

In praise of Generation Z

Zoomers have turned out to be the new champions of the Palestinian cause, and it's irritating conservative boomers.



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Championing the Palestinian Cause

Every day, new videos on TikTok emerge that challenge the Zionists' narrative surrounding the longstanding conflict in the Middle East. As a result, conservative senators and congressmen in the US have expressed concern about the proliferation of pro-Palestine content on TikTok, accusing the company of manipulating algorithms to amplify such content. However, TikTok recently issued a press statement clarifying that the prevalence of pro-Palestinian content is not due to algorithmic manipulation, but rather reflects the sentiments of the platform's teenage users.

"Israel can't sway us as easily with a propaganda video," said a young TikToker recently in a 72-second video that went viral on the platform. "So, every time you

see a video spreading the truth about Palestine and you like it, comment, favorite it, post it, or share it, you are costing Israel more money."

In a video titled 'Propaganda Is Expensive,' the user @yourfavoriteguy drew an intriguing parallel between the South African apartheid and the ongoing apartheid in occupied Palestine, which resonated strongly with younger TikTok users (known in generational terms as Gen Zers, or zoomers). However, it was not just his peers who appreciated his insightful analysis, but also members of older generations who were impressed by his depth of understanding and clarity. His video shed light on the fact that amidst widespread misconceptions about the conflict, he was able to articulate a perspective that resonated with many. He concludes the video by saying, "Free Palestine," a sentiment that has gained traction among a majority of Generation Z individuals.

Following is a full transcript of this viral video for the sake of my argument:

"Look at South Africa for a second. The government during apartheid was spending an average of \$100 million a year on a worldwide propaganda campaign to convince the world that what they were doing was not a human rights violation and not oppression. And when we look at Israel, they spent \$7 million on YouTube ads alone to convince people to support their oppression of Palestinian people since October 7. We have AIPAC, the Zionist lobby to the US government, spending tens of millions of dollars giving to politicians to convince them of their Zionist ideas. And then we have Israel in 2018, putting together a \$37 million budget on propaganda videos. I'll say it again: propaganda is expensive. A part of the reason apartheid ended was because it became too expensive to maintain. It was costing them too much money. It wasn't worth it anymore. And the same must happen to Israel. Israel can't sway us as easily with a propaganda video. So, every time you see a video spreading truth about Palestine and you like it, comment, favorite it, post it, or share it, you are costing Israel more money. So make sure to do all those things whenever you see those types of videos. Anyway, thank you for watching. Free Palestine."

No Climate Justice on Occupied Land

Zoomers have inherited a messed-up world: from global warming to decades-long wars, unresolved territorial conflicts, some of which escalated into humanitarian crises. In the case of Israel, there is a new apartheid regime for which they are shouldering the responsibility of setting things right.

Greta Thunberg, the Swedish activist and a Gen Z icon, is only 20 years old, yet she understands the world and its happenings better than most political figures with decades of experience. During a recent pro-Palestinian rally, she emphasized the importance of listening to the voices of the oppressed and those fighting for freedom and justice as part of the climate justice movement. Thunberg stated, "Otherwise, there can be no climate justice without international solidarity," according to Euronews.

To further amplify these voices, Thun-

berg invited a Palestinian and an Afghan woman to speak at the rally. However, while resuming her speech, a man approached the stage and took the mic angrily to express his disagreement, stating, "I have come here for a climate demonstration, not a political view."

Undeterred, Thunberg firmly reclaimed the microphone from the man and told him to "calm down." She then joined the crowd in chanting, "No climate justice on occupied land," emphasizing the interconnectedness of climate justice and the need for addressing political issues.

The mere fact that a zoomer icon recognizes the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is hopeful. What is admirable about this new generation is that they are doing all the thinking for themselves, disregarding the influence of legacy media. They educate themselves on various matters without succumbing to the distorting views of their elders.

Not only are they confronting climate

anxiety, but they also face limited means to halt the profitable oil and war machines. Nevertheless, they are persistent in their efforts. Moreover, they are indeed passionate about making sense of the world on their own terms, often challenging traditional modes of thinking or questioning what their parents and teachers have taught them to believe.

Criticisms of Gen Z

Born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, Generation Z is the first generation to grow up as digital natives. Often criticized by older generations for being unproductive and having short attention spans, Gen Zers are much more than that. The common criticism is expressed in lines such as, "Look at them; they are careless. They spend countless hours on their phones, accomplishing nothing productive in their lives." Sometimes referred to as "millennials on steroids," zoomers pose a challenge for their elders on how to handle them. Subject to many jokes, they are often seen as individuals who will create chaos.

"We are a diverse cohort," writes Leshan Kroma, a junior in the School of International Service, on The American Agora website. "All we want to do is use social media to interact and connect with the rest of the world. We learn about different cultures."

Kroma further elaborates that they curate their public image, using social media as a means of communication and self-expression. Despite facing condemnation, they are simply innovative and pragmatic. They grasp the direction in which the world is heading and possess open-mindedness towards the evolving future, be it in technology or diversity.

"Gen Z are incredible individuals who are already changing the world," Kroma verdicts.

Another Gen Z member, Grace Potter, writes in 'In Defense of Gen Z' on Junkee: "As a Gen Z, I feel an increasing amount of scrutiny from the public eye as we enter high school, universities, and the workforce. Gen Z is on the verge of embarking on adult lives in an environment that seems far from nurturing and encouraging."

Pointing out the "complete lack of understanding" behind the familiar sigh of "young people," accompanied by a shake of the head, she emphasizes that zoomers are not "hopeless and unmotivated."

"We, like every generation before us, are simply trying to figure out how to navigate the world we have been placed in, which comes with its own set of challenges."

Ability to Change

I seriously doubt that it's true that zoomers don't read as many books as previous generations and spend more time on their screens, jeopardizing their cognitive and social development.

According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, our habitus encompasses the ways in which we internalize and embody social structures and systems of meaning. Since we don't share the same habitus with Gen Z, it's hard for us to clearly see how they constantly evolve their value systems to navigate ethical conundrums. Their stance on the Palestine issue is a clear example of how successful they are in this regard.

Growing up with access to the internet, these young individuals had the time and resources to build a global community for themselves. Furthermore, through

the creation of their own jargon and art forms – namely, memes and reels – they successfully ward off intruders who could pollute their thinking with corrupting agendas.

Due to our differences in habitus, it's only natural that we don't fully understand them, and from what I've gathered so far, zoomers are not like their parents, and their value system comes from their peers on social media. The only Gen Zers who aren't like their global peers are the ones who were cut off from the internet. When someone wants to be critical of the new generation, it would be wise to remember all the generational conflicts that came before them. Zoomers want different things in life and face unique challenges, so it's natural for them to feel resentful towards previous generations and rebel against them.

When we come into contact with a member of this cohort and struggle to communicate with them, failing to understand their motives or even language, we should remind ourselves that the problem does not lie with them, but with us. Instead of trying to lecture or guide them onto our own paths, we should make an effort to learn their language and be passionate about their interests.

American zoomers not only suffered the effects of a long, futile war on terror instigated by George W. Bush, but also witnessed the shocking election of Donald Trump.

Therefore, given the world we are offering them, we are in no position to lecture zoomers on anything. They are a potent community of free-thinkers with the ability to change the world for the better. Let's just support and help them along the way.



Gen Z icon Greta Thunberg (c) and youth activists protest outside the White House, September 13, 2019.
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