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Baby Boomers Can Still Set an Example of Civility for Younger Generations

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By: Rick Bava

Baby boomers, when you were growing up did your parents or grandparents tell you that you should treat others the same way that you want them to treat you? Or did you hear statements such as, "Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you"? Perhaps these "Golden Rules" of days gone by have been lost on society as we know it today, in the 21st century. As a baby boomer, what do you think of the present discourse, both in the political realm and in your community? Baby boomers are starting to ask the question, "Has civility been lost in America?" While it may be difficult to find specific data on this subject, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that something is not right about the way we are communicating with each other in recent times.

Most baby boomers will focus in on three aspects of our lives in America today that they believe are contributing to this lack of civility. The first is what we are watching on television — especially cable television. The second contributing factor is the increased commentary on social media, and last, but not least, is an overall lack of manners, which in turn can be attributed to an erosion of respect. Recently, at a discussion group held outside of Columbus, Ohio, this issue was debated as part of an overall conversation on our political system. The question was raised, "Do our political leaders reflect us, or do we reflect them?" One may ask, who is more responsible for the decreasing civility in our society today? Is it the politicians who squabble based on political parties, or is it a deep chasm in our society that is being reflected in the debate?

An 87-year-old woman might ask her baby boomer daughter why people today all seem to speak in such harsh tones. She might tell her daughter and granddaughters that there was once a time in this country when the way you conducted yourself in public actually meant something. She remembers when being kind, being positive, and showing respect for others and their opinions was considered to be the appropriate way to conduct oneself. Somehow, though, this concept of mutual respect seems to have changed. Today it seems that people have turned to lashing out at others, either in person or on social media. Unfortunately, it appears that this trend has now become the new "normal." As baby boomers we sometimes take a step back, and as we observe the pundits on cable news yelling at each other, or talking over each other, we wonder — does this behavior perhaps work against our value of common decency?

So now returning to our original question — what is the state of civility in America today? The consensus from the baby boomer community can be summed up as follows: if this were a baseball game, we would be way behind going into the late innings. The American people, as a whole, are smart and do not need to have a social scientist tell them that something is wrong in Peoria. American baby boomers look around and say to themselves, "Something is not right here." Furthermore, they say, "We can do better than this!" Unfortunately, this problem with the way we treat each other is not going away anytime soon. Some said that our national discourse would change after the highly partisan election cycle of 2016. But that did not happen. Some said there would be a calm, and that the country would come together, or even become more united once the harsh rhetoric was in our

rear view mirror. That has not happened. In fact, one can argue that it is only getting worse now.

So what is the path forward for baby boomers in America? We, as a society, will perish if we do not find some common ground. There are reasons why mutual respect should count for something. Baby boomers, please try not to fall into the trap of simply blaming the politicians. If you want to live in a more civil world, and if you want the peace of mind brought about by good human relations, then start down that path by looking into the mirror. Start by looking at your own computer screen and thinking about this issue before you post something on Facebook or Twitter next time. Baby boomers, please consider taking the high ground and setting a positive example for the next generation, much in the way that so many members of the "Greatest Generation" have served as examples for you.

Rick Bava founded and was CEO of the Bava Group, which became the premier communications consulting firm serving the Fortune 500 community. Bava became known for his popular blog columns "Rick Bava on the Baby Boomer Generation." He is the author of "In Search of the Baby Boomer Generation." For more of his reports, [Go Here Now](#).

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