

HAITIAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
Willingness, Know-How, Resources

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"FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA"
From Charity to Development



From Septa-Octogenarians to Thirtysomethings: A Call for Renewal

Flash! On January 9, 2024, President Emmanuel Macron made a spectacular announcement by appointing Gabriel Attal, the current Minister of Education in France, at the young age of 34, as his new Prime Minister. Macron himself, now 46, had assumed the presidency of the French Republic at just 39. Meanwhile, in the United States, two septa-octogenarians are battling it out in the race for the presidency, offering a spectacle that resembles more of an elderly scuffle than a commitment to renewal. In Haiti, my home country, a septuagenarian Prime Minister recently recited on television the same unfulfilled wishes that he had promised at the beginning of 2023. The concepts of "bios" and "thanatos," symbolizing life and death respectively, immediately crossed my mind. I immediately contacted my friend Philippe in France to discuss the appointment of this young Prime Minister, and to analyze our reaction as seniors in the framework of our regular conversations on the management of public affairs.

Our impressions align on the crucial role of thirtysomethings in promoting life, youth, and renewal, while septa-octogenarians seem to embody decline, aging, obsolescence, and a society in decline. Today, this image of a choice between youth and old age in the governance of a country is a crucial choice. Why ?

Today's thirtysomethings are better educated, more skilled, and more in tune with modernity and the necessary transitions it entails. Politics should reflect this evolution, and its image should serve as a vehicle for a more modern and dynamic society.

In essence, it's a choice between boldness, transformation, and audacity versus old age, which tends to foster stagnation and resistance to change.

Some might argue that the elderly have experience while the young do not. So what? Today's youth have access to knowledge and expertise thanks to digital resources that the older generation did not have. It took them years to acquire a fraction of the knowledge available today in various fields. Furthermore, in the example we have before us, these young leaders have a top-notch administration to handle day-to-day affairs while they are tasked with providing direction, energy, and course corrections in a turbulent world. It is essential to be responsive and, as they say, not to "doze off" on one's laurels.

The choice lies between the audacity of youth, unafraid to adopt disruptive stances, just like the Schumpeterian innovator in creative destruction. Change in complex societies requires speed and dynamism. The example of large companies rejuvenating themselves by acquiring startups created by young entrepreneurs is a compelling illustration, helping them avoid imminent obsolescence.

Faced with this powerful movement, septa-octogenarians protect their "turf." They use their influence to hinder the youth, contributing to societal stagnation. They neglect the need to plan for succession. Septa-octogenarians seem oblivious to their own programmed obsolescence, as they are busy trying to hold onto power. But, face creams to preserve the illusion of youth have never replaced actual youthful skin with its supple and pleasant epidermis.

This dynamic is also reflected in cultural and technological activities, such as social networks and artificial intelligence, which did not exist a few decades ago. This social transformation illustrates how collective behaviors of the population emphasize the vitality and renewal brought by thirtysomethings, while challenging the relevance of older generations' ideas for a country's future.

Everyone is drawn to the call of youth because it gives us the illusion of postponing our own inevitable demise, which is the ultimate fate of the human species. We find ourselves in a collective psychosocial dynamic between "bios" and "thanatos," between life and death, where the choice of youth carries the hopes of a people yearning for rejuvenation. This quasi-ontological question that every individual carries within themselves becomes a collective issue.

In conclusion, the continuity of governments and societies must rely on youth to give meaning to existence. Our responsibility towards our children is to leave them with a better future. It is logical and healthy to entrust those among them who are most capable with the governance of a country when it concerns their ambition.

Cicero said that a politician should have the trust of their people, and the proof is before our eyes. It is time to pass the torch to the young, so that our countries can fully embrace the future that awaits them and allow the elderly to enjoy a well-deserved retirement, either at home or in specialized elderly care facilities, or even the very elderly.

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January 2024
