

# **BOOMERS: THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO PROMISED FREEDOM AND DELIVERED DISASTER**

(HELEN ANDREWS)

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What is a “baby boomer”? Technically, it is an American born between 1945 and 1964. More communicatively, a boomer is a member of the worst generation in American history, and perhaps the worst generation in human history. The boomers, handed a wonderful, successful, stable society, fed it into a woodchipper, starting the very instant they could have any influence on society. They cobbled together the brakeless clown car in which we now all must ride, and dumped the rest of us into it, after picking our pockets and stripping every shred of our dignity. And now the author of this excellent book, Helen Andrews, who is not a boomer, expertly analyzes this decline and ongoing fall, through profiles of six boomers, each an exemplar (but not exemplary).

I’m not a boomer either; I’m Generation X (1965–1980), from the middle of it. We’ve always been oppressed by the boomers, who ate the seed corn that should have fueled our generation’s success. But at least we came of age before the boomers truly ruined everything for the Millennials and later generations. That meant that at least some of us, especially those in the professional-managerial elite, were able to navigate the crumbling of our society to some degree of success and stability. The destruction wrought by the boomers, however, has now made it much harder for those who came later, Millennials and Generation Z, and nearly impossible for those not part of the upper tier of the two-tier, extractive, stupid society the boomers built.

Despite not offering optimism, *Boomers* is a joy to read. Andrews’s writing is sparkling. She self-identifies as mean, though her touch is actually mostly fairly gentle; I would excoriate the boomers without mercy, but she is willing to give some of them the benefit of the doubt. So this book is not a polemic; if anything Andrews errs on the side of a mild lashing, rather than a vigorous flogging. Her book attempts to understand, and to show, how certain of the boomers, representative of their generation, “had all the elements of greatness but [their] effect on the world was tragically and often ironically contrary to their intentions.” I suppose that’s one way to put it.

The inspiration for *Boomers* was, Andrews tells us, Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, which, in the anger that followed the Great War, tore down those who had actually contributed to making an outstanding society. The two books really prove opposites, however: Strachey lied that the Victorians were a corrupt and incompetent ruling class; Andrews demonstrates that is precisely what the boomers are. But she explicitly wants, as Strachey reduced the influence of the Victorians on his world, to reduce the influence of the boomers on our world. Whether and how that can be done we will see later. And while Strachey is the author's putative model, I think *Boomers* has more in common with Czesław Miłosz's *The Captive Mind*, which studied the accommodations, or not, made with Communism by four exemplars chosen by Miłosz. Unlike Strachey, but like Miłosz, Andrews accurately gives credit where credit is due, without holding fire when that's called for.

What did the boomers destroy? Andrews makes no attempt to itemize all their harms; this is a short book, and those facts have been often covered by others, though certainly elements crop up in the six profiles. In short, the boomers destroyed the fabric of society. They demanded rights, and rejected responsibilities. They destroyed families, and thereby the fulfillment of both men and women (Andrews attacks, in passing, Betty Friedan and her odious and lying screed, *The Feminine Mystique*). They destroyed education, substituting cant and leftist ideology for rigor and the transmission of American ideals. They crushed the working class, both through their extractive economics, such as globalization, and by smashing all intermediary institutions, while they exalted the federal government and the priesthood of the administrative state, thereby neutering the working class as a political force and mutating beyond recognition the political structure of the Republic. They destroyed high culture in everything from architecture to music to film. And much more—but, in short, they ruined everything that makes a society strong, capable, and enjoyable for all its members, rather than benefits only an elite, extractive few. There can be no doubt of any of this, which all began in the 1960s, at the very moment the boomers were able to begin hijacking the existing system, with the help of dissatisfied members of former generations who at that time occupied positions of power, but who were soon enough shown the door as insufficiently dedicated to remaking America.

Andrews picks her six exemplar boomers to represent six fields—technology, entertainment, economics, academia, politics, and law. She shows how each left an area of American life worse off than it was given to him. One might view them as personifications of six deadly sins, each of whom had a different axis of destruction. Steve Jobs eroded moral virtue, though unlike the others his sins were not intended. Aaron Sorkin, propagandist of our screens, poured poison into the porches of our ears. Jeffrey Sachs, economic imperialist and destroyer of cultural fabrics. Camille Paglia, corrupter of our youth. Al Sharpton, racial grifter. Sonia Sotomayor, racial grievance hustler. These sins are all projects of the Left, of course, but Andrews does not view her subjects, for the most part, through a political lens, but rather through a sociological lens. Regardless, collectively, these types created the putrefying blob that is 2021 America.

First on the chopping block is Steve Jobs. At first, I wasn't sure why Andrews included, and started with, Jobs. But her choice is clever, because she shows an exception can prove the rule, most of all by contrasting Jobs with his worthless successor as head of Apple, Tim Cook. Not that Jobs didn't exemplify plenty of boomer personality traits, notably grossly excessive self-focus. But her considered conclusion is that "Jobs's greatest rebellion was against his own generation," and I think that's true. "The big difference between Jobs and his fellow boomers comes down to this: they were institution destroyers, and he was an institution builder."

Now, to be fair, I have a personal soft spot for Jobs. Although he was a hugely defective person, he is one of the few business geniuses I recognize. As a successful entrepreneur myself, and a corporate lawyer before that, I have long recognized that almost all high-profile businessmen are in fact nothing special at all. The prototypical example is Jack Welch, but you can pick any modern CEO at random, and realize that any modestly intelligent and competent person could perform the same job just as well or better. Sure, Jobs was often flaky, and frequently acted like an overgrown child, but those are personal defects, not judgments on his achievements. What I also liked about Jobs was his refusal to get sucked into donating money to causes, particularly left-wing causes. As he said of Bill Gates, "Bill is basically unimaginative and has never

invented anything, which is why I think he's more comfortable now in philanthropy."

Still, Jobs enabled the vices peddled by the boomers to reach all of us, through the technology he thought would benefit us. Andrews faults Jobs because his creations created a world "that gives free rein to the boomers' worse vices," most of all those that destroyed the working classes to benefit the boomers. Jobs effectuated, as Andrews says, "limbic capitalism," "the redirection of America's productive energies into inducing and servicing addictions." Pornography, job instability, drug addiction, gig work, and the fake achievement of video games are the new normal, which seems normal to us, even though any time traveler from the past would immediately see this as the foolery of an society at its end. But creating this wasn't Jobs's goal; he simply had an overly optimistic view of human nature—and nobody foresaw that the internet, and the technology that relies on and revolves around it, would be, on balance, very much a net negative for society.

This comes into clearest focus when Andrews discusses the boomer who now runs Apple, Cook. He has none of Jobs's vision; he's a nasty little bean-counter who sucks up to China while oppressing decent Americans who aren't coastal elites. Jobs was "a family-obsessed psychological basket case haunted by themes of inheritance and lineage." But that's much preferable to Cook, a deracinated, childless homosexual. (As Joseph Schumpeter pointed out about John Maynard Keynes, though Andrews shrinks a bit from endorsing it, homosexuals can have little or no investment in the future.) Cook's primary goal, other than lining his pockets, is being a "global citizen," an impossible entity, yet the logical end point of boomer navel-gazing and self-love. Cook has taken what Jobs created and used it to corrode America in ways unimaginable to the Jobs of 1986.

Next up is Aaron Sorkin, entertainer. I must admit I know nothing at all about Sorkin. I have never watched a single episode of *The West Wing*, the show for which Sorkin is famous. My impression has long been that show was simply a standard piece of left-wing agitprop. Andrews seems to disagree, yet all the specific examples she gives about the show merely strongly confirm my impression. Television was, we know, the boomers' main vehicle for distributing poison to destroy the strong culture that America had in 1960, a project that continues today. Certainly, most

television, especially television news, is unwatchable for anyone with any intelligence—when it is not overt lies, which is most of the time, it is cultural propaganda directed at Left ends. Even the few decent shows, such as *The Expanse*, are filled with propaganda. Andrews paints Sorkin as a type of ingénue, unable to grasp how most Americans, especially conservative ones, think, yet trying to understand. I think that's false. I think Sorkin is a prototypical boomer propagandist, one of many active agents of American destruction, all of whom should be beaten with chains and sentenced to perpetual silence for their sins.

But we can all get behind Andrews's next target, Jeffrey Sachs. Again, I've never paid much attention to Sachs, even though he floated around the edges of my own life tied to Eastern Europe and as a young corporate drone in the 1990s. As Andrews deftly outlines, he made an entire career out of destroying other societies through his economic advice as a "development economist." He started with Poland, wrecking it and handing decades-long ascendance to the former Communists who looted the country (whose power was only recently put down by the awesome Law and Justice Party), and then "he did what every great man does when he is overwhelmed by hubris. He decided to go to Russia." There he became tangled in, and indirectly participated in, the web of corruption that nearly destroyed that country. Hitting the eject button, he next went to Africa, and ruined countries there, through involvement in the United Nations's Millennium Villages program. Sachs was earlier ably pilloried by William Easterly, whom Andrews discusses—although she doesn't endorse Easterly either, with his overly Hayekian, libertarian approach. Ironically in a way, given Strachey as her model, she endorses the Victorians, the colonialists. After all, with maybe some very rare exceptions, the colonized were never better off than under colonialism—something that I am certain will get even more true as the world spins apart over the next decade or two, returning those sections of the world now totally dependent on Western handouts to the barbarism from which they came.

Camille Paglia is chosen to represent academia. I can't decide if this is an inspired or cramped choice, given that of all the six areas Andrews examines, academia is today the closest to a singularity of cretinhood, with tens of thousands of possible choices for sinners, many more academically mainstream. Andrews's criticisms of Paglia are less related to

the academy, although Paglia's superficiality and repetition do characterize the academy, and more related to her greatly contributing, under the guise of iconoclasm against the Left, to the destruction of culture. This included the mainstreaming of pornography, which has turned out, along with the culture of contraception, to be a disaster of the first order. The boomers caused this; they normalized obscenity and made it impossible to prohibit, through their control of the courts. Andrews ties this degradation to the degrading of culture more generally; there was high culture and folk culture; now there is only pop culture, and Paglia was instrumental, or at least highly visible, in this process as well. I think it began long before Paglia, though. But it doesn't really matter; we can all agree that American culture today, if one can even use the term, is a sink of turpitude.

Al Sharpton exemplifies the boomer belief in transformational, rather than transactional, politics. He combines this with being a greasy, lying shakedown artist. Andrews seems to have a grudging respect for Sharpton; I suppose the same kind of respect one has for a slick con man you see performing a con on someone else. Of course, as Andrews does somewhat more than hint at, Sharpton and all the other supposed black leaders among the boomers have actually made the average black American worse off. Far worse off. Yes, a thin crust of black people have made it to the professional-managerial elite, in part due to opportunities formerly closed now being open, in part due to various forms of extortion, either using threats or appeals to the supposed need for remedies for past wrongs to obtain handouts. Most black people today in America, though, are far worse off, relatively speaking in economic terms, and, as far as family and social structure go, absolutely speaking, than they were in 1960.

Andrews pulls few punches here, nor should she, especially since the gross falsehoods used to slander white people during and after the Floyd Riots has entirely justifiably enraged white people in America (my point, not hers), though they know they have to keep silent or face extreme punishment. It's not black people as a whole at whom they should be enraged, though. As voting patterns in November showed, there are plenty of black people, and more Hispanics, who don't believe the lies they are told, and they also keep silent for fear of punishment. (Not to mention there are others who do believe the lies, but could be persuaded

by the truth.) It's the racial grifters, many white, at whom decent people of all races should be directing their righteous anger. When those racial sectarians are silenced and destroyed, run out of town on a rail, then we can have nice things again, including the degree of racial harmony that's possible among disparate people working together for common goals.

Andrews is certainly hard on those grifters. She correctly points out, for example, that Ta-Nehisi Coates is an inveterate racist. She slags James Baldwin as the very opposite of oppressed, rather, he "was coddled by white America from the time he was in grade school." His "writing was inspired not by oppression but by his personal neuroses." "America's race problem . . . survives not because we are psychologically too guilt-ridden to deal with it but because the people invested in it gain too much from it to let it go away." Andrews even daringly points out that "white flight" was merely an inevitable reaction to the criminality that accompanied blacks moving into white neighborhoods. I think she probably gives short shrift to the real problems black people faced in acquiring real estate prior to the 1950s and 1960s, expertly covered by Richard Rothstein in *The Color of Law*. It can both be true that white flight made sense and that white people unfairly kept black people from acquiring desirable real estate. But Andrews's core point, that transformation politics as adopted by the boomers has only benefited a small elite of America's black population, is spot on.

Sonia Sotomayor, on the other hand, is an entirely different type of racial hustler, one who ignores politics entirely to instead achieve her ends by corrupting the rule of law. She's a type anyone in the professional-managerial elite knows well: an unintelligent person (in her case perhaps as dumb as Earl Warren, Andrews says) elevated far beyond what she could ever have accomplished on her own, simply because of her race, or ethnicity, or sexual hungers, and hugely resentful as a result. In Sotomayor's case, as in many such individuals, this emerges as hectoring and bullying, and an aggressive need to silence anyone who would point out the truth. When I worked in a big law firm, this type was very common, and inevitably rose in the law firm hierarchy, as high as he or, more often, she wished and therefore dictated, as a result. Of course, the administrative state makes this corruption possible, most of all through the so-called Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, backed up by the courts which have abandoned the rule of law.

And that's all six. This is a lot of sins. But should all the boomers be indicted for the sins of some? I'm not really sure. On the one hand, most boomers weren't destructive. We associate the odious Left project, implemented by boomers, of the Port Huron Statement, with all the boomers, and that is somewhat unfair. I'm currently reading the first volume of Niall Ferguson's biography of Henry Kissinger, and he notes in passing that in 1968, fifty-nine percent of those in their twenties wanted aggressive expansion of the Vietnam War. That is to say, most boomers rejected the Left; that the Left has triumphed is not their fault. On the other hand, they didn't do anything to stop the boomer elites from destroying America, did they? And now, all the boomers, Left, Right, and center, are parasitically draining America—more than half of federal spending, at least until the Wuhan Plague, consisted of cash payments to those over sixty-five. And, worst of all, the huge cohort of boomers didn't accomplish anything to counterbalance what they destroyed. I can't think, off the cuff, of a single boomer who accomplished anything great. Can you? I mean, I'm racking my brain, and I can't think of one. I can list endless boomers who destroyed a small part of America, but like Abraham arguing with God over Sodom, can't find any ones who benefitted America.

Andrews ends pessimistically, in essence afraid that the boomers have left nothing for the rest of us, having successfully gutted America, and that recapturing the Western tradition in these circumstances will be a tall order indeed. Certainly, that many Millennials are woketards suggests salvation is not to be found among them, though perhaps there are gems waiting to be found in that generation. She's right, but she doesn't take the next logical step, which is that something crippled that cannot be healed should be put down. We should burn it all with holy fire, every aspect of our elites—their government, their law, their economics, their academy, their control of technology—and then rebuild, perhaps with the assistance of Generation Z, among whom there are signs of a return to basing in reality. No time like the present to get started, though perhaps we should wait until some greater instability, to maximize the push.