

BIG PICTURE RANCH
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PRESENTS

THE REVOLUTION GENERATION

Narrated by MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

Featuring interviews with NEIL HOWE CICI BATTLE RENALDO PEARSON ROZA CALDERON
DAVID BURSTEIN CHRISTINE HASSLER, ADAM SMILEY POSWALSKY ANA KASPARIAN
TAMARA DRAUGHT ALEXI PANOS TULSI GABBARD

Co-Producers ALEXA COUGHLIN, SHEILA LAFFEY, LAUREN SELMAN

Produced, Written, and Directed by
JOSH TICKELL
REBECCA TICKELL

The number of Millennials in the United States — those born between approximately 1978 and 2000 — is near 80 million people. They're the most diverse generation in America, with 56 percent of them registered as politically Independent ... and every single one of them will be needed if the planet is to avoid climate catastrophe. In *THE REVOLUTION GENERATION*, filmmakers Josh Tickell and Rebecca Tickell (whose previous films *Fuel*, *Pump*, and *Kiss the Ground* have examined oil, capitalism, and a regenerative way forward for the earth) spotlight a generation that has been mischaracterized, mislabeled, and mistakenly mocked. Through interviews and highlighting a theory by authors/generational demographers Neil Howe and William Strauss that history can be viewed as a series of 80-year cycles — and within that, into four “seasons” that bring with them profound societal changes — the film shows the impact of the WWII Generation, Baby Boomers, and Gen X. But Millennials occupy a special spot: They're creators of social tech and native digital users, are anti-corporate crusaders, are more empathetic than any previous group ... and they now have to secure voting rights, equality, and the safety of the planet itself. Can they do it? A kinetic, perceptive documentary of a generation and why they are who they are, *THE REVOLUTION GENERATION* is also, as Josh Trickell says, “A how-to manual for saving the earth.”

THE REVOLUTION GENERATION Produced, Written, and Directed by Josh Tickell, Rebecca Tickell. Executive Producers, Andrea Van Beuren, Zac Kilberg, Mark Sims, Bill Benenson, Laurie Benenson. Co-Producers, Alexa Coughlin, Sheila Laffey, Lauren Selman. Cinematography, Simon Balderas. Edited by Gabriel Valda, Anthony Ellison, Mikki Willis. Additional Editing by Tucker Maxfield, Derek Boonstra. Production Coordinators, Sam Gall, Heather Hollander, Darius Fisher.

TRT: 78 Min.

Publicity:
name:
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A CONVERSATION WITH FILMMAKERS JOSH TICKELL AND REBECCA TICKELL

Their oldest members turned 21 as the 21st century began — the youngest were born in the last years of the 20th century. Either way, “Millennials” are a societal force unlike historical predecessors Gen X, Baby Boomers, and the WWII Generation. Their childhoods are seen as having been cheery and coddled, until 9/11 and school shootings upended their sense of safety. Their fears and influences were unique to them. And their challenges are unlike anything any civilization has ever seen. In *THE REVOLUTION GENERATION*, filmmakers Josh Tickell and Rebecca Tickell break down what it is about the now 22-to-44-year age group that makes them perfectly situated to transcend their demographics, utilize their upbringings, and harness their power to face enormous challenges, including the existential threat of the climate crisis.

Utilizing the generational theories of author Neil Howe, *THE REVOLUTION GENERATION*, narrated by actress/activist Michelle Rodriguez (the millennial-age star of the *Fast & Furious* franchise, *Girlfight*, *Avatar*, and more), is a primer on Howe and his coauthor William Strauss’s “80 year cycles” in generations, the distinctions between those who came of age in different eras, and the changes Millennials and Gen Z will both be experiencing and causing. From the fight to preserve democracy to the new Civil Rights showdown to political upheaval to the battle with imagination stasis to save the human race, Millennials have their work cut out for them. But as this fast-moving, vibrant, and essential documentary shows, they also have every tool they need — from team-building skills to social media know-how — to fix every broken system that stands in their way. Here, Josh and Rebecca Tickell discuss the film.

What were the origins of THE REVOLUTION GENERATION?

REBECCA TICKELL: We’ve been to so many colleges and universities around the world and interacted with a great deal of young people — mostly about the climate — and it became clear how misunderstood they are. We typically stay away from politics in our films, because our message isn’t Democratic or Republican; it’s universal. But *THE REVOLUTION*

GENERATION *is* a political film. As we noticed what was happening politically in 2015 leading up to the 2016 election and subsequent to that, we saw the imbalance of representation in our democracy of young people voices and values. We felt it was an important missing piece of the puzzle to talk about things like ranked choice voting, and how congressional maps are re-drawn and districts are decided. And, crucially, it was vital to activate young people, because let's face it, time is running out and we honestly think that young people, rather than being disempowered, are perfectly positioned to be the leaders that help us climb out of the mess we're in.

JOSH TICKELL: We both have done filmmaking and activism for long enough to see that there is a growing disconnect between policy, civic work, and activism in this country. We wanted to roll back the historical dial and look at what powerful political sea changes took place as a result of activism. And our children and grandchildren are going to say, "Wait, you mean you *knew* climate change was happening but there was *no* policy to deal with it?!" We wanted to connect for young people the ideas of climate activism and policy change and show how we've changed policy in the past on progressive issues that mattered, like voting rights, and this is the same method we need to use today. All of today's advanced tools will be critical if we're going to change policy in time to mitigate a *real* climate crisis — we're just in the warm-up act of the crisis now. So the film gives young people a set of reference tools, because no matter where you go in the climate situation, you end up back at policy. That doesn't mean policy alone is going to fix all the problems, but if we never fix that spoke in the wheel, we'll have a huge impediment to doing the things we know we should do.

How did generational theorist Neil Howe's work inform the film?

J.T.: In many ways it made the film gel because we have this big overarching timeline — we start hundreds of years ago and move up to today. We needed a way to show people how we were moving through time, how cycles are repeating, so that they knew *when* they were — not where, but *when*. When we found Howe's ideas, we thought, *now* we have the device to travel through this film with the audience: As a species, we understand time as cyclical, and we're all going through the same cycle at different points.

R.T.: When we started making our documentaries back in the 2000s, we watched as the housing market crash happened and we knew that was a turning point of some kind. Then we watched as Occupy Wall Street happened, and we knew that this was all somehow connected to something that was bigger. Then we came across Howe's book and his theories about different generations and 80-year cycles, and we realized where American society was in that cycle. Then seeing what was happening in 2016, with people so divided, it was clear something much worse was coming. Then we were aiming to finish the film in 2020, Covid-19 happened. That helped open our eyes to what's possible at the end of this fourth "turning," as Howe says, and it could go a few different ways by 2028 or 2029. We wanted to give young people the best chance to rise up and make sure that as we go through this cycle turning, they know what's emerging.

What are the results and ramifications of those cycles Howe discusses in the film?

J.T.: What the film is saying is, each time we've gotten to this 80-year point before, it's ended badly. But now we've probably never had this much youth power in the history of human civilization — over 50 percent of humanity is under 35, and they have control of technology. And while conflicts are natural, the end result this time *must* be a society that's about restoring nature versus destroying it. That's a huge mental leap for the species. Older people are going to essentially do what they've been trained to do: Push buttons or beat their chests and rattle their sabers because that's what they've been trained to do. But the youth have *not* been trained to do that, so the question is, how do they navigate the greatest crisis our species has ever faced?

R.T.: Multiple generations have faced existential crises, from war and the threat of nuclear conflict, but it's different when you can go to a marathon and suddenly there's a bomb there, or you're worried that if you go to school people will be shooting you. That's a very different America, a different view of how to live. With climate change, young people are distinctly aware that our species has an endpoint unless we fix this. That has really never happened before, so you've got two universal drivers of this generation: One is a pervasive sense of the lack of personal safety, and another is a pervasive sense of the lack of a future. When you put those things together, the stakes couldn't be higher.

Unlike other generations who feel they're on equal footing with others their age in their shared eras, Millennials really do need to band together, and know how to do that, don't they?

J.T.: Yes, and they've got to all act in concert. This is a generation that's going to win or lose based on group dynamics. Where this generation excels though is in fact working in groups, partly as a result of feeling unsafe. If there's anything we can stake our hopes on, it's that, if two heads are better than one, how about *2 billion* heads, almost half of our species? A connected lifestyle is baked into who they are. Howe has a great line where he says, "The turnings create the leaders, not the other way around." I love that, because we've entered a time where young leaders can show up and with an iPhone can rally millions of followers to do something important. All of this has been practice for what's coming next. It's time to use that skill set.

The film discusses the political issues Millennials face. What sets their politics apart?

J.T.: They came of age with the 2008 election of Barack Obama, and he was certainly Kennedyesque in terms of what he meant to a generation. But who could match that? We saw in the last midterm election that it wasn't a single *person* who would match that, it'd be millennials themselves. When the Bernie Sanders campaign didn't work out, they said, maybe we'll give ourselves a shot, so people like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez were elected. They look at movements rather than people. AOC would probably be the first to say, don't look to me — look to my ideas. And when we say the revolution generation — revolutions are scary, right? They're spontaneous, they're messy, they're often bloody. But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about a revolution which is largely digital, and it's protests but not violence. We don't at all diminish the work of protests and marches. The film says about those, "Yes, and now *this* is how to actually use technological tools, with these little secret upgrades, to change the whole political system." Let's have this generation use the tools they know, and so at the end of our film you think, "Oh, this is a how-to about saving the world!"

R.T.: Being an actual millennial, I grew up hearing everything was corrupt, from Rodney King to O.J. Simpson to Bill Clinton. But all of that distrust was overcome by Obama. It was the

belief that he could do it in the face of everything that had come before. And then to have it all happen the way it unfolded in 2016, I think “disenfranchisement” is a nice way of putting it.

THE REVOLUTION GENERATION discusses how tech connects them, and connects to them, in unique ways. How will Millennials’ tech savvy and digital nativism influence their approach to the challenges of the 2020s?

R.T.: This generation is focusing on, “*How* do we fix this?” It’s almost a philosophical revolution: If we’re not willing to have corporations rule us anymore, what does that look like?

J.T.: People are looking for ways to do exactly what Rebecca said, which is, how do we have a mental revolution? We’ve had protests and there will probably be more, but our film shows how a few simple tweaks could radically change the direction of this country. We discuss things like rank-choice voting. This sort of “philosophical revolution” doesn’t have to be violent — it’s like an operating system upgrade. We’ve currently got a system of policy and government that is literally running on punch cards. It’s archaic — why do we *not* have blockchain voting at this point? In Lithuania, you can vote on your computer with an encrypted key card! A box of cereal has better encryption for the toy you get at McDonald’s than what we have for voting. The film has a lot of big calls to action, like fixing climate change, and it’s got subtle calls to action, such as, let’s upgrade this system of government so it’s as effective as the tech you grew up.

R.T.: I think coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic, the question will be, this is such a “system fail,” so now what do we do? It seems education was a failure, health care was a failure for this generation, the job system and finances are a failure. But what millennials have going for them are the idea of “updates” – anything that’s broken gets fixed with an update. So you don’t have to reinvent the wheel to revolutionize something; it can be revolutionized by tweaking things. And by working collectively as a team, you’re actually able to problem-solve it. The first iPhone was a real brick, and then they had updates, right? So, we just have to think the same way in terms of government and climate change: You just need to hack it, get in there and tweak it, and if the first upgrade doesn’t work, you do another!

Millennials' financial choices are, they feel, a house of cards they inherited, right?

J.T.: Financially, Millennials have faced essentially two choices: Go to college and amass tremendous debt in order to ascend to higher echelons of income, or else don't go to college and hope you'll make ends meet with side hustles in the gig economy. Both of those choices are awful. But what's amazing about young people is that they are *so* optimistic in spite of all this! Because if you put Gen X in the position that millennials are in today, it would not go well!

What surprised you the most as you made THE REVOLUTION GENERATION?

R.T.: We thought when we started working out in 2015, we'd have to get the film out soon to address social justice issues and how climate change affects all these other issues. And just to watch the world go through what it's been going through around these issues wasn't surprising, but it was a bit overwhelming to watch it happen in real time. Everything we put in the film has been absolutely predictive of exactly what happened over the last 6 years. In 2015, when we started, I don't think we thought the accuracy would be so right. The surprising part is that, in a lot of ways, the surprising stuff is still to come. That's the mic drop — the biggest things are going to come in the next couple of years.

J.T.: Like AOC and all of these young people in Congress, we need a critical mass. It's literally a numbers game at this point in terms of getting young people in positions of power, which is why we wanted to bring the film out in advance of the midterms, and Earth Day, to help get the momentum going. This film is going to 1,000 college campuses for screenings.

R.T.: We know the film will revolve around all of these issues the film touches on. But it's also exciting because what that means is, on the other side is rebirth and renaissance. A world where my voice is represented as is everyone else's, a world where we're regenerating our planet. I can't wait to see what that world looks like. **THE REVOLUTION GENERATION** is an alarm bell people to say, "Wake up — we're not done yet. We're just getting started."

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