



Boomer Nation: The Largest and Richest Generation Ever, and How It Changed America

Steve Gillon

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The Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, form the single largest demographic spike in American history. Never before or since have birth rates shot up and remained so high so long, with some obvious results: when the Boomers were kids, American culture revolved around families and schools; when they were teenagers, the United States was wracked by rebelliousness; now, as mature adults, the Boomers have led America to become the richest and most powerful country in the history of the world.

Boomer Nation will for the first time offer an incisive look into this generation that has redefined America's culture in so many ways, from women's rights and civil rights to religion and politics. Steve Gillon combines firsthand reporting of the lives of six Boomers and their families with a broad look at postwar American history in a fascinating mix of biography and history. His characters, like America itself, reflect a variety of heritages: rich and poor, black and white, immigrant and native born. Their lives take very different paths, yet are shaped by key events and trends in similar ways. They put a human face on the Boomer generation, showing what it means to grow up amid widespread prosperity, with an explosion of democratic autonomy that led to great upheavals but also a renewal from below of our churches, industries, and even the armed forces.

The same generation dismissed as pampered and selfish has led a revival of religion in America; the same generation that unleashed the women's movement has also shifted our politics into its most market-oriented, anti-governmental era since Woodrow Wilson. Gillon draws many lessons from this "generational history" -- above all, that the Boomers have transformed America from the security- and authority-seeking culture of their parents to the autonomy- and freedom-rich world of today.

When the "greatest generation" was young and not yet at war, it was widely derided as selfish and spoiled. Only in hindsight, long after the sacrifices of World War II, did it gain its sterling reputation. Today, as Boomer America rises to the challenges of the war on terror, we may be on the cusp of a reevaluation of the generation of Presidents Bush and Clinton. That generation has helped make America the richest, strongest nation on the planet, and as Gillon's book proves, it has had more influence on the rest of us than any other group.

Boomer Nation is an eye-opening reinterpretation of the past six decades.

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