



# IT'S ABOUT TIME

Let's

Talk

About

A G E I S M

IT'S ABOUT TIME: The Zine  
It's a project report  
in a handmade magazine

March 2023

## It's About Time

Welcome to our zine *It's About Time – Let's Talk About Ageism*.

It's about TIME, given how much ageism is tolerated and even encouraged in our society.

It's about TIME, because that's what it takes to observe, know, and name our assumptions about age.

It's ABOUT time and our relationship with and beliefs about our future selves.

The New Horizons for Seniors Program funded Ottawa Valley Community Arts to explore ageism by bringing together a small group of older and younger people to participate in dialogue and art-making across generations.

This group met weekly from September to November 2022. We shared experiences of ageism and then created print and sound projects to raise awareness of the issues. Participants chose the messages they wanted to convey in this zine and created much of its content. They also conducted field interviews with members of the community to give voice to their stories. The edited interviews have a permanent home on Ottawa Valley Community Arts' website (ov-caos.org).

We partnered with the Senior Active Living Centre (SALC), Madawaska Valley District High School, and Barry's Bay and Area Home Support. We called on experts in the community to facilitate the process and bring people together for an ageism awareness event. A big thank you to everyone involved in the project.

*And welcome to our zine. We figured....It's About Time!*

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## What is Ageism?

Ageism happens when age is used to justify stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, injustice, and unequal treatment.

## Why Challenging Ageism Matters

Among older people, ageism is associated with poorer physical and mental health, increased social isolation and loneliness, greater financial insecurity, decreased quality of life and premature death (World Health Organization—WHO).

*And* it's not only older people who experience ageism:

**Ageism against younger people** is found in many areas such as employment, health, housing and politics where younger people's voices are often denied or dismissed (WHO).

Ageism is based on three things: stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination:

- **Stereotypes** define how we **think about** age – e.g. being old is associated with being frail, forgetful, and foolish while young people are seen as lazy and disrespectful.
- **Prejudice** is an unfounded feeling or **belief** based on how a person looks, their age, or ethnic background. Prejudice can lead to discrimination.
- **Discrimination** is an action. For example, workplace hiring practices may be based on the belief that some people are too old to work and others are too young and inexperienced for the job.

***Yo, are you ageist?***

Find out at <https://yoisthisageist.com/>

## Ageism Affects Everyone



## Notes from the Project Coordinator

By Kathy Blomquist

It doesn't take long to realize that any time you are dealing with a negative 'ism' – racism, sexism, classism – you'll be exploring stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination embedded in our personal and social narratives.

In this project, I wanted to create an experience where a diverse group could look at the one 'ism' that everyone is exposed to on very personal levels all their lives—Ageism. How we're treated based on our age has huge impacts in what we believe about ourselves and others and the aging process.

Working with our participants has made me realize how we all want the freedom to choose our own path in life and to find an identity that suits us becoming our authentic selves. No matter how old or young we are.

Stereotypes about each other—negative or positive—remove opportunities to really listen to each other and understand differences.

- Not all younger people see themselves as young.
- Not all older people see themselves as old.



Below are two photos of my Grandma Edna, one at age 5 and one at 95. When I was 5, she let me roam free with residents at the Care Home where she worked as a nurse. I remember dressing two of the residents up in toilet paper and flowers for a pretend wedding.



Grandmothers on both sides of my family lived long and loving lives. My love for them influenced the paths I've chosen since I was 5 years old.

This Zine is dedicated to their wisdom and humour and curiosity.

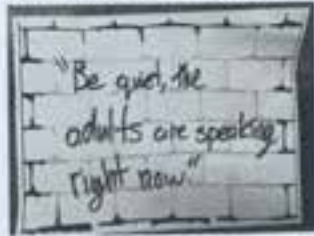
Thanks Edna Blomquist, Ruby Knutson and Bertha Aaseby!





## Young people experience ageism too!

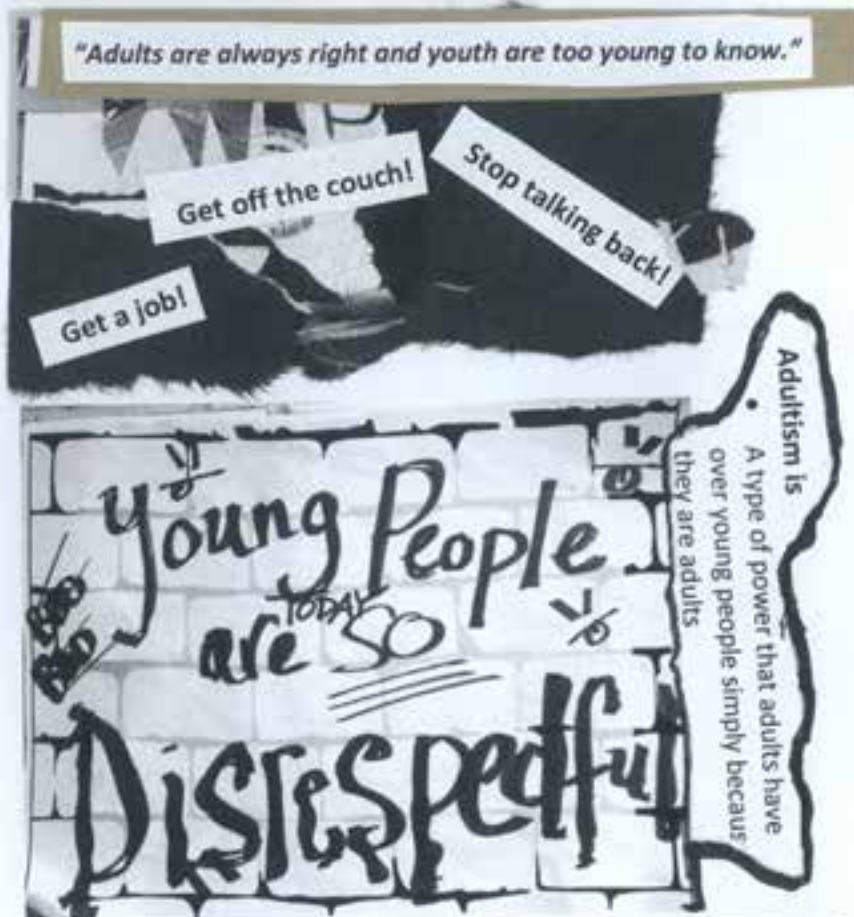
In a session focussing on ageism experienced by young people, participants created a Myth Wall and then added comments that challenged those myths.



### The Myth Wall: Themes

Young people spoke about being disrespected, not being listened to, and not being taken seriously. They noted that older people see them as irresponsible, unwilling to work, and too

young to be stressed.



Comments were then added to the wall to counter and respond to the myths:

People think I'm too young to do something, but then they also say, "you're too old for that."







# Disrupt Ageism

**WHAT IS AGE QUEER?**  
"Simply put it is the refusal to conform to the social constructs of age-rejecting — the young/Old binary, embracing the measurement of time without clinging to the idea that time is linear."  
(Ryan Backer at [www.ageactivism.com/age-queer-zine/](http://www.ageactivism.com/age-queer-zine/))

## Disrupt Ageism

Talk with people older and younger than yourself. Develop intergenerational friendships.

## Disrupt Ageism

Conversations are like drops of water. Just as one can create countless ripples, one conversation can have countless effects on those involved and their connections. Use language that invites a conversation, listen and try to find some common ground. You want to include each other and not shut each other down.

*Did you know:* Positive beliefs about getting older have been shown to increase longevity by an average of 7.5 years (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2002, 83 (2): 261-270)

## Disrupt Ageism

Naming it - Don't need to be polite. Don't need to be rude. Focus on being direct and use the power of your own voice.

## Adultism is

- A type of power that adults have over young people simply because they are adults



Use the arts to raise awareness and influence views and attitudes [artagainstageism.org](http://artagainstageism.org)

*"I'm learning a lot about change, and if you go too fast, it doesn't work. Make little changes and go slow,"*  
17-year-old participant

*"Lead with love, low ego, high impact, and move at the speed of trust."*

- Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullers  
Guidelines for Black Lives Matter





## Reflections: The Circle of Aging

By Doug Delamatter

I have noticed over my years that my approach to life, and that of many friends, seems to follow a great circle.

In youth, I tended to alternate between being unfocussed and having concentrated thoughts. The infinite possibilities of the future were confusing and intimidating, and I wondered if I could keep up and if I would ever measure up. I wanted to fit in, and also to stand out. My opinions were definite and idealistic: *"This is Wrong so we should stop doing it."* Like many youth today, I was empathetic and principled and impatient. I wanted to fix everything that appeared unfair. I was focussed on the future, usually with optimism: *"Someday I'll be able to do that / fix that."*

In **middle age**, my principles may not have changed a lot, but the focus shifted inward. I had responsibilities to my family, my job, and my community. In those years, it was easier to say, *"Someone should fix that, but it's not my problem."*

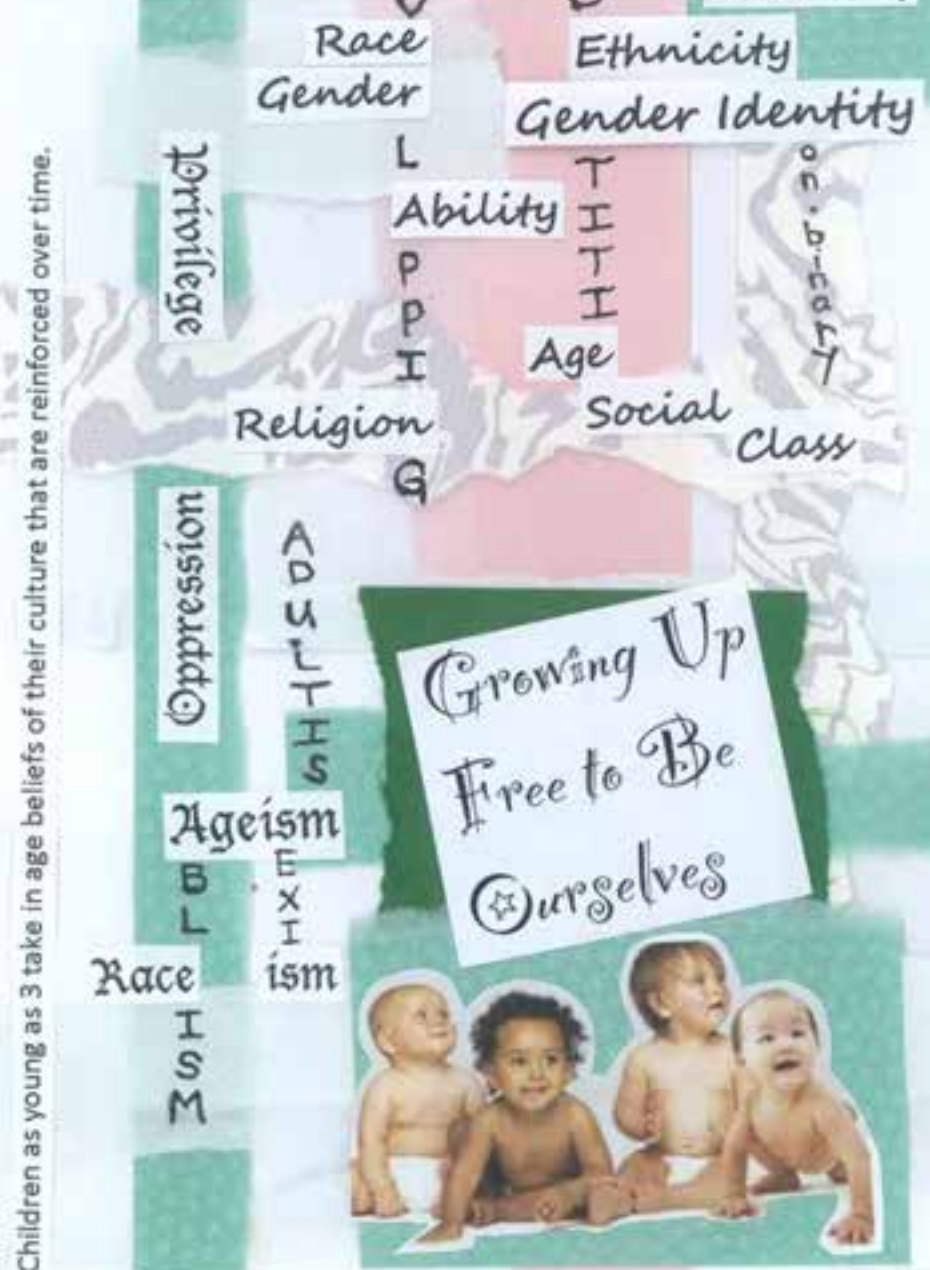


As an **older person**, I find that empathy and altruism have returned to the forefront of my thinking. I look at our public services and see the decline. I think, *"We used to be able to do that."* I feel more responsible for the future I am leaving, the closer the time of departure gets. I say things like, *"Everyone deserves kindness and fair treatment."* *"Greed is the main problem."* *"We can go so much farther when everyone is willing to help each other."*

I see now how much I have in common with my younger self. But I also admit, *"I used to be able to..."* and *"someone else will have to do that."*

*Doug, a photographer and retired high school teacher, returned to Madawaska Valley High to participate in this project*

## Intersectionality (isms and identities)



Children as young as 3 take in age beliefs of their culture that are reinforced over time.

## Ageism - What Can I Do?

### Listen, listen, listen

How people talk provides insights into what they believe. "Words are important. Language is not just a medium, like a water pipe, it is a reflection of how we think" (Rybczynski, 1986). Listen as well to how you talk to yourself.

### Shed Light on Assumptions

Most ageism is more thoughtless than malicious and often said with entirely good intentions. Referring to a neighbour as a 'sweet old dear who looks good for her age', even when said as a compliment, is based on a false assumption that people of a certain age should look a certain way.

If you see or hear something you think is ageist, don't launch an attack, start a conversation to help raise awareness.

***"Ageism really impacts young minds more than I thought."*** (a young participant)

### OFFER A COUNTEREXAMPLE

Gently challenge people who say "all Boomers" or "all Millennials" do something. We might respond with: "Why do you believe that?" or "What experiences have you had?" or "Have you ever been stereotyped because of your age? Tell me about that."



Time Time



### ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO THINK DEEPER.

For instance, if someone says a politician, writer or artist is "too old" or "too young," we might answer, "I try to think about what they are doing, not how old they are."





## The Role of Dialogue in Challenging Ageism

Conversation can play an important role in challenging ageist stereotypes. This was mentioned by many project participants.

One-on-one and small group conversations—if people feel safe enough to speak honestly—can change both minds and hearts.



*“Our words matter: Changing the way we talk will change attitudes about aging, and ultimately, will advance policies and programs that support us at every stage and age of life.”*  
(reframingaging.org)



A number of participants said they were already bringing ageism into their conversations with friends and family.

Future actions could include:

- Bringing discussions of ageism into the public and into schools
- Discussing how age is viewed in different cultures
- Creating a short play or audio story
- Holding more intergenerational gatherings.



This collage suggests that even difficult conversations can lead to positive outcomes. It takes courage to stay in the conversation, to listen with compassion, and speak with respect. In the centre of the conversation, an answer may emerge.





**"A just society ensures that everyone, regardless of age, can participate and contribute..."**

Equality Rights are recognized in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

15(1) Everyone is equal and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, especially discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability (Constitution Act, 1982).

**What we learned from the younger participants:**

- how much ageism and adultism affect their lives
- how important issues of identity are, including using each person's preferred pronouns—*they/them, she/her, and he/his*
- the importance of respecting what people say, no matter how young or old they are.

No one is asking for special treatment just equal treatment and freedom to chose your own path in life.

**Self-Respect is different from disrespect**

Young people just want to be heard  
Older people just want to be heard  
Hey, maybe everyone wants to be heard  
Maybe we should listen, eh?



Some Good Resources  
← Some of the It's About Time participants

Websites

- This Chair Rocks [www.thischairrocks.com](http://www.thischairrocks.com)
- Old School Anti-Ageism Clearinghouse [www.oldschool.info](http://www.oldschool.info)
- Pioneer Network [www.pioneernetwork.net](http://www.pioneernetwork.net)
- Reframing Aging - Gerontological Society of America [www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org)
- Let's Stop Ageism - Alberta - <https://acaging.ca>

- Age Queer - Ryan Backer [www.ageactivism.com/age-queer-zine](http://www.ageactivism.com/age-queer-zine)
- WHO Global Report on Ageism <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/combatting-ageism/global-report-on-ageism>
- Facing Adultism Toolkit <https://freechild.org/2022/06/16/adultism/comment-page-1/>

Campaigns

- Global Campaign to Combat Ageism - World Health Organization
- Every Age Counts - Australia

Books

- Breaking the Age Code: How Your Beliefs about Ageing Determine How Long and Well you Live* by Becca Levy, PhD
- Successful Aging* by Daniel J. Levitin (2020)

YouTube

- Aging Crème - Toronto [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFBis\\_a3Bn0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFBis_a3Bn0)
- Drivers of Ageism - Australia <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNPwV1a9OA>

→ Disrupt Ageism - <https://gerontology.chp.vcu.edu/about-us/disrupt-ageism/>



# IT'S ABOUT TIME

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