ Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying,
“A great prophet has arisen among us!” and
“God has visited his people!”
- ¹⁷ And this report concerning [Jesus]
spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Generation Politics: 65-Year-Olds Share Experiences That Shaped Their Views

June 2, 2016 4:28 PM ET

Heard on [All Things Considered](#)

NPR's Robert Siegel speaks to a group of 65-year-old voters as part of a radio series where he explores the generational differences between how 25, 45 and 65-year-olds think about politics. He finds that this group of 65-year-olds were born into a structured world, which, for many, resembled *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. But later, their outlook was rocked by a series of assassinations of political figures, anti-war and civil rights protests.

ROBERT SIEGEL, HOST:

What events in our national life have shaped your political thinking? How much do you think you have in common with other Americans your age? Well, this week we've heard from some 25- and some 45-year-old voters, and today we hear from some people who grew up in the 1950s. They're all 65 this year. They remember growing up in a country that was idealized in popular TV shows - a safe, neighborly place, peaceful and prosperous.

(SOUNDBITE OF TV SHOW, "THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET")

UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER #1: "The Adventures Of Ozzie And Harriet," starring the entire Nelson family.

SIEGEL: Val Mobley of Orlando watched those shows as a child in the Mississippi Delta.

VAL MOBLEY: It was the "Ozzie And Harriet" era, you know? Mom stayed home. Dad worked. Her job was to raise the kids and take us to school, pick us up from school.

(SOUNDBITE OF TV SHOW, "LEAVE IT TO BEAVER")

UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER #2: "Leave it to Beaver."

SIEGEL: Don Tamaki (ph) watched in California.

DON TAMAKI: Growing up in the '50s - a fairly placid, "Leave It To Beaver" time.

ANGELO FALCON: I remember "Ozzie And Harriet." I remember watching as a Puerto Rican - watching all of these programs on TV - "Leave It To Beaver" and all that. And those pictures are so alien to me.

SIEGEL: But Angelo Falcon watched in Brooklyn.

FALCON: I remember as a kid I used to say, geez, I didn't know there were houses where they had, like, stairs going into, like, a second floor because I always lived in tenement building, you know?

SIEGEL: Television, still a young medium and just three national networks, presented a country of white, nuclear families. JoAnn Jacobs, who's black and from Queens, N.Y., says she made a stronger connection with books than with TV.

JOANN JACOBS: I knew of "Jane Eyre" and "Nancy Drew" and "The Hardy Boys." And you know, I had other worlds open to me, and I knew about the possibilities outside of what I saw on television. I can remember running and calling my mother

and telling her, oh, look; there's negroes on television, you know, because they just weren't there.

SIEGEL: When today's 65-year-olds were children, the country was very different. There was stability and order, but sameness was prized, and much of the country was still racially segregated by law. Not everyone was engaged in undoing that. Priscilla Grannis says in Coral Gables, Fla., where she grew up, you wouldn't have known the civil rights movement was even happening.

PRISCILLA GRANNIS: Civil rights - I think I was oblivious, naive, ignorant about it. I didn't go in the circles that were involved in that. I lived in an upper-middle-class home where we just weren't exposed to it.

SIEGEL: But for Charles Brooks, who's black and grew up in the South Bronx, segregation was literally painful to experience. In 1962, he traveled South with his family.

CHARLES BROOKS: I had to go down to a wedding in South Carolina. We're waiting in line for a bag, and some people started to walk past us. And I just stuck out my hand and said, hey, wait; we're in line here. And then I stopped talking because there's a sudden pain in my shoulder. My uncle, who was a stonemason, had just grabbed me, and he said in a sort of singsong voice, no, you all just go ahead; he's from the North; he doesn't understand.

And I was staring up at him, and it was just a frozen moment. It was just sort of, you don't understand where you are. We have to live here.

SIEGEL: When our 65-year-olds were kids, the old Jim Crow South came under sustained protest and pressure to change.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

UNIDENTIFIED CROWD #1: (Chanting) We want freedom. We want freedom.

SIEGEL: There were other biases that were coming undone. In 1960, the country elected a Catholic president. Three years later, the world was stunned by his murder.

(SOUNDBITE OF TV SHOW, "CBS EVENING NEWS")

WALTER CRONKITE: From Dallas, Texas, the flash apparently official, President Kennedy died at 1 p.m. Central Standard Time.

SIEGEL: That was CBS News anchorman Walter Cronkite, and in talking with 65-year-olds, I heard a lot about Cronkite as if he epitomized the very stability and order of the country. He was a trusted voice Americans turned to from Bismarck, N.D., where Nancy Alfton remembers there was a newspaper in town...

NANCY ALFTON: A very pathetic newspaper. All we got was what Walter Cronkite told us.

SIEGEL: ...To Val Mobley's childhood home in Mississippi.

MOBLEY: We counted on him for his truthfulness and fairness.

SIEGEL: Today's 65-year-olds remember when the country was divided over the war in Vietnam.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

UNIDENTIFIED CROWD #2: (Chanting) Hell no, we won't go.

SIEGEL: Cronkite's reporting and commentary on the war were critical.

(SOUNDBITE OF TV SHOW, "CBS EVENING NEWS")

CRONKITE: It seems now more certain than even that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. When he went to Vietnam and saw with his own eyes what was happening there and came back and on his news show gave an editorial which - uncle Walter didn't do that real often; that was left to somebody else - but he said this war is wrong, and that's when things changed in this country.

SIEGEL: Imagine a single journalist having that kind of impact and influence today. That was 1968. Our 65-year-olds were in high school. Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated that year. Americans cities erupted into violence, including Angelo Falcon's neighborhood, Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

FALCON: The rioting was occurring in my neighborhood, you know? There were kids running around looting, and it was a time when - for example, in that neighborhood, we also had groups like the Young Lords Party, which is kind of like a Puerto Rican version of the Black Panthers.

SIEGEL: The sense of stability and safety was gone. So was the pressure to conform. Americans began embracing their racial and ethnic identities. Don Tamaki's Japanese-American parents had been interned during World War II.

TAMAKI: This cultural revolution, I'll call it, in which the black civil rights movement began, to which we owe a great debt as far as I'm concerned - and speaking as an Asian American - which began to open up opportunities - I would not have become a lawyer but for I think that movement.

SIEGEL: If you're 65 today, you came of age at time of activism for multiple causes. JoAnn Jacobs tried the women's movement.

JACOBS: So walk into this big auditorium, you know, brimming with, you know, I am woman; hear me roar. And there's a sea of white women. And it was lightbulb moment for me that I realized, wow, my identification isn't really as woman. It's as black.

SIEGEL: She went on to become one of the first female firefighters in New York City, a role that would never have made it into an "Ozzie and Harriet" script.

JACOBS: You know, there are two Americas - the one that they want us to believe exists and the one that actually exists. We're not all united in one goal - you know, freedom and democracy.

SIEGEL: We're different. When today's 65-year-olds were in their mid-20s, the country was riveted by the Watergate scandals. Again, Val Mobley...

MOBLEY: Nixon resigning - that was a national disaster. The office of the presidency lost esteem and has never recovered it to this day.

SIEGEL: Val counts herself a Democrat, but the sense that America no longer embodies virtues that it used to cuts across political lines. John Charleston, of Greenbluff, Wash, is sympathetic to the Tea Party.

JOHN CHARLESTON: I don't know how in the world we're ever going to be able to get that moral character back that we've lost.

SIEGEL: Priscilla Grannis is a conservative Republican.

GRANNIS: We are concerned the direction that the country is taking. I think that it's losing its foundation. I feel like it is turning its back on one of its founding principles, which was the Judeo-Christian value system.

SIEGEL: JoAnn Jacobs doesn't talk about the need to go back. She says we haven't moved as far forward as we might think. The challenges facing young people today...

JACOBS: A lot of doors are open, but a lot of the same doors that were closed for me are still closed for them. Yeah, I - you know, I can't paint you a rosy picture. I can't say that the world is better.

SIEGEL: But for all the work left undone, other 65-year-olds told me we've come a long way thanks to activist movements. Again, Don Tamaki...

TAMAKI: I have a memento that I keep for my family. It's my father's diploma from the University of California, Berkeley. He never participated in that graduation. Instead, that diploma was sent to him in a mailing tube addressed to an interment camp in a desert in Utah. And I keep it as a memento of just how far we've come as a people, not just Americans of Japanese ancestry but I think everybody else.

SIEGEL: They were born into a country that enjoyed unprecedented wealth and strength in the world but where racism was still part of the law and, for many, part of everyday experience. In recalling formative moments, these 65-year-olds struck me as proud of the country's progress but also nostalgic for a place that was more orderly, better mannered and at least imagined itself to be as placid as "Ozzie and Harriet's" house.

ARI SHAPIRO, HOST:

We've just heard from that group of 65-year-olds, and earlier this week, Robert, of course, we heard from 45- and 25-year-olds who you spoke to. How many people in all did you interview for this?

SIEGEL: Oh, we heard 22 people. I actually did interviews of groups of two or three in most cases. They were hour-long sessions. I did this with 26 people. Apologies to Alma Samudio (ph), Sam Waters-Krisley (ph) and Ben McKitten (ph). They certainly informed my reporting (laughter), but they didn't make it through the cut. Jess Chung, our colleague on ALL THINGS CONSIDERED - Jessica spoke to about a hundred people...

SHAPIRO: Wow.

SIEGEL: In winnowing down the field. She, by the way, is 22.

SHAPIRO: So having spoken with dozens of people...

SIEGEL: Yeah.

SHAPIRO: ...About the national experiences that formed their sense of identity, what was your big takeaway?

SIEGEL: Well, I think that there are some things about how old you are that really make a big difference. We learn about the world through media, for example, and people talked a good deal about media. We just heard the 65-year-olds remembering the days of big, consolidated, national networks.

And we heard from the 45-year-olds about the sense of the era of cable news in the '90s when this sensationalism of tabloid TV seemed to them to blur together through the O. J. Simpson trial and the Bill Clinton impeachment to some.

SHAPIRO: And the 25-year-olds...

SIEGEL: Yeah.

SHAPIRO: ...Were really striking in their bleak experience.

SIEGEL: I was really struck by it. They're really little kids when 9/11 hits. Then come, you know, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. And then comes the recession. They're just coming out of high school at that time. And it really struck me that unlike me at age 68, where there's this time of great stability and what felt like great prosperity and safety, I don't think they experienced that.

SHAPIRO: If you had to say the balance overall was tipped more towards positivity or disillusionment, is there one or the other?

SIEGEL: I didn't hear a lot of disillusioned people. I heard people who were optimistic about things but not wetted in the same way to what our experiences of the past have been because those experiences are very different depending on how old you are.

SHAPIRO: Well, I've enjoyed listening to the stories. Thanks, Robert.

SIEGEL: You bet.

Copyright © 2016 NPR. All rights reserved. Visit our website [terms of use](#) and [permissions](#) pages at www.npr.org for further information.

Generation Politics: 25-Year-Olds On The Experiences That Shaped Their Views

May 31, 2016 4:28 PM ET

Heard on [All Things Considered](#)

NPR's Robert Siegel speaks to a group of 25-year-old voters as part of a radio series exploring the generational differences between how 25, 45 and 65-year-olds think about politics. Having stood witness to the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal, the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, two wars, and an economic crash from a very young age, this group of 25-year-olds has seen a country going through hard times for most of their lives.

ROBERT SIEGEL, HOST:

In politics, we make choices based on experience. I don't mean the candidates' experience. I mean ours. What have we lived through? What events have shaped our outlook? Our experiences are personal. They're also cultural, regional and generational, and that's what we're focusing on this week.

I've been speaking with Americans who have only one thing in common - their age - today, 25-year-olds. When you're 25, you haven't lived a lot of history. And if you're a 25-year-old American right now born in the early 1990s, the history you have lived hasn't been a bed of roses. The larger world intruded on your life when you were 10, and it was catastrophic.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #1: We saw the plane on the other side of the building. And there was smoke everywhere. People were jumping out the windows.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #2: The building is falling right now. People are running through the streets.

CHRIS MARTIN: I pointed at the TV, and I said, you know, Mom, someone accidentally crashed a plane into the towers in New York.

SIEGEL: Chris Martin was a fifth grader about to leave for school in Fort Wayne, Ind.

MARTIN: We're kind of scuttling out of the house to go to school, and I said, Mom, someone did it again. Like, how is that possible?

SIEGEL: It was incomprehensible. Ariel Sepulveda was at the Air Force base elementary school she attended near Miami. Kids were being called out of school without explanation.

ARIEL SEPULVEDA: And it was my neighbor, actually, who had to come get me. And I remember asking her, why does everybody have to leave? Like, why is everyone leaving? And she was like, well, you never know what's going to happen. And you know there's, like, an Air Force military base down the street from you, so we just want to make sure that everyone's anything OK.

SIEGEL: We all lived through this, but these were 10-year-old kids. For Timothy Ng, it was unthinkable - buildings in flames in the safe country that his Chinese immigrant parents had chosen.

TIMOTHY NG: That was the confusing part - was, like, this doesn't happen. I've never heard this happening. So there was no context for me to kind of fit this in. Like, what's going on, and why is America in this? Like, I thought wars were a foreign thing. They only happened elsewhere.

SIEGEL: What struck me about these 25-year-olds was that 9/11 didn't so much revise their sense of the world. It began it. And then came war...

(SOUNDBITE OF GUNFIRE)

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: Eleven o'clock.

SIEGEL: ...Two long and indecisive wars, first in Afghanistan. Erika Chaves grew up in the ultimate Air Force town Colorado Springs.

ERIKA CHAVES: That impacted a lot of my friends at their older siblings wanting to serve, being from a military town where we have five different bases. My friends' parents started to deploy a lot more.

SIEGEL: And then Iraq - when the U.S. toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, today's 25-year-olds were middle schoolers. They trusted their leaders. Again, Ariel Sepulveda who was near Florida's Homestead Air Force Base...

SEPULVEDA: Because I was in a military town, you were supportive of the war, and it was the American thing to do.

MARTIN: Hey, if our government's doing this, it must be the right thing to do. I had this sort of naivety about me but just kind of hoping that it would get resolved.

SIEGEL: That's Chris Martin. First-generation American Timothy Ng...

NG: I trusted the authorities. And at the time, I was very young. I trusted that the president knew more than I knew and that he acted with good intention and this is a public office and that he would do the right thing.

SIEGEL: I kind of hear implicit in what you're saying that those are feelings of trust that you don't still have. Am I right?

NG: Yeah, well, of course, yeah. After that, it's the great betrayal. I kept watching it, like, OK, when are these weapons going to come up? When is the resolution going to happen? When are the people going to, you know, greet us as liberators? SIEGEL: When Timothy Ng speaks of a great betrayal over the war that didn't quite work out, he sounds a bit like a baby boomer recalling the Vietnam War. But his generation also shares something with people who grew up in the 1930s. When the bottom fell out of the economy, today's 25-year-olds were just nearing the end of high school.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED BROADCAST)

MELISSA BLOCK, BYLINE: The Dow closed down more than 770 points. That's the largest one-day drop counted in points ever.

SIEGEL: Some of the 25-year-olds I interviewed said the Great Recession left their households unscathed but not Chris Martin.

MARTIN: My dad had worked at the same company since he had graduated college in the '70s. And so he lost his job that he'd been working for 27 years when I was a senior in high school - so in late-2008.

SIEGEL: Chris had just decided to attend a private college.

MARTIN: And I was unsure of, you know, should I go to college at all? Should I change colleges and change what I plan to do? And my mom went back to work. She had not been working when I was in high school. And it was hard to see my dad struggle without having a job for just a few months. I mean, he was more fortunate than most. He got a job pretty quickly.

SIEGEL: The Great Recession drove Ariel Sepulveda's parents to relocate.

SEPULVEDA: Both of my parents lost their jobs in Florida and moved to Texas so that my dad can start a new business. It was a very unsteady time for me, and I was very much involved in my community, my school programs. So not only was it uprooting our financial stability but my life that I had - I had planned out for myself.

SIEGEL: On her family's ranch in North Dakota, Callie Lindseth's plans were also derailed. She eventually entered college but not right out of high school.

CALLIE LINDSETH: My family definitely did what many farm families did and sold off some livestock and tightened the belt and sold land. And I remember selling land for significantly less than our family paid for it. And it was really difficult.

And that's actually the year I joined the military.

My mother, unfortunately, had to go through a lot of my sister and I's college fund to keep us floating. And of course, I joined the military for some different reasons, but I signed up at 17 in 2007 because I thought that this would at least be guaranteeing some sort of a future because for quite a few years, things weren't very great in rural North Dakota.

SIEGEL: Listen to 25-year-olds from memories of a peaceful world and a booming economy that used to be, and you will listen in vain. From childhood on, it's been a time of danger, dissolution and political dysfunction.

But most of the young people I spoke with seem determined to thrive and to help make things better. Some have even taken inspiration from politics. Albrey Brown

grew up in Berkeley, raised by a single mother who died of cancer. He was 17 during the election of 2008.

ALBREY BROWN: As an African-American man, seeing an African-American president being elected in our country that we never thought would ever happen - that was the biggest moment in political history for me. It not only got me interested in politics, like, on a whole another level, but it gave me the confidence to say that I can really do anything.

SIEGEL: Callie Lindseth, the rancher's daughter who enlisted in the North Dakota National Guard, deployed to Kuwait and Kosovo, then went to college and became a veterans advocate. She's seen the struggles of returning vets and the desperate poverty of Native Americans on the nearby reservations. All that has changed the way she thinks about politics and society.

LINDSETH: Before, I think, you know, growing up in a small town, you just pick yourself up by your bootstraps, and you just work harder. And you're going to have success, and I'm finding that more and more unfair. People do not have the same foundations for success. Just seeing how bad things got in my hometown and how hard people had to work to try to get out really changed how I address the world now.

SIEGEL: Talk with 25-year-olds, and it's not hard to see the appeal of calls for systemic change or even revolutionary change. If you're 25, the country has been through a rough patch for as long as you can remember. Tomorrow we'll hear from a group of 45-year-olds.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #3: It almost seemed like our country was unstoppable. We were the power figure.

SIEGEL: They remember coming of age in a country they thought worked a lot better than it does now.

Copyright © 2016 NPR. All rights reserved. Visit our website [terms of use](#) and [permissions](#) pages at www.npr.org for further information.

NPR transcripts are created on a rush deadline by [Verb8tm, Inc.](#), an NPR contractor, and produced using a proprietary transcription process developed with NPR. This text may not be in its final form and may be updated or revised in the future. Accuracy and availability may vary. The authoritative record of NPR's programming is the audio record.

Generation Politics: 45-Year-Olds Share Experiences That Shaped Their Views

June 1, 2016 4:32 PM ET

Heard on [All Things Considered](#)

NPR's Robert Siegel speaks to a group of 45-year-old voters as part of a radio series where he explores the generational differences between how 25, 45 and 65-year-olds think about politics. He finds this group of 45-year-olds experienced a swell of patriotism and American exceptionalism in their youth. But patriotic

fervor dwindled, as scandals and the emergence of 24/7 news coverage changed the game of politics.

ROBERT SIEGEL, HOST:

What are the experiences that shape the views of people your age, the things that made you different from your parents or your kids? That's what I'm asking this week. Yesterday we heard from some 25-year-olds - young Americans who became politically aware just as the country entered two intractable wars and then sunk into recession.

Well, today we hear from 45-year-olds. If you were born in 1971, then when you were little and impressionable, the president loomed large.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

RONALD REAGAN: We, as Americans, have the capacity now as we've had in the past to do whatever needs to be done to preserve this last and greatest bastion of freedom.

MATT INNIS: I clearly remember hearing a speech from Ronald Reagan. It was a moment in my life that for the first time I realized I was an American and that that was the greatest thing on Earth.

SIEGEL: Matt Innis grew up in Southeast Iowa.

INNIS: Growing up in a small farm community in the '70s, you saw a lot of despair. And you know, when you listened to Ronald Reagan, he brought incredibly optimism.

SIEGEL: Other kids might have heard Reagan criticized at home by their parents but not Lorena Perez of Sacramento. Her family came to the U.S. from Mexico undocumented when she was 3. The Reagan administration granted her family amnesty. Eventually they became citizens, and for that, Reagan was revered.

LORENA PEREZ: My parents would see him as someone that they wanted to thank for helping us and so many other immigrants and kind of like a star-like figure. He was, you know, Ronald Reagan. We owe a lot to him, my parents would say.

SIEGEL: When today's 45-year-olds were entering adulthood around 1990, times were good. The Cold War was ending. The Berlin Wall came down.

PEREZ: It almost seemed like our country was unstoppable. We were the power figure.

SIEGEL: The shock of 9/11 was still a decade away. The country felt secure. Here's another change that Americans of Lorena's age lived through. They are old enough to remember the news media when they were different, dominated by a few big outlets, formal in presentation, conventional in choice of subject matter. The morning papers and evening news shows drove the agenda.

(SOUNDBITE OF TV SHOW, "ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT")

UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: From ABC, this is "World News Tonight" with Peter Jennings.

PETER JENNINGS: Good evening. In New York City...

SIEGEL: In the 1990s, that started to change. The media broke into intense competition for immediacy and sensation - no holds barred.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

BILL CLINTON: I did not have sexual relations with that woman - Ms. Lewinsky.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #1: Mr. Simpson, do you understand the charges as I've read them to you?

O J SIMPSON: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #1: At this time, do you wish to either plead guilty or not guilty?

SIMPSON: Not guilty.

SIEGEL: Some of the 45-year-olds I spoke with recalled the Clinton impeachment and the O. J. Simpson trial as a blended memory, a media circus where there'd once been something more restrained. Holli Holliday was born and raised in Kansas City and became a lawyer.

HOLLI HOLLIDAY: The O. J. Simpson and the Clinton stuff was a demarcation in fueling the need for people to just - their natural curiosity. And now it's just on steroids.

SIEGEL: The nonstop news cycle was displacing the old model. Jason Lovett owns a trash-hauling business in Griffin, Ga.

JASON LOVETT: When I'm in college, CNN is producing coverage of the Iraq war 24-7.

SIEGEL: This was the first Iraq War in 1991.

LOVETT: And it really starts to change how you perceived what was going on in the world. I don't say that as a good thing. I think the 24-hour news cycle is probably one of the problems that creates the discourse between, you know, the conservative and liberal movement.

SIEGEL: Matt Innis of Iowa agrees.

INNIS: The media has really helped in creating the dysfunction.

SIEGEL: And so does Scott Thornhill. He's a real estate broker in Greensboro, N.C.

SCOTT THORNHILL: Some of that civility of, you know, talking to each other (laughter) and being able to explain positions on issues or whatever it might be in a cordial manner - at least in my experience, I think some of that is gone. And I think the media and social media now I think has affected that a great deal. I can go on Facebook, and I can say something on there that I would probably never say to you in person.

SIEGEL: The way we communicate with one another has changed both in method and substance. Scott Croom of Pasadena, Texas, says around the time of the Clinton impeachment, he sensed a change in American values.

SCOTT CROOM: There was a shift where everything quit being about necessarily doing what's right or wrong, and it started becoming about winning - winning points here and there on the polls. And it quit being about doing what was right for the country or, you know, right for the world, and it became about, you know, are we going to win next time?

SIEGEL: He thinks we became more cynical. Today's 45-year-olds were adults in their mid-30s when the Great Recession struck. For Mindy Riesenber of Phoenix, it was the end of what had been good times.

MINDY RIESENBERG: I made a lot of money, and then I lost a lot of money. I have been on both sides of the bar. I've been where I could give money to people and

where I was on unemployment and living off of the health care system in Arizona called Access.

And because of my personal experiences like that, I feel that I definitely have gotten more involved in politics than I was when I was younger because it hits home with me more personally than it did 20 years ago.

SIEGEL: The recession also changed the way Jason Lovett thinks about politics and the economy.

LOVETT: It was this amazing, eye-opening experience that said the political machine churned out these incredibly bad loans and backed up these - through crony capitalism - this entire Wall Street bubble. And when it burst, it burst on the American middle income.

SIEGEL: For Jason, it was a political wake-up call.

LOVETT: Before that time, I actually thought that elections were in November, and you know, they're not. Elections are in May. You know, the Republican primary is in May. The Democratic primary is in May.

SIEGEL: The economic collapse of 2007, 2008 also led Michelle Warren of Denver to question the system.

MICHELLE WARREN: Six months, we were at the top ZIP Code for foreclosures. And on my block, we had six abandoned houses one summer. And - but it didn't probably shift my politics. It did make me think with a little bit more scrutiny though about banks and, you know, just where the majority of wealth is.

SIEGEL: Forty-five-year-olds like Michelle Warren and the others we've heard from obviously lived through all the things that 25-year-olds have lived through. But this older group is old enough to remember America as a different place, and they might say a better place. They remember the country as being more powerful, more prosperous and, Scott Thornhill would say, more optimistic.

THORNHILL: For me, maybe as a child, and I've - it carried me into my adulthood is wanting those leaders that do talk about, as Reagan did, you know, the shining city on the hill and us being a beacon of light for the world and, you know, kind of that grander purpose of the United States.

SIEGEL: I asked Scott how he would sum up the concerns of his generation to a 68-year-old like me.

THORNHILL: What I would say to you or anyone else, you know, in that 68 category is that you wanted for our generation that American of, you know, better for your children than what you had. I want the same thing for my son. We want those same things. I go through times when I wonder if when I'm your age if I'm going to have left that for him or not.

SIEGEL: Tomorrow, people who are almost my age - some 65-year-olds. They grew up in an America that was supposed to resemble the idealized nuclear family they saw on television.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #2: Mom stayed home. Dad worked. Her job was to raise the kids.

SIEGEL: But not every 65-year-old's life looked like "Leave It To Beaver." That's tomorrow.

Copyright © 2016 NPR. All rights reserved. Visit our website [terms of use](#) and [permissions](#) pages at www.npr.org for further information. NPR transcripts are created on a rush deadline by [Verb8tm, Inc.](#), an NPR contractor, and produced using a proprietary transcription process developed with NPR. This text may not be in its final form and may be updated or revised in the future. Accuracy and availability may vary. The authoritative record of NPR's programming is the audio record.

<http://www.npr.org/2016/05/31/480183211/generation-politics-25-year-olds-on-the-experiences-that-shaped-their-views>

<http://www.npr.org/2016/06/01/480335679/generation-politics-45-year-olds-share-experiences-that-shaped-their-views>

<http://www.npr.org/2016/06/02/480487234/generation-politics-65-year-olds-share-experiences-that-shaped-their-views>