**A Quiet Generation? Now Hear This! (**Responses belowPublished: October 12, 2007)

To the Editor:

Re: “Generation Q,” by Thomas L. Friedman (column, Oct. 10):

I agree with Mr. Friedman’s perception of today’s college students as both optimistic and idealistic, but quiet? Not in the least.

Today’s college students may not be as outwardly radical as their 1960s counterparts, but their passion to change “the system” is still alive. What has altered is their approach. Protests, sit-ins and boycotts brought much-needed attention to the hot-button issues of the 60s and 70s, but these measures fell short of achieving their intended goal: change.

Students have learned from these shortcomings and recognize that paradigm-shifting change does not result from outside pressure. It must be pragmatic and must come from within. That is why students today who desire to make a difference in the world are pursuing engineering, law and business instead of — or in addition to — philosophy, religion and political science.

They are going to work in pinstripes, presenting to boards of directors the business case for sustainability. They view environmental and social problems as entrepreneurial opportunities and are forming companies to show Wall Street that people and profits are not mutually exclusive.

They are staking their professional reputations on their desire to prove that a triple-bottom-line business model (people, profits and planet) enhances a company’s brand, market position and financial future. And that takes courage.

Shannon Cox Baker, Boulder, Colo., 10/10/2007 The writer is a sustainable-building consultant.

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Thomas L. Friedman argues that “activism can only be uploaded, the old-fashioned way.”

But before Woodstock and Bob Dylan, members of a certain generation thought you could never instigate social change through a rock concert. My generation is realizing that old-fashioned modes of activism are just that — old-fashioned. They are proving to be ineffective in the context of our times.

Mr. Friedman may not see Facebook as a “substitute” for his generation’s tactics, but my generation needs to see the potential in creative, nuanced and unseen ways of getting our voices heard. We’ve already seen what big numbers on the Washington Mall can do. Now let’s see what else we can come up with.

Rochelle Terman, Chicago, 10/10/ 2007 The writer is student coordinator of human rights internships at the University of Chicago.

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As a college senior, I applaud Thomas L. Friedman’s exceedingly accurate description of what he calls “Generation Q.” That college campuses across this country, including my own here in Iowa, are not uproarious in the current political climate is inexplicable and inexcusable. It is a job for 20-somethings to light a fire under the country.

It is imperative that we abandon “virtual,” Facebook politics and obtain a more forceful, informed voice in the public discourse. America needs a jolt of activism and outrage. And we should be the ones willing, able and eager to provide it. Kenny Hood, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Oct. 10, 2007

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I think it is wonderful that students are so focused and diligent about how to effect change while staying healthy and essentially happy in their pursuits.

Unlike previous generations of activists who naïvely believed that the revolution was just around the corner, Generation Q knows that making meaningful social change is a lifelong commitment that will take many twists and turns. Courage is important, but so are patience, persistence and wisdom.

Each generation tackles its time in ways that are appropriate to the historical moment. There is so much that is wrong in our world. Let’s celebrate what is right about what Generation Q is doing. --Marea Siris Wexler, Northampton, Mass., Oct. 10, 2007

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Looking for “activism and outrage,” eh? Well, I’m happy to report that there are at least some of us in our 20s working overtime to shake things up.

Heard of [StepItUp2007.org](http://StepItUp2007.org) (where I am a national coordinator) or maybe [1skycampaign.org](http://1skycampaign.org) or perhaps [Powershift2007.org](http://Powershift2007.org)?

Before jumping to the conclusion that pointing people to Web sites is proving that our generation is “too online,” take a look at what we’re up to. More than anything we want a movement to take on global warming — to express our outrage and also our hope that we can do better.

We’re not just blogging and harnessing the power of online networks; we’re trying to inspire on-the-ground activism and political engagement. We’re using every tool we have, the Web included.

But we don’t just need more action from our generation. We need everyone to join the movement to fight global warming — now! Will Bates, Manchester, N.H., Oct. 10, 2007

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As a 20-something, I’d like to express this unfortunate truth with which I live: in a world built to make sure I succeed to the best of my ability, I am also warned to be cautious.

Don’t show your affiliations, we are urged, lest your ideology keep you from that school or job that would be the best for you and your future. So you purge your essay, résumé and Facebook page of any connection that might be unpalatable to potential employers and sacrifice part of your identity to the murky “what ifs” of the future. Maybe, in the worship of caution, we’ve lost our connection to those passion-inspiring causes and have become the quiet, inoffensive and ultimately employable Americans. --Melissa Sullivan, Boston, Oct. 10, 2007

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Maybe this generation has found a better way. Traditional-style outrage at everything wrong gave us an entire generation of yellers and screamers. They have yet to solve a single major problem despite decades of “outrage.” Maybe Generation Q is optimistic because it’s more interested in solving problems than in being “outraged.”

I have two children in college, and they see the problems we face. But they say they have no time for demonstrations and aren’t interested in posturing. They want to actually do something, to make a difference — and are confident they will.

Optimistic? With that kind of attitude, the same one that made our country great, Generation Q is setting an example more of us should follow. --John R. Bellucci, Marlboro, N.Y., Oct. 10, 2007

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As a retired marine and also a child of the 60s, I think that the problem, relative to “activism” and “outrage,” is quite simply that these words are now pejorative. Since Sept. 11, Americans have been told to no longer question authority and that you are either “for or against us.” This now thoroughly ingrained attitude restricts and inhibits the ability to champion beliefs that are unpopular or outrageous, let alone act on them.

--John Lepire, Newport Beach, Calif. 10/10/ 07

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I’d like to invite Thomas L. Friedman to visit my college. He will see that my generation is not the quiet generation. Yes, Denison University in Granville, Ohio, is a picturesque campus about as far away from the Iraq quagmire, Darfur and American poverty as one could get. But despite the unrealistic setting, we’re involved in tangible and significant ways with social activism.

Let’s give credit to those who carry out positive work and not dwell on the students who choose to spend more time on Facebook than out in the real world.

--Cara Downs, Granville, Ohio, Oct. 10, 2007