The notion of \textit{age} of elements of complex linear groups was introduced by M. Reid and is of importance in algebraic geometry, in particular in the study of crepant resolutions and of quotients of Calabi-Yau varieties. In this paper, we solve a problem raised by J. Kollár and M. Larsen on the structure of finite irreducible linear groups generated by elements of \textit{age} \leq 1. More generally, we bound the dimension of finite irreducible linear groups generated by elements of bounded deviation. As a consequence of our main results, we derive some properties of symmetric spaces $GU_d(\mathbb{C})/G$ having shortest closed geodesics of bounded length, and of quotients $\mathbb{C}^d/G$ having a crepant resolution. (Received September 16, 2009)