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18-29 Voter Landslide Is A New Generation Flexing Their Activism

Obama Victory Is Generation We's "Spirit of 1776"

New York, New York [November 6, 2008] - A new generation has seized the reins of history—the Millennial generation. “This election was the Millennials’ American Revolution,” said Eric Greenberg, author of [“Generation We: How Millennial Youth Are Taking Over America and Changing Our World Forever.”](#) To help mobilize and organize the Millennial Generation, Greenberg also created an important website, www.Gen-We.org, and released a new video by award-winning producers that has been viewed more than 4 million times on various social networks. The video can be viewed here on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vknHKTy1MLY>.

Democratic brand domination was the corollary to Obama's 66%-32% blowout among 18-29 year-old voters. The youth also voted 63%-34% for House Democrats. So, young voters also voted straight ticket for the Democrats down ballot. The real story about the youth vote is not how many "new" voters Obama got to show up, but rather how he produced a gargantuan 34% differential in the youth, versus a 9% margin for Kerry in 2004.

In 2008, 18% of the electorate was comprised of 18-29 year-olds. That figure, when multiplied by the 34 percent differential in Obama voting equals 6.1 points, or a majority of Obama's popular vote margin. Had the Democratic 18-29 year-old vote stayed the same as 2004's margin, Obama would have won by about 1 to 2 points, and would not have won 73 electoral votes from Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, or Indiana. “The Electoral College result would not have been the same, nor can we say that Obama would have won the election,” said Greenberg.

Born between 1978 and 2000, the Millennials currently include 95 million young people up to 30 years of age—the biggest, most diverse, and best-educated age cohort in the history of the nation. In 2016, they will be 100 million strong and positioned to dominate the American political scene for 30-40 years.

During 2007-8, Eric Greenberg sponsored a major research study into the values and attitudes of the Millennials whose results have never before been fully revealed. Conducted by Gerstein | Agne Strategic Communications, it included an in-depth national survey of 2,000 individuals aged 18 to 29 as well as a series of twelve focus groups. This research revealed that the Millennials generation is very different from Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers and are now creating a new politics in America. Data from this study are below.

A Powerful Generation with a Different Worldview

The worldview of the Millennial Generation is shaped by two overriding dynamics that set this generation apart from those that have come before them.

The first is a commitment to the greater good over individual gain, an ethos that reaches across traditional divisions such as race, ideology, and partisanship. The Millennials are not a “Generation

Me” but rather a “Generation We.” They are strongly progressive, socially tolerant, environmentally-conscious, peace-loving, and poised to lead the biggest leftward shift in recent American history. They volunteer in record numbers and declare themselves ready to sacrifice their self-interest for the greater good.

The second dynamic that fundamentally shapes their worldview is a comprehensive rejection of the country’s current leadership and dominant institutions. These young Americans believe the large institutions that dominate so much of our modern society have comprehensively failed, placing narrow self-interests ahead of the welfare of the country as a whole. “This election was a referendum on that verdict”, said Greenberg.

They See Themselves As A Unique Generation

The Millennials have a clear sense of generational identity. By 10:1 (90 percent to 9 percent), they agree that their generation “shares specific beliefs, attitudes, and experiences” that set them apart from generations that have come before them. When asked whether their generation was more likely or less likely than earlier generations of Americans to be characterized by various attitudes and behaviors, topping the list was *embracing innovation and new ideas*. Over three quarters (78 percent) thought Millennials were more likely than earlier generations to embrace innovation and new ideas, compared to a mere 7 percent who thought Millennials were less likely than earlier generations to do so. Further, 87 percent of Millennials agreed with the statement, “Throughout our history, America's success has been built on innovation and entrepreneurship. As we confront the many challenges facing us today, it is that same spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship that is needed to maintain America's strength in the 21st century.”

Sober About Their Future and Ready to Do Something About It

Millennials are not willing to sit back and wait for others to act; instead they are ready and willing to take on the responsibility of leadership themselves. They reacted strongly to the following statements: *Young Americans must take action now to reverse the rapid decline of our country. If we wait until we are older, it will be too late* (89 percent agree, 48 percent strongly agree). *Life in the future in America will be much worse unless my generation of Americans takes the lead in pushing for change* (85 percent agree, 42 percent strongly agree).

Millennials are extremely negative about the direction of the country, and that in turn has made them pessimistic about the outlook for their generation, with two thirds saying they believe that, 20 years from now, they will live in country that is about the same (20 percent) or even worse off (46 percent) than it is today. However, they are far from resigned to their fate and believe they can make a difference, personally and collectively. *My generation of Americans has better opportunities to make a difference and produce structural change than previous generations* (79 percent agree). *Addressing the big issues facing my generation starts with individuals willing to take a stand and take action* (80 percent), versus *Individuals can't make a real difference in addressing the big issues facing my generation* (20 percent).

Millennials pride themselves not only on their recognition that the status quo has failed but also on their refusal to be constrained by past conventions. Of all the attributes on which they were asked to compare themselves to earlier generations of Americans, they identified their willingness to “*embrace innovation and new ideas*” as the variable that most differentiates them from older Americans. More than three out of four Millennials (78 percent) say they are more likely to embrace innovation and new ideas, including 44 percent who say they are much more likely to do so – more than 10 points higher than any other variable tested.

Millennials see their embrace of innovation not as a radical departure from earlier generations, but rather as a new step forward in a tradition that highlights the best of our country and the unique

American spirit. *Throughout our history, America's success has been built on innovation and entrepreneurship. As we confront the many challenges facing us today, it is that same spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship that is needed to maintain America's strength in the 21st century* (87 percent agree, 38 percent strongly agree).

Their belief in the power of innovation and the ability of Americans, no matter how dire the current situation, to innovate the future is the foundation of how Millennials view the future. Despite their current frustration, they remain optimistic for the future and maintain a strong belief in their own ability to effect change on a national or even global level.

Strong and Activist Sense of Generational Mission

Despite their harsh assessment of the current state of affairs and leadership, Millennials are not pessimistic about the future. In fact, they are quite optimistic and believe that new leadership can transform government and corporations. Seeing little hope for real change within the current political system, Millennials believe that innovation and new ideas are the only path forward, and they are eager to engage in collective social movements to reshape the world around their own values and priorities. When asked about the best way to address the challenges facing the country, the leading choice by far was “through a collective social movement” (60 percent made that their first or second choice).

Consistent with their belief in collective action, Millennials have a strong and activist sense of generational mission. The results of these four questions demonstrate just how robust that sense of mission is:

In our country, each generation has a responsibility to wisely use the country's resources and power so that they can provide the next generation a secure, sustainable country that is stronger than the one they inherited (91 percent agree, 53 percent strongly agree).

Young Americans must take action now to reverse the rapid decline of our country. If we wait until we are older, it will be too late (89 percent agree, 48 percent strongly agree).

Life in the future in America will be much worse unless my generation of Americans takes the lead in pushing for change (85 percent agree, 42 percent strongly agree).

My generation of Americans has better opportunities to make a difference and produce structural change than previous generations (79 percent agree, 31 percent strongly agree).

Moreover, Millennials explicitly reject the idea that individuals shouldn't step forward and try to make a difference. Over three quarters (78 percent) say they are willing to make significant sacrifices in their own lives “to address the major environmental, economic, and security challenges facing our country.” And, by 4:1, Millennials say that *Addressing the big issues facing my generation starts with individuals willing to take a stand and take action* (80 percent), rather than *Individuals can't make a real difference in addressing the big issues facing my generation* (20 percent).

Electing Obama Was The First Plank Of The Generation We Agenda

“The election of Senator Obama was the first step in the Generation We Revolution. The election results fit squarely with their thoughts and sentiments of dissatisfaction and the need for change. Obama is an icon for this. He represented the embodiment of their ethos for hope and optimism. Moreover, this election, for the youth, was their first salvo in flexing their activist muscle and restoring their damaged American Dream,” said Greenberg.

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