



YOUTHQUAKE

by Erin Renzi

Gen Zers are known for their drive to create change— scroll through social media or walk on any college campus and you will hear conversations surrounding our current political climate and social justice movements. Unique and expressive fashion trends go hand in hand with these movements, supporting the goals of the world's youth. As seen with Gen Z, self-expression and comfortability in one's self often prompts outward political expression.

The intersection of these ideals have prompted a "youthquake" in recent years. Youthquake is defined as a significant cultural, political, or social change arising from the actions or influence of young people. While the history of the word takes root in a fashion movement of the 1960s, many would argue that in 2022, we are in the midst of a youthquake.



In 1965, Vogue editor-in-chief Diana Vreeland coined the term youthquake. According to Vanity Fair, Vreeland invented the word to describe “Swinging London” in the 1960s, which was a youth-driven cultural revolution in the United Kingdom during the age of the British Invasion and World War II. At the movement’s center stood the ideas of modernity and fun-loving hedonism, which is a series of theories that all value pleasure. The rejection of traditional ideals of femininity during the ‘50s as a result of women’s newfound economic, sexual, and social independence is also thought to have put Youthquake into motion.

Complimentary to the movement, London’s youth engaged in Beatlemania and wore miniskirts, which were included in luxury designer’s spring lines. Designers incorporated industrial plastics, metallic fibers, and jumpsuits as an homage to the Space Age trend A-line silhouettes and bold colors were all the rage. Youthquake also influenced the rise of boutiques, where couture houses carried pieces influenced by these new trends that were mass produced for lower prices. The popularity of boutiques also contributed to the closing of several couture houses, such as Balenciaga.

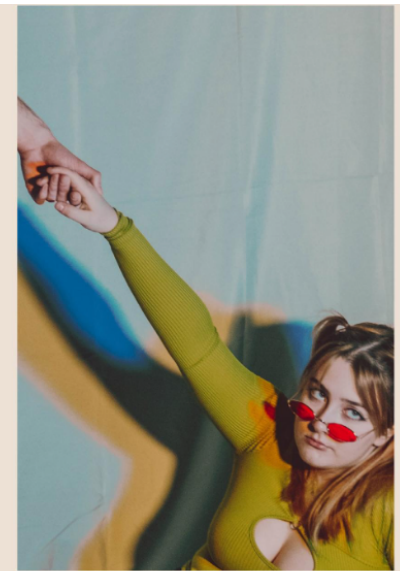
In 2017, Oxford Dictionary proclaimed youthquake the word of the year. With all of the political and social movements occurring in 2017, this is fitting. 2017 marked the year of the #MeToo campaign and the start of Trump’s presidency, which prompted The Women’s March to demand gender equality and other civil rights issues. Protestors wore pink pussy hats and T-shirts with feminist slogans.

In 2022, we are in the midst of another youthquake, or rather, still in the era of the youthquake that began in 2017. The 2020 presidential election inspired Gen Z to call for change in the current government administration. With Gen Z rooting for Biden and the dismantling of conspiracy theories spread by right-wing subcultures concerning mail-in ballots and voting, there was significant pushback from America’s youth when the capitol was stormed on January 6th, 2020 as well as around COVID-19 misinformation perpetrated by our nation’s leaders.



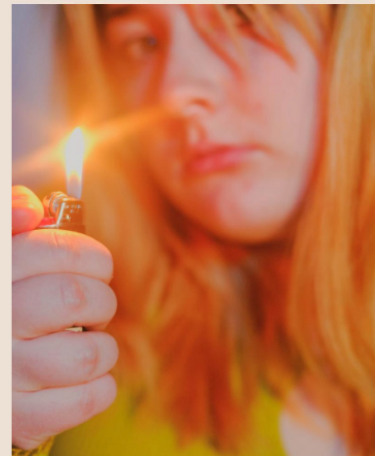
According to “7 Fashion Trends That Will Be Big in 2022,” an article published by Elle, youthquake trends that were popular in the ‘60s will dominate this year, including the miniskirt in low-rise and high-rise styles and bold and sparkly fabrics. At the time of the original youthquake, these trends were considered subversive because they challenged the status quo and what was currently seen as “in fashion.” Today, popular retailers incorporate youthquake ideals directly into their lines. Free People’s “We The Free” collection includes bold essential pieces like the “Youthquake Crop Flare Jeans,” a high rise pant that is tight in the thighs and bells out at the knees.

Fashion pieces that align with youthquake ideals aren’t limited to eccentric patterns and unique silhouettes. Today’s youth incorporate important social causes as part of their fashion statements. Dylan Scott, a junior visual media arts major, demonstrates queer empowerment through supporting clothing brand Lockwood51. The company is queer owned and operated, and Scott creates promotional videos for the brand. Both he and his boyfriend own several t-shirts and hoodies from the brand, their favorite being one that says “Destroy racism / destroy sexism / destroy homophobia / destroy transphobia” in a bold font.



“It’s not corporate pride stuff like Target and all those companies that make stuff to profit off and slap a rainbow on so people will buy it, and then don’t actually do anything for the community,” Scott said.

Sustainable fashion is another important aspect of the current youthquake era. As Vogue highlights in their recent project “Youthquake,” where they looked at 41 Gen Z creators from 24 countries, youthquake fashion trends can range from hand-made knit pieces to sustainable workwear. During the first youthquake in the ‘60s, sustainable fashion wasn’t at the forefront of the movement. Mass production of clothing sold in boutiques led to poor working conditions and manufacturing processes that were not environmentally conscious. This is ironic considering that youthquakes stem from subversive intentions.



In the past few years, thrifting has become an integral part of Gen Z culture and fashion. Social media has helped with popularizing shopping second hand. Those who are on “Thrift Tok,” the side of TikTok where creators film videos shopping at local thrift stores and hauls of items they have bought, have been influenced to shop sustainably. While trend cycles rotate quickly, thrifting is one that has stuck with the Gen Z crowd.

“Even if something is ethically sourced, just buying secondhand and just consuming less in general is the best thing you can do for the environment,” Scott said. He loves to go thrift shopping for jeans, and buy band t-shirts and other unique pieces from secondhand online stores like Depop.

Elements of pop culture also help Gen Z step into their own styles and unique fashion choices. Season two of HBO’s television series “Euphoria” inspires many of the eccentric fashion trends youth love today, including strappy clothing, iridescent glitter, and rhinestones incorporated into eye makeup looks. Seeing popular actors and actresses sport bold looks helps viewers feel more empowered to express themselves through their own fashion choices.

As an avid lover of fashion and “Euphoria” I was fascinated by the character Cassie Howard, played by Sydney Sweeney, and the evolution of her style. Cassie felt as though she had lost all control and desperately sought validation from Nate Jacobs. In effort to get Nate to notice her, Cassie woke up at 4:00 a.m. every morning to get ready. One day, she dressed like Jules, half of her blonde hair in two high ponytails and bright pink triangular eyeshadow. Another day, she dressed just like Maddy, hair in a high ponytail, rhinestone eyeliner, and an outfit that was almost identical to her supposed best friend’s.

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When one feels as though they have lost all power, trying to regain that power through fashion can make it feel as though you are once again in control. This is seen time and time again with Gen Z as we navigate our current world and the youthquake we have insinuated. Climate change is too big an issue to solve alone, and so we shop sustainably. The government is trying to control women’s reproductive rights, so we wear pink vulvas on T-shirts and dress provocatively. The rights of the LGBTQ+ community are in jeopardy, so we wear clothing that symbolizes queer impowerment.

Youthquake and the social movements and trends that come with it aren’t going where. During a time when the world is constantly changing and normal ceases to exist, youthquake is more prominent than ever.

