

Where is the Song to Unite Us?

By Jane Glenn Haas
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Everyone is mad as hell.

Some vent their fury occupying space in parks and in front of civic buildings. Others demand religious obedience. Then there are those that insist no politician should talk about God. Our youth say Boomers caused all the nation's problems. Boomers say the younger generation is "lost." No one looking for work can find any.

So far we have all the times and tensions of the 1960s. If we could put it to music, it could change the course of history. But where's the Gen Y version of "If I Had a Hammer" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Pete Seeger, the card-carrying communist of the 1950s who gave the future a voice back then, told me three years ago he thought the human race had a "50-50 chance of surviving." He was 89 then and he's still surviving. Jury's still out on the human race.

Harvard Professor Niall Ferguson says, in a posting on thedailybeast.com, that Boomers have no right to long for a return to the 1960s-style protest movement, complete with song. Any protesting today belongs to the 18-24 year-olds who face a lifetime of horrific tax burden because boomers were profligate spenders not savers and they still expect Social Security and Medicare from a shrinking workforce.

As Paul Simon sings: "Why am I soft in the middle when the rest of my life is so hard?"

Ken Dychtwald, the gerontologist and founder of Age Wave, points to the downgrading of the U.S. credit rating by Standard & Poor's based on their report that says "No other force is likely to shape the future of national economic health, public finances and policymaking as the irreversible rate at which the world's population is aging." His tune is "Show Me the Money."

Dychtwald admits our nation is obsessed with youth but also wonders why we refuse to celebrate the triumphs of longevity. He calls it gerontophobia, the fear of aging and discomfort with the elderly.

What we need is music to unite us. Perhaps I place too great an emphasis on the impact of music on a movement. I don't think so. Music can move you to tears, to march, to rally, to achieve.

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic" spurred troops in the Civil War. Brown and Hendersen wrote "Life is just a bowl of cherries" in the depression and Bing Crosby sang "Buddy, can you spare a dime?" Remember the Andrews Sisters and "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy?" Or John Lennon singing "Give Peace A Chance."

Perhaps the saddest thing about the current "recession" or "new economy" is its lack of tune-fullness. Meanwhile, the strain on society continues.

David Baxter, senior vice president of Age Wave consulting firm, says our time is marked the convergence of three major trends:

- People are living longer. The average 65-year-old looks forward to a minimum of 20 years, which is unprecedented longevity.
- Boomers forgot to have children. Fertility rates have declined from the 3.8 percent to just 2.1 percent today – which is just enough to sustain the current population numbers.
- The "Echo Boom" generation, or Gen Y, is not as great in numbers as the Boomers in and tends to be narcissistic.

The challenge is finding a song that brings us together – no matter our age. I wish somebody would sing to the choir and hear them sing back instead of creating so many discordant notes.

Actors and actresses are packing the stage. You can hear their off-tempo tapping, their minor key vocalizing, the rumbles of rehearsing dialogue. Will somebody PLEASE dim the houselights, cue the orchestra and strike up the band.

This article can be found at <http://www.ocreger.com/articles/boomers-323150-music-song.html>.