



# Previous generations created issues facing young people today

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“Finding a way out of the wilderness for a lost generation of young American males is one of the most consequential public policy challenges of our time,” Scott Jennings noted in his thought-provoking commentary last Sunday (“Lost generations create dangerous situation for America”).

“We have made it too easy for this lost generation to do nothing, to fail to grow up and take personal responsibility for what it means to be an American citizen.”

Jennings was lamenting the attraction to racist ideology as well as the escalating incidence of substance abuse among young white men in the United States. The easy explanation would be to blame these individuals for their own misfortune; i.e., to conclude that the situation they find themselves in is due primarily to a lack of initiative, poor choices and a sense of entitlement.

But in order to understand what is really going on here, we need to re-examine the expectations placed upon this cohort by their elders. What we are actually seeing are the inevitable consequences of a world fashioned by their well-intentioned but ultimately misguided predecessors.

Our society seems to have a penchant for holding people personally accountable for their circumstances even though they had very little input into the creation of the system that spawned those circumstances.

Struggle builds character and success is only self-satisfying when it is earned. My grandparents came of age during the Great Depression. My parents also had to fight to make ends meet. They understood, and instilled within me, the relationship between hard work and meaningful accomplishment.

Somewhere along the way, many in my generation failed to pass along the important life lessons that were so essential to our development. Our children did not create this problem – we did. As such, it is our job to provide them with a roadmap out of this mess.

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