

# An Endangered Generation's Resilient Appeal

When thinking of generations at risk, we normally refer to the younger generations. We wonder if they will be able to find their place in a world where things like getting a job, starting a family, making ends meet, finding resources to access higher education, receiving social recognition for deserved merits, and so forth, are becoming increasingly difficult. We also worry about the fact that often they cannot cope with the growing pressure put on them by society. Many of them are in fact becoming psychologically frailer and frailer, we find them frequently seized by panic attacks, they lack resilience, and some of them are either at the mercy of an illusory desire and deceiving prospect of easy success, or of a general feeling of frustration, or perhaps of both. There is the risk that they might lose their way or never find it.

Surely, we should not stop worrying about the young, but the coronavirus emergency has made us set our eyes on a different generation, the one that seen as a group, not in the specificity of individual families, is at best taken for granted, and at worst seen as a problem in itself. We could clearly perceive this at the beginning of the spread of the contagion, when the first deaths arrived in our country and the media kept reassuring everyone that it was 'just the elderly who were dying'. No less painful was the idea that, due to the lack of intensive care units, doctors were sometimes faced with the difficult choice of deciding who was more likely to make it, and we can presume that the elderly were often the ones who got the worst. We all know that especially in the north of Italy, like in the Bergamo area, almost an entire generation has been wiped away by the virus. And we know that so far, several RSAs (health residences for the elderly) have been dramatically affected by the virus, among them the notorious *Pio Albergo Trivulzio* in Milan, nicknamed *La Baggina*, the shelter of underprivileged elderly people since the eighteenth century. The imbalance between the importance given by our society to economic development and to those human roots that connect our past to our present has significantly emerged in the difficult contingency brought about by the coronavirus.

But we also know that grandmothers and grandfathers do not want to be totally crippled by events; with an incredible power of resilience they want to fight back against the risk of oblivion, and here is a very interesting example. Annamaria Bagordo Altamura, a granny of two, has recently made an appeal to grandparents,



*Grandmother & grandchild, Spain 1956.  
Photographer Bill Perlmutter. [www.keblog.it](http://www.keblog.it)*

inviting them to use this suspended time in lockdown to put down into writing their own histories. She has invited them to include not just personal family events, but also an outlook on the ever-changing society in which they have lived, because looking at it from the inside means producing something unique, something that no external writer could ever express. This is in fact social history narrated from the inside. The invitation has been welcomed by the local administration and the *Casa della Memoria e della Pace di Lucca* is now available to receive and diffuse the personal memoirs which can be accompanied by photographs.

It is certainly understood that the stories of those who do not have any grandchildren are equally important. Their voice must be heard through writing probably even more, as they do not have the opportunity to pass it on through oral transmission, to younger next of kin. The whole of the elderly generation represents that common cultural heritage which can contribute to teach the young how to face the challenges of contemporary society, as Annamaria Bagordo Altamura says: *We are physically the weakest, but we are the strongest in terms of courage, self-sacrifice, endurance and determination. The knowledge of the past can help you make the right choices in the present.*

– by Chiara Calabrese

Send your history to  
[casadellamemoria@comune.lucca.it](mailto:casadellamemoria@comune.lucca.it)



*The author with her Nonna Teresa*

[<< home](#) [Click here to read an article from last month:](#) [>>](#)