

“OK, Boomer!”: Not Okay In the Office

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As [recently highlighted by the New York Times](#), a new phrase emblematic of the real or perceived “War Between the Generations” has gone viral: “[OK, Boomer!](#)” The phrase, popularized on the Internet and, in particular, Twitter by Generation Z and Millennials, has been used to dismiss baby boomers’ thoughts and opinions, sometimes viewed by younger generations as paternalistic or just out of step.

And, the phrase isn’t just living in Twitter feeds and the comments sections of opinion pieces. There is “OK, Boomer!” merchandise and, just last week, a 25 year-old member of the New Zealand Parliament [used the phrase](#) to dismiss a fellow lawmaker’s perceived heckling during a debate about climate change.

While many may find “OK, Boomer!” a harmless way to point out generational differences, the phrase’s popularity could lead to problems once it creeps into the workplace. Age (over 40) is a protected category under both California law (*i.e.*, the Fair Employment and Housing Act) and federal law (*i.e.*, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act). Whether the speaker is well-intentioned or not, dismissive attitudes about older workers could form the basis of claims for [discrimination and/or harassment](#). And, as one radio host recently opined, the phrase “OK, Boomer!” may be regarded by some as an [outright slur](#).

Generation Z and Millennial employees understand that using derogatory or dismissive comments related to gender, race, religion, national origin, disability and sexual orientation are inappropriate. Yet, for some reason, some may not have made the leap with regard to insidious/disparaging comments about a co-worker’s age. Given the [prevalence of age discrimination lawsuits](#), employers should take heed and consider reminding their workforce about the impropriety of this and other age-related phrases, and train their employees to leave the generation wars at the door.

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