

# The Millennial Generation Part Two

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## Technology puts power in the hands of the many

**Transition** As traditional ways of working disappear, the young find value in contributing to changing the world, writes *Sarah Murray*

Few “millennials” – or the generation aged between 18 and 33 – can remember a time when technology has not been a fundamental part of their lives. Not only does it answer their questions, but, through social media, it also gives them the ability to alter the way in which they are perceived by their peers and the greater world around them. Online tools and smart devices have empowered the generation born since 1980 in a way few previous technologies have done.

“Technology has played a huge role in how they’re different from the generation that came before them,” says Jean Case, chief executive of the Case Foundation, which she and her husband Steve Case, AOL’s co-founder, created in 1997.

This generation sees technology as levelling the playing field. In the FT-Telefónica Global Millennials Survey of 18 to 30-year olds almost 70 per cent of respondents said “technology creates more opportunities for all” as opposed to “a select few”.



This belief has brought tremendous confidence to the world’s first generation of digital natives, despite facing the worst economic outlook since the great depression.

“We have all these incredible gadgets that connect us to the world,” says Paul Taylor, executive vice-president of the Pew Research Centre and director of its Social & Demographic Trends project. “But for them, it’s the wallpaper of their lives and it allows them to place themselves at the centre of the universe.”

With a Facebook page or a Twitter presence, millennials can broadcast their views, ideas and creative output globally – and potentially find an audience of millions. “That is enormously empowering,” says Mr Taylor. “That, as much as anything, contributes to their confidence.”

While technology might help them feel at the centre of the universe, its ability to connect millennials to other communities across the world has also created in many a desire to help solve big global problems. “They’re idealists and their level of engagement with the things they care about is extraordinary,” says Ms Case.

She cites research the foundation conducted revealing that millennials want to do more than simply give to

‘They’re idealists and their level of engagement with the things they care about is extraordinary’

causes they care about. Some 44 per cent wanted to know how their donations were used and 41 per cent, when giving, also wanted to know about volunteer opportunities.

“This is a different level of engagement from young people than we’ve traditionally seen,” she says.

Again, technology is playing a role. Supporting this philanthropic impulse are non-profit websites that match charities with volunteers or allow

ILLUSTRATION: NICK LOWMEDES

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#### The Millennial Generation Part One

Finding a place within the world

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*Telefónica*



## The Millennial Generation Part Two

# Artist turns work into protest against the 'big men'

**Kenya** *Katrina Manson* meets Nairobi artist Gor Soudan to hear an offbeat view of society

Gor Soudan is fed up of "big men" – the people who run the country. Instead the 31-year-old Kenyan artist says he cares more about his friends and neighbours. "It's just realising who do you want to hear you? Do you want the people at the top to hear you? They're so way up there, you can shout as much as you want," says the up-and-coming artist.

"Speak to your brother. That's someone who will stop and listen."

Mr Soudan's home-cum-studio is a case in point. On the fifth floor of a six-storey block – one of the few multi-storey buildings in Nairobi's sprawling Kibera slum – his workspace embraces those closest to him. A large black sheet stuck up on the living room wall greets visitors who climb the stairs. "The Jolly Guys Kibera Social Club," reads large white lettering, with the entreaty: "Keep peace."

The reference to jolly is a pun on the name of a nearby nursery and also an invocation to the spirit of his age and place. Hidden among the shacks, bad wiring and even worse guttering of the country's biggest slum are artists, ad hoc art schools and the odd music recording studio. "Things are just happening," he says. "We are also trying to get a feel of it. We don't know what's going on. That's why we choose to just be jolly about it. So it's a jolly club."

Although Mr Soudan, who read philosophy at university before becoming an artist, had never heard of the millennial generation, he could be its local spokesman. "We gave up trying to speak to the big men. They don't

listen," he says. "That's what art in Africa is doing right now, speaking to your brother."

In their home, works by Mr Soudan and his two flatmates fill the walls, the floors and the space where his bed should be. About 12 friends hang out or work together there, and any local resident is welcome to look in at any time. Their artists' collective spills into the other rooms and, in the bedroom, his thin mattress is rolled up into a bundle beside a bicycle, bags of clothes and his works. "I need the space," he shrugs.

Despite the upbeat approach to producing art, his work is hardly jolly. Evidence of his "Angry Birds" series is everywhere. A wire-framed crow glowers on the floor, shrink-wrapped in molten black plastic bags. Outsized cardboard daubed with black and blue sprays of dribbled shining car paint forms the image of furious crows, leaning against walls.

It is a bleak motif – a homage to the crow as an aggressive scavenger, a metaphor for everything from colonialism to Kenya's broken modern politics, from the cultural appropriation of video games to survival. "You grow up knowing they're evil," he says of the black crows that made it over from India, feeding off trading ships to Kenya's hot coastline. "It's an easier way of talking about people."

Mr Soudan is a scavenger himself. On a narrow balcony overlooking the rusting metal roofs of Kibera, a profusion of wire sits in a bag waiting to be bent into his latest work of protest. For Mr Soudan, his art is a continuation of years of inquiry. "It's like



**Generation yes:** Gor Soudan is engaging with his peers through art

Pete Muller

writing. It's a critical way of thinking. So I don't feel I'm doing anything very different from what I studied." In another piece, he scrawls ink over a copy of Kenya's constitution, pasted on board to look like a building. "They can never tell me I never read the constitution," he laughs.

Mr Soudan has twice been caught up in the violence that has accompanied Kenya's elections. A few years ago, he was at home in Kisumu, an opposition stronghold and the western lakeside town of his birth. There police shot dead dozens of people who protested the results over the course of months.

He was in Kibera, another opposition stronghold, for the latest round of elections in March. "The police presence was massive," he said. "We had helicopters going around the neighbourhood; there were lorries of police with AK47s, shining boots and all lined up, just going up and down; the rule was, they don't want to see a group of people. So if you were hanging out with your friends on the streets, they'd come for you."

Friends and neighbours took to the streets, targeting police with stones. Mr Soudan prefers to take refuge in his art. While expatriates buy his work, regularly on show in Nairobi, many more young Kenyans are buying pieces. "They have, like, 15 paintings, and then they start talking about their collection," he says.

For him, art is less about ownership than consumption – including the kids who watch him at work. "They see the wires and they see what you are doing with it, so really they are consuming, looking at the process – the transformation of this wire from rubbish into art," he says.

"A gallery [is] some place they always just hear about and are not allowed to visit. But then they realise that the transformation is art. That's the consumption. It's not the end result."

That means he strives to be an artist for all people. "I don't buy into this Generation Y or X, we are all in this together," he says. "The 90-year-olds and the five-year-olds, we are all in this mess together."

# Politician adds edge to gender battle

**Brazilian society**

**A Marxist at 17,** Manuela D'Ávila's aim is to break the male stranglehold, writes, *Joe Leahy*

When people think of the millennial generation they might imagine people who grew up spending their every living moment on the internet. But Brazilian "Generation Y" politician Manuela D'Ávila defines her age group by far more than its relationship with technology.

Although they are tech savvy – the country has the second-largest Facebook community in the world after the US – Brazil's millennials have the proud distinction of being the first generation in recent history in their country to have grown up politically free.

While many were born during the country's military dictatorship, which ended in 1984, few were old enough to remember it and most have participated in almost as many elections as their parents. "This is the first generation that has voted according to their true feelings," says Ms D'Ávila, a federal congress member from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. At only 31 years of age, Ms D'Ávila has already broken most of the existing moulds, even for a member of a generation accustomed to turning traditional models upside down.

She is serving her second term in Congress, where she is the leader of the Communist party of Brazil faction in the lower house.

Not only is she exceptional for her youth in an assembly characterised by ageing party stalwarts but also for the fact she is a woman. She carries on her cellphone a photo of her taken in Congress showing a young elegantly dressed woman adrift in a sea of grey-bearded suits, which illustrates the point that Brazilian politics is dominated by men.

"I saved this on my cellphone because when people say they don't need to fight for empowerment of women any more, I show them that image. When I do, everyone understands," she says.

Brazil with its relatively young population seems a natural breeding ground for politicians such as Ms D'Ávila. Younger Brazilians have no hang-ups about using technology, including for political ends.

They are taking to smartphones as fast as they can afford them, or the country's creaking telecom networks will allow.

About 1.8m Brazilians per month have joined Facebook in recent years, with the number using the site now totalling more than two-thirds of the country's 90m internet users. The aptitude of Brazilian youth, in particular, for the internet has attracted attention from Silicon Valley. Redpoint Ventures, previously known as BV Capital, has received commitments of

political future: **Manuela D'Ávila**

\$130m for a joint fund that will invest mainly in new consumer internet groups in Brazil.

Ms D'Ávila came to office by championing the rights of her generation. A Marxist by age 17, she started in student politics at her university in Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, before joining the local council. She campaigned for more space and facilities for young people in a city that was wrestling with increasing crime.

"The idea of public security is always that of restricting public space, which for youth has a huge impact," she says.

She became a congresswoman in 2006 and was struck by what she believes is the mutually reinforcing male domination of Brazil's political and business worlds. Brazil's Congress is 8 per cent female compared with almost 40 per cent for neighbouring Argentina or 25 per cent in France.

"There is no one reason," she says, in reference to the skewed congressional gender balance. She adds that it at least partly reflects the machismo of Brazilian society. "There doesn't exist a situation where politics supersedes the culture of a society."

Reinforcing the trend is that campaign finance was provided by businessmen to politicians who also happened to be men. They operate as a cartel, with the political dynasties in congress and their business associates making it difficult for newcomers, especially women, to penetrate their world, she says.

The only way to solve the problem of gender imbalance and graft in Congress in the longer term is to provide public financing for campaigns, she adds.

"For me, public finance for campaigns would end corruption. No, nothing will end it," she corrects herself. "But at least it would diminish it."

In the meantime, she says one of the great steps forward for women in Brazil was the election of the country's first female president, Dilma Rousseff, in 2010. Since she took office on January 1 2011, the president has appointed a large number of women to senior positions in the government and in state-owned companies, such as oil producer Petrobras.

"People perhaps don't understand how important it is for children to be raised in an environment with women occupying positions of power," she comments.

"It will change a generation."

# Post-Soviet youth perceives world of opportunity

**Lifestyle**

**Russia's young have more choices but still face deficiencies in infrastructure, says** *Rachel Morarjee*

Born into a world in which old certainties were crumbling and nothing, from the value of the rouble to the security of their parents' jobs remained certain, Russia's twenty-somethings know the future depends very much on their efforts.

The old Soviet Union is the unimaginable past for many and a hazy memory for the rest. These perspectives define their age group, starkly differentiating them from parents and older siblings.

"Our generation is interesting. I was born in 1989 as the Soviet Union was ending and we grew up in vibrant turbulent times," says Timur Zolotov, a journalist and PhD student.

While his older brothers and sisters were forced to attend Boy Scout-like pioneer rallies that drummed

patriotism into Soviet youth, Mr Zolotov and his peers absorbed US films and soap operas and have adapted to Russia's cut-throat capitalism far better than older compatriots. They have travelled far more widely than previous generations and are wired into an online universe.

"The early exposure to American culture affected our generation," Mr Zolotov explains. "We expect our lives to be in our own hands. We don't expect anything from the state – not a car, not a house, not a job."

"We are young, aggressive and ambitious."

Mr Zolotov, who graduated two years ago from Russia's prestigious Moscow State University, feels it is easier for many western companies and private firms to hire young graduates like himself, flexible and eager for experience.

The downside for companies hiring Russia's bright young things is that while this generation might not expect job security, loyalty does not feature highly in their résumés. Many job hop frequently.

"I quit my last job three weeks ago and I've already

got three offers," says Ilya Tsatska, a German-speaking PhD student, who has spent the last 18 months working for a market research company helping western firms navigate the complexities of doing business in Russia.

Mr Tsatska says his willingness to stay in a job far outweighs that of his former classmate, Anastasia Fedotova, who is happy to move on after a few months if the position is not right for her and has worked at four different companies in the last two years. "Nastya is a notorious job-hop-

per," he says with a grin.

Now working as a marketing manager, Ms Fedotova denies she is fickle and says that hitherto she was looking for the right opportunity where she could learn new skills and not be called to work at 3am. She worked at the Austrian embassy, Siemens and a consultancy before settling.

"In Russia, many people think that work is part of your life, but I think that work is your life, so if you are happy at work you'll be happy. I hated my last job and lost a lot of weight

**Nicholas Davies, 23**  
Student official, UK

"While recession has had a huge effect on the number and range of jobs available to graduates, that is no reason to be pessimistic about the future. I will always strive for my ideal future, and persistence will get me there one day"



# Technology puts power in the hands of the many

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donors to track small donations and receive feedback from recipients. Meanwhile, the sense of how millennials can contribute as individuals is increasing as traditional ways of working are eroded and technology replaces not just manual labour but also intellectual capital.

"Artificial intelligence, algorithms and the web mean that all the repetitive jobs are going away," says Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka, the social entrepreneurship organisation. "The new value is in contributing

to change." Millennials' belief in their ability to effect change varies across the world. The Telefónica survey found Latin Americans had the strongest sense that they could make a difference globally, at 62 per cent, compared with 40 per cent of all respondents.

This belief increases when considering their own environment, with 62 per cent of all surveyed saying they could make a difference locally.

What this highlights is a shift in the way leadership is viewed. Millennials' trust in traditional institutions and leaders is declining.

More than half the respondents did not think governments reflected their beliefs and values. Instead, they put more faith in the wisdom of the crowd, accessed via social media. Millennials trust each other and turn to their peers when they have questions to answer. "There's a two-way connection and anyone can talk to anyone in the world," says Mr Taylor.

Yet the confidence and connectivity that technology has brought this generation can also be accompanied by stresses and doubts. "The old model of organisation, where a few people

choreograph what everyone else does is failing and instead you have fluid, open architecture with synapses running in every direction," says Mr Drayton.

This means that, to survive and thrive, millennials believe they must rely less on institutions and more on themselves and their peers.

One thing that may help millennials navigate this new fluid, open environment is that, as a 2010 Pew Research Centre study revealed, they are more receptive to change than older generations.

The study, which polled millennials in the US, found

them more tolerant of immigrants than their elders, with almost six-in-10 saying that immigrants strengthened the country.

While religious extremism is on the rise among young people in certain communities, many are more religiously tolerant than their elders, with 76 per cent of those polled by Telefónica saying they were open to religions and beliefs outside their own.

Mr Taylor sees this particularly at work among US millennials, among whom attitudes to interracial marriage and sexual identity are changing rapidly. "In

the US, one thing that's notable is their acceptance of diversity," he says. "There's a lot of social change that's connected to this generation."

Of course, for the millions of young people without jobs, any tolerance, openness and confidence in their ability to effect change is tempered by the grim prospect of being unable to make the transition from school to the workplace or to afford to buy a home or eventually retire.

Given the growing gaps in employment prospects and wealth levels among young people worldwide,

differences in attitude between the haves and have-nots are likely to increase, too.

However, given the millennials' desire to help solve problems, they may well play a prominent role in building a more stable economy and an equitable society.

Ms Case is optimistic. "These people will change the world, and they have opportunities to do that," she says. "We have a segment being left behind. But I'm hoping that the generation with the opportunities will pay attention to their peers without."

40%

Percentage who feel they could effect change globally

62%

Percentage who feel they could effect change locally

## The Millennial Generation Part Two

# Engineer's skills helped build online retailer from scratch

**Technology** *James Crabtree* talks to Binny Bansal, co-founder of the ecommerce site Flipkart, India's answer to Amazon

As one of India's most prominent dotcom entrepreneurs, it is perhaps not surprising that Binny Bansal recalls the moment he discovered his passion for technology.

"The first time I saw a computer I was 11, in school back in 1994," he says. "You could play some games or do some basic programming. That was when I got to experience it first hand and I think it was love at first sight."

Today, Mr Bansal is known as one of the co-founders of Flipkart.com, an ecommerce venture dubbed the "Amazon of India". It is a label he happily accepts for a business that sells everything from books and electronics to toys and watches, and makes more than 2m shipments per month.

To some extent, the company could be seen as derivative of Amazon's pioneering model. Its achievements are just as impressive, however, not least given the unusual barriers such a business faces in India.

From the outset, Mr Bansal and his team had to cope with a chaotic, fragmented retail system, while also figuring out how to do seemingly basic things, such as building a reliable nationwide delivery system in a country with a limited postal service and developing systems – for example, payment on delivery – to suit customers who mostly do not own credit cards.

Many of these problems were solved by the application of technology, Mr Bansal says. He adds that this is an approach that he shares with many of his generation, who become familiar with technology at a young age. In his case it took four more years after he

first used a computer before he had one in his house, when his father bought a PC for their home in the northern city of Chandigarh. An interest in software programming followed, deepening a few years later when the web first came to India.

"I was the first one in my town to get the internet, and so there were a lot of friends who came over," he says. "Computers were what I became passionate about."

Then, as now, only a select few in India were able to have access to computers, although these days most do own basic mobile phones. An estimated 150m are online, less than 10 per cent of the 1.2bn population.

Even so, this makes India the world's third most engaged nation online, after China and the US and creates a sizeable group of young people comfortable with developing technologies.

Of his initial experiments with games and chat rooms, Mr Bansal recalls: "In those early days, it was slow [using] a modem on a phone line, but the information was quite powerful. But from that time on, I became very, very interested in how these things work and what they can do."

In person, Mr Bansal is quiet and reflective, almost shy. When I met him for the first time last year – at a coffee shop close to Flipkart's high-tech offices in the southern Indian IT hub of Bangalore – he came across as quite unlike a pushy California-style dotcom whizkid.

For all that, he does share at least two traits with many of the other young global entrepreneurs who have built leading technology companies,



Start-up nation: Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal, the co-founders of Flipkart, the Indian ecommerce site

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'If we had known how difficult it would be, we probably wouldn't have done it'

the first being a background in engineering. Mr Bansal's early interest in computing helped him win a place at the Indian Institute of Technology (IITD) in New Delhi, perhaps his country's most celebrated university. It is certainly known for the extraordinarily slim odds faced by applicants for admission. "I was lucky," Mr Bansal says.

The second shared characteristic is more obvious: his youth. He set up the company with co-founder Sachin Bansal (a friend from IITD but not a relation) in 2007, when he was just 24.

Today, Binny Bansal is still only 30, while his group's 6,000 staff have a decidedly youthful feel, too. "Almost all of the company, including the leadership, is our age or younger, definitely," he says. In its early days, he says the idea for the business was mostly based on intuition, if one inspired by a period during which Mr Bansal worked as an engineer in Amazon's Indian operation.

"Our hunch was that online travel companies were growing in India very quickly and so people were buying tickets on the web, but at the same time the current crop of Indian

retailers were just really, really bad online," he says. "We could see they just didn't get it."

For all that, building an online retailer presented formidable challenges. "There were a lot of these problems at the start, but thankfully we were quite ignorant of them before we began," Mr Bansal recalls. "We didn't really have a clue and if we had known how difficult it would be, to be honest, we probably wouldn't have done it." The company now has revenues of Rs5bn (\$90m), servicing 6.5m registered customers.

As to the future, Mr Bansal says he and Flipkart are preparing for what they believe will be the next big stage in India's internet journey – the moment when the first generation in the country to grow up digitally suddenly junks their old-fashioned mobile devices in favour of internet-enabled smartphones.

"That is where the growth is going to come from, and it will happen in the next couple of years for sure," he says. He imagines his client base potentially doubling, "or going up even more than that... It will have a massive, massive impact."

# Military offers security of sorts in hard times

**Armed services**

*Shannon Bond* finds recruiters adapting to a new generation

In 2004, Aaron Duncan was working in minimum-wage odd jobs, had a high school equivalency diploma and was falling behind on his rent. While the financial crisis was still years away, the economic picture was already bleak for the 18-year-old in Louisiana.

Mr Duncan did what countless young Americans in similar situations have done: he walked into the local army recruiter's office. "I said, 'I need to join now,'" he recalls.

Nine years later, military service has evolved for him from a way out of a difficult situation into a career. He has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, taken college-level classes and is a staff sergeant based in South Korea.

"I definitely did not see myself doing this for the long term," he says. At one point he considered leaving and trying his luck in the civilian world. But that was 2011, and he worried about his job prospects.

"You can't beat the predictability of the military. I know on the 15th and the 1st, I'm going to get a cheque," he says. "Even if the military downsizes, they do it in a competitive fashion. They're not just going to get rid of me because I'm the new guy."

The US armed forces are shrinking as a share of the population – about 1.4m out of 315m Americans are on active duty, the smallest proportion in uniform since before the second world war – but the military's slimmed ranks are dominated by young recruits. More than two-thirds of enlisted members are under 30, and the target age for recruits is 18-24-year-olds, the tail-end of

the millennial generation. The economic factors that helped push Mr Duncan into the armed forces are familiar to recruiters.

"Historically, there's been a fairly strong inverse relationship in the economy and our level of difficulty in recruiting," says James Ortiz, marketing director at the army's recently created marketing and research group. "When the economy is strong, recruiting is difficult and vice versa."

That trend has started to change. "In the last two years, we've seen an unprecedented paradigm," Mr Ortiz says. "The economy is weak and recruiting is significantly challenged, which we haven't seen before... economics and unemployment aren't as strong an influence on this cohort."

New recruits in 2013 are telling the army that their top reason for joining is service to their country, edging out factors such as money for college, financial stability and skills training that have dominated in recent years, according to Kathleen Welker at the army's recruiting command in Fort Knox, Kentucky.

"We are happy beneficiaries of the millennial generation's wanting to be part of something," she says.

**Pablo Rodríguez Sánchez, 27**  
Communications co-ordinator, Mexico

"Our generation today faces a void: our governments have failed us; companies have failed us too. We have a crisis of credibility towards institutions. We have come to realise we are the protagonists of the 21st century. Our generation is starting to wake up and create the solutions of our own problems"



Be all that you can be: the US army offers an alternative for young people affected by the weak jobs market

Getty

But channelling their "spirit of volunteerism" into military service is not a simple task. The shift to an all-volunteer force in 1973, coupled with the deaths of many veterans of the second world war, Korea and Vietnam, means there are fewer immediate family members to influence prospective soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Matthew Mueller belongs to that shrinking group. A 29-year-old captain in the US air force, he grew up with both parents in the army and several other relatives in the services. "I come from a strong line of military," he says. At 18, he enrolled at Penn State with an officer training corps scholarship, followed by a four-year commitment that he has extended.

To reach young people who do not have such strong family traditions, recruiters, like companies, are turning to social media. "One of our challenges is

that unlike other industries, a lot of which are doing new product development, we are who we are. We can't change the army," Mr Ortiz says. "But we can change how we position and communicate."

With smartphones in every pocket, millennials can quickly access information and learn what their peers are watching, reading, eating and playing. That expectation of transparency has "forced us to open up the army and allow soldiers to engage with prospects in a way they haven't done before", Mr Ortiz says.

On the army's website, candidates can pose questions about military life – from what basic training is like to how the food tastes – and real soldiers post answers. "That is a significant change for the army, for a very conservative institution for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is security," Mr Ortiz says. "The kids were going to get information whether we wanted to play or not. We were better off engaging them."

For those who have chosen a soldier's life, even in an era of government budget cuts, military service offers a stability that is increasingly rare for young Americans. In 2010, a newly married Mr Mueller considered seeking out a job in financial services – the field he plans to enter when he eventually leaves the air force. But, he says, "at that time the global economy was so uncertain, hiring prospects were so depressed... [that] the thing we wanted most was certainty in life".

# Record unemployment for young destroys aspirations

**Spain**

Financial crisis hurt a generation, writes *Miles Johnson*

Spaniards born in the 1980s were until recently thought to be the luckiest generation in their country's history. Coming into the world as Spain emerged from the isolation of the Franco dictatorship into the wider community of the European Union, it was taken for granted that the country's confident, educated young would enjoy opportunities never offered to their parents.

Yet, for a generation that has lived through an almost uninterrupted surge in wealth and living standards, history has taken a cruel turn.

Where once the Spanish government openly boasted about the possibility of the economy overtaking that of Italy, the bursting of Spain's decade-long property bubble has caused youth unemployment to surge to the highest level in the EU.

With about 1.8m Spaniards under the age of 30 out of work, and an unemployment rate of 57 per cent for those aged under 25, the life chances for a generation that had symbolised a new, modern and internationally relevant Spain now appear, for the first time since the transition, to be worse than for those born a decade before.

"It is much worse to be a young person coming out of college today in Spain than 10 years ago," says Javier Diaz-Giménez, an economist at Iese Business School in Madrid.

"For graduates, it is very difficult but a sizeable number of young Spaniards became high school dropouts to work in the construction sector when it was booming, and now they find themselves out of work and without training." Faced with remaining on

the sidelines for the start of their working lives, more and more young Spaniards are choosing to move abroad.

Cristina Arias, a 27-year-old from Galicia in the northwest, is typical of many highly educated young Spaniards. She faces the choice of staying in the country in the hope of finding often poorly paid work, or searching for opportunities abroad.

After graduating in Madrid, she worked in a series of jobs before taking up a position in the communications department of a music festival. Last year the festival lost money and she found herself without a job in a market where the chance of finding permanent and reasonably paid work was fast disappearing.

Having taken a holiday to visit friends in Germany, she then came to a decision about what to do next: "When I was staying in Berlin on holiday, I suddenly thought to myself that there was nothing in Spain to go back to, no opportunities, so I decided to stay," she says.

Yet not being able to speak German meant she could not find work and so, after two months, she returned home to her parents in Galicia. She is now taking German classes and hopes to return to Germany later this year. "Young

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**Styling the future**  
Katie Eary, UK fashion designer, on menswear and rapper Kanye West

people in Spain want to do things, they are motivated and have ideas, but with the situation we have people who find themselves in a vicious circle," she says.

"When you are without a job, it is easy to become completely unmotivated, and just sit on your parents' sofa all day. But you have to keep doing things, you have to keep yourself motivated".

The Spanish government, stung by the effect on the country's image caused by the high level of joblessness, hopes that a reform to the labour laws will improve the situation. The reform aims to increase the ability of companies to hire and fire employees and act

as an incentive for employers to take greater chances on recruiting young workers, without the fear of later being forced to pay high compensation if they are made redundant.

The government has adopted increasingly unorthodox policies to underline its commitment to fighting youth unemployment.

Fátima Bález, Spain's employment minister, in May struck an agreement with her German counterpart, whereby Germany will offer 5,000 apprenticeships a year to young unemployed Spaniards.

Economists and labour market experts argue that more must be done to combat Spain's so-called dual labour market, where short-term and poorly paid contracts are the norm for those young people lucky enough to find work.

"There is no long-term commitment to employees from their employers, and that is an extremely unfair proposition for young people," says Mr Diaz-Giménez.

For Ms Arias, the difficulty of finding a long-term contract, or the insistence of many employers on offering only unpaid internships, is a further incentive to emigrate. "When you have a short-term contract you are less motivated," she says. "In the past in Spain, companies knew that their workers were the soul of the company and that when they were treated well they worked hard."

Many of her friends are now trying to set up their own businesses, although they are struggling to find the level of start-up capital they need.

"Sometimes people think that young people here are unmotivated, or enjoy living at home with their parents, but this is not true," says Ms Arias.

"People are more motivated to do new things than ever before, but many see how things are and think it is impossible. I love Spain, but we cannot be expected to stay here and wait forever just to get a job."

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## The Millennial Generation Part Two

# Activists fight on to taste fruits of their revolution

**Egypt** Two years after the downfall of Hosni Mubarak, courageous men and women are challenging widespread repression, writes *Heba Saleh*

There was a time, Nazli Hussein recalls, when she was the kind of girl who would get her nails painted while her friends went to demonstrations on the streets of Cairo.

This now feels like the distant past, says the 30-year-old activist who has put her career as a special needs teacher on hold to immerse herself fully in supporting the families of detainees and producing videos documenting abuses by the Egyptian security services.

"The first person I saw get killed on Kasr El Nil bridge in the revolution [in 2011] changed my life forever," she says. "He fell; we looked and just marched on. He and I were on that bridge because we had the same dream. He died for that dream but there is no logical reason the bullet hit him and not me or one of my brothers. From that moment I decided I should either die like him or achieve that dream."

Ms Hussein is a member of a generation of Egyptian activists determined to keep alive the spirit of the 2011 revolution that ousted President Hosni Mubarak, ending his 30 years of stultifying rule.

Convinced that the repressive state that Egyptians rose up against did not fall with Mr Mubarak, they remain a thorn in the side of authority, agitating for the rights and freedoms that the revolution was supposed to have restored to Egyptians after decades of authoritarian rule.

Many of them argue that Mohamed Morsi, the elected Islamist president, has been seeking to inherit and exploit his predecessor's tools of repression rather than implement a programme of reform.

"Every time there is a fight between the people and the police [on the street] I will be there," says Ms Hussein. "The people have not yet achieved their rights in the wider fight with the security services."

"There is still a vendetta against the police. There has been no acknowledgment of their mistakes, no one has been held to account and there has been no reform."

When she is not on the front lines during confrontations between protesters and the police, Ms Hussein volunteers with two activist groups that



provide help to detainees and lobby on their behalf. Her role is to liaise with the families of the sometimes hundreds of protesters arrested in demonstrations and to ensure that the detainees receive meals, medication, blankets and legal aid.

"We are a small group and in the demos after January 25 this year [the second anniversary of the revolution]

the violations were terrifying," she says. "Hundreds were arrested and sent to six prosecution offices around Cairo. We had to trace them for their families, and we had to deal with cases of missing people. Two of them turned up dead."

"Abductions by the state have returned. There were many minors and there was a lot of torture. Why

should an 11-year-old child be tortured?"

For Hossam Bahgat, the 34-year-old founder of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), the day Mr Mubarak fell remains the "happiest" of his life. He too complains that disillusionment has set in after two years of a tortuous transition in which the country was ruled by a council of

senior military officers and now by an elected Islamist president.

He acknowledges certain aspects have improved after the revolution – the press is freer and human rights activists face fewer restrictions in moving around the country – but there are still many battles ahead.

"After the revolution, I expected our priorities as a human rights movement would be dismantling the apparatus of abuse built under Mubarak and dealing with the legacy of the past while rebuilding democratic institutions," he says. "Instead, we are dealing with a daily wave of new abuses and the same structures persist."

"Instead of the security laws used for repression under Mubarak, we are campaigning against new repressive laws to govern civil society and the right to demonstrate."

Mr Bahgat was 23 and a journalist

'Almost every human rights problem under Mubarak persists today and many are more acute'

when he founded EIPR, now one of Egypt's most authoritative human rights groups, in 2002. A grant from CIDA, the Canadian development agency, helped him set up the organisation.

He wanted to build a young organisation staffed by young people, and to focus on "neglected issues" such as reproductive rights, health discrimination, and the freedom to choose and change religion.

Since the revolution, he says, EIPR has opened a handful of offices across Egypt and has more than doubled its staff, which stands at 60.

Despite the fall of Mr Mubarak, many of the same issues remain equally pressing today, Mr Bahgat insists. "Almost every human rights problem under Mubarak persists today and many are actually more acute: from violence against women to unlawful and lethal police shootings, [and] from sectarian violence to the lack of access to basic services and decent work."

**The voice of their generation: protesters in Tahrir Square, Cairo, in November, 2012** Reuters

## Her feet planted in Somali sand, an English school in her head

### Exile

The writer Nadifa Mohamed tells *Feergus O'Sullivan* of life in two worlds

When writer Nadifa Mohamed returned to her Somali home town of Hargeisa in 2010 after 22 years' absence, it was not her eyes that helped her locate her childhood home, but her feet.

"I was walking around the neighbourhood I was staying in and at one point I felt my legs sinking into the sand in the street. I remembered it straight away from when I was a child – that area is embedded in me, and everything fell into place."

This anecdote of return and deep memory reveals a process that is at the heart of Ms Mohamed's fiction. Now 31, she was prised away from Somalia at the age of six, when her family fled the country and moved to the UK to escape the escalating civil war.

Her path to British literary success was fairly smooth: school in suburban London and graduation from St Hilda's College Oxford were followed by a shortlisting for the Guardian First Book Award and an Orange Prize long-listing for her first novel, *Black Mamba Boy*.

Now Ms Mohamed has been endorsed by that most respected of literary commendations, publisher Granta's decennial list of the best young British writers. She joins a group that has included Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson and Kazuo Ishiguro.

Despite an adulthood and promising career firmly based in Britain, it is to her family's Somali past that Ms Mohamed's work consistently returns. She seeks to rediscover roots and memories made distant by migration, to sink her feet back into the sand of her past.

Lean and poetic, her writing attempts this feat by

mixing invention with retold family anecdote, piecing together a narrative that connects fragments of the past with her imagination. *Black Mamba Boy* reimagined her father's real life journey across Africa and the Middle East, searching for his own lost father. Her second novel, *Orchard of Lost Souls*, due out this August, follows three Hargeisa women as Somalia descends into civil war. It is a compelling snapshot of a city whose normal life is unravelling into violence and an elegy to the childhood friends and relatives Ms Mohamed left behind.

It is no coincidence that the imagery in these books sometimes has the dreamy vividness of brown-edged old photos – it is faded images like these that set her creative process into motion.

"Normally my writing starts with an image or two that I can't get out of my head," she says. "With *Black Mamba Boy*, I was haunted by this mental picture of a man on a ship, a sepia-toned image of a black guy staring out to sea. Another one was on three little boys in loincloths splashing around in the water, probably in Aden."

The process of determining the identity of the people in these images and where they fit within the narrative is one that involves as much talking and listening as reading and writing.

While she cites South

Africa's J.M. Coetzee and Ivorian novelist Ahmadou Kourouma as influences, her greatest enthusiasm seems to be for less obviously literary inspirations. "Music is a huge influence on me. When I was writing *Black Mamba Boy*, I listened to a lot of Louis Armstrong, partly because his deep, gravelly voice reminds me so much of my dad's. The Nubian Egyptian singer Ali Hassan Kuban also blew me away – his music is like what I want to achieve with writing: it's jagged, mad and fast and

'From a temporary move . . . it's taken me a long time to accept that I won't go back to Somalia'

also sounds somehow ancient. In a way, it's my soul music."

Understandably for someone whose writing has family storytelling so close to its centre (though she insists that her work is not directly biographical) Ms Mohamed cites the cadences of Somali speech as key in shaping her style. She feels that a certain writerliness is a typical trait of everyday Somali talk.

"When I read other Somalis, the way of phrasing is very long sentences running on, images that pile on

top of each other. Somali is very poetic, in a way that I'm only discovering right now in my own voice. People talk in a really very literary way there, much more than in the UK. Just listening in to a normal conversation between old women, they're often masters language-wise. The depth of language is incredible – and this is often from people who can't read."

Despite the vividness of these voices in Ms Mohamed's writing, her work thrives on distance and recollection. Agreeing that it might have been her family's flight from war-torn Somalia that motivated her to become a writer, Ms Mohamed says her former homeland is a place she chooses to return to imaginatively rather than physically.

"It's taken me a long time to accept that I won't go back to Somalia. When we first left, the move was always meant to be temporary and even recently I thought I'd go. But now I've come to realise that London is my home."

This gradual realisation is perhaps typical of her generation of British Somalis, many of whom left their birth country during the civil war to escape anarchy that they assumed would be shortlived.

But joining contemporaries such as journalist Rageh Omaar and athlete Mo Farah, who have made highly visible contributions to British culture, it seems that Ms Mohamed's future work may move on from Somalia-based subjects to explore her inevitably complex relationship with her adoptive country.

The obsessive images shaping the contours of her third book – still very much at the planning stage – explore the writer's early years in Britain. "I have in my head a big, grey Victorian school, like a camp or an institution, somewhere in London. She went to one such school here herself, she says, and it left an "indelible memory" for her: "that shock to my system of leaving my mother for the first time".

**Dana Sobh, 19**  
Student, Lebanon

'The future seems a little intimidating. You can't tell whether the actions of today are leading to success or destruction. I'm constantly haunted by thoughts such as "Did I choose the right career path?" However, the economic climate might get better by the time I graduate'



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