



Age and Youth in Action

**Statement of Gray Panthers
Authored by Gray Panthers Summer Interns
Sixth Session of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing
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My name is Florence Shen, a summer intern with the Gray Panthers, NYC Network. I am honored to speak on behalf of the five Gray Panthers interns, and to share our perspective about aging with you.

During our research and communication with a wide range of countries in the past two months, we were glad to see the growing interest in addressing issues of age in many parts of the world. Meanwhile, we also realized older people are still excluded in various policies and processes of data collection, at both the national and the global levels. We were shocked to find out the abominable situation and the lack of adequate grievance procedures in nursing homes in one of the most developed countries, and we were concerned about how the lack of basic literacy among older persons in the least developed nations keeps them from adjusting to this fast changing world. Moreover, we learned to look at everything through the lens of ageism, whether it is in the workplace or regarding public transportation, and we kept it in mind that populations are aging rapidly across the globe.

We, and many other people at our age, were never made aware of these issues before, which is a serious omission in education and in the global discussion. Ageism has taken a backseat to other serious issues, such as racism and homophobia, that get more attention in the media and we talk more about in everyday life. This makes it even more important to educate the public on issues of ageism and to increase intergenerational communication. That's why we, the Gray Panthers interns, are here today to contribute to the intergenerational dialogue on ageism. We are here to help put a face to an important ally of older people, and of combating ageism as a whole.

Many of you may wonder why younger persons like us are concerned with aging issues. A lot of us realize that older people are resources, not burdens, for the whole society. A lot of us realize that to help older people is to help ourselves, because we all age. A lot of us realize that as the world gets older, issues regarding older persons will become more prevalent and severe, making it crucial to address these issues now. A lot of

us realize that this intergenerational dialogue, and intergenerational alliance, is necessary to build the coalition that is needed to increase ageism awareness, and hopefully to bring ageism to an end.

There are a lot of people in our generation who want to work with older persons in dealing with ageism. Unfortunately, there are many others in our generation who are either unaware of or don't fully understand how prevalent ageism is throughout the world. Our generation has already been the driving force in several important issues today, such as marriage equality, and we are going to play an even larger role in leading social progress in the future. It is therefore important that more young people recognize and become motivated to address issues of age.

We hope that the education and discussion on these issues spreads beyond the confines of the Gray Panthers interns, and beyond the confines of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing. We hope that the education and discussion on ageism spreads globally to all generations of people. If this dream becomes a reality, the generation which we are a part of will become more capable allies of older people than we currently are.

Thank you, and we wish nothing but success for the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing.

Florence Shen, Colgate University
Brendan Birth, Dickinson College
Mallory Shaner, Colgate University
Scott Levinson, Colgate University
Jason Magaziner, Carleton College

For further information about Gray Panthers, please contact:
Jack Kupferman, Gray Panthers, NYC Network
917 535 0457
www.graypanthersnyc.org