



1819 NEWS

Allen Mendenhall: Dealing with the anger of the manosphere

[Allen Mendenhall](#) | 10.05.26



(Pxhere)

If you haven't heard, or haven't taken rooms on X, the young men are angry. Angry the way a kettle is angry: steadily, audibly and with little notion what to do about the steam.

We've been here before. England's "[Angry Young Men](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angry_young_men)" of the 1950s, [Kingsley Amis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingsley_Amis) among them, one of my dearest favorites, scowled their way through a disenchanted decade with real flair. Yet this time feels different, perhaps because I am living it and know the earlier episodes only as one knows a faded photograph of a house fire: the smoke is on the page, but the heat is not on the face.

I learned just lately that I'm *not* one of the angry young men. My frustrations are in excellent repair, but at 43, I've been stricken from the roll of youth like a name scratched from a guest list by a cold hand.

This news came, as bad news does, dressed as a pleasantry. Asked at dinner whether I was a Swiftie, I said yes with radiant sincerity, thinking of the Dean of St. Patrick's, [Jonathan Swift](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Swift), and his famous [modest proposal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Modest_Proposal). I held forth for some time before my interlocutor explained the Taylor phenomenon to me.

Not long after, I met [Dr. J.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Erving), a man who once floated through the air like a rumor of the divine. I was so giddy that I told a young colleague the instant I reached the office. "Who's Dr. J?" she asked. "A professor?"

But here's the point, and the record will bear me out: these young men have reasons for their anger. They were handed an economy they did not build and cannot easily enter. Houses cost too much, college costs more, and the debt that pays for it trails a recent graduate the way a bad reputation trails a reprobate through a small town.

Starting a family is more expensive by the year, and the old ladder of accumulation, homeownership chief among its rungs, has lost several steps.

Small wonder the statist, socialist nostrums find a hearing. I was a lefty once myself, when I was in college, and I know how a guy in want of a grievance becomes a guy in want of a system. That the ideas are false does not make their allure a mystery.

My own experience and the [testimony of others](#)

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2024/11/the-elite-college-students-who-cant-read-books/679945/>) suggest that students increasingly cannot read, and will not wrestle with, difficult texts. They were reared on the snippet: excerpts for books, test

preparation for thought, credentials for learning, conformity for inquiry. Add the smartphone, that small glowing slot machine of the attention, and the mixture is combustible.

They are not wholly to blame. They inherited a schooling where the formation of the mind was swapped for therapy, DEI programming, and activism in pedagogical garb. But there comes a point when responsibility drifts back to the individual, as a boat drifts home on the tide. A free man can be held to account: You must read the books; you must study; you must learn what is hard and, now and again, dull. No professor can be blamed forever for a discipline you declined to acquire.

Consider the latest jobs reports, which show several million job openings across the country. The notion that one must land the dream title, or redeem the world, before one begins is a luxury and, frankly, a delusion. There's work to be done, and it wants doing. Rise from the sofa, take the job, earn the experience and climb the honest way: one rung, then the next.

I have more to say, but let me close on a larger matter. There's such a thing as righteous anger. The Psalmist counsels, "Be angry, and sin not," and Paul repeats it to the Ephesians; Christ, whip in hand, cleared the Temple of its money-changers.

But anger is a voracious tenant. It moves in, wrecks the furniture of the mind, and bolts the door against reflection.

The Greeks knew it. In the [Oresteia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oresteia) of [Aeschylus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeschylus), the [Furies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erinyes), those ancient hounds of blood-vengeance, pursue Orestes through the dark for the killing of his mother, murder answering murder with no exit. The genius of Athens was to give that fury a home. Athena convenes a court, a jury votes, the public looks on, and the Furies, persuaded, become the Eumenides, the "kindly

ones.” Wrath is not extinguished but seated, bound to procedure, open argument, and law. It was a great civilizational achievement, and we should not sneer at it.

Yet law alone leaves something behind. The resentment, the bitterness, the angst still smolders in the man who loses, patient as an ember under ash.

Christianity offers what the Athenian court could not: forgiveness, the power to let go. The relief of it is not merely private. Multiplied across individuals, it becomes the ground of a gentler civilization, where the blood feud gives way to neighbors, where you can let go of hate.

None of this says the young men lack cause. It says only that a man must govern his anger, lest it govern him. Freedom is the power to choose the good; the man enslaved by his resentment has surrendered the very liberty he imagines he is defending and will soon help build, with his own furious hands, the very house he hates.

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