

The charity fighting for a generation

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In 2018 it is easy for a voice to go unheard, but in today's turbulent society, in an ageing population, The Gray Panthers refuse to let ageism encompass the world we live in.

When Maggie Kuhn founded the Gray Panthers in 1970, she was vigorously resisting a forced retirement and it wasn't long before Gray Panthers expanded their activism and advocacy to focus on more issues, including cuts to Medicare and Social Security and protesting the Viet Nam War, the latter bringing many enthusiastic young people into the organization.

But 48 years later, how is the world coping with a growing ageing population?

Jack Kupferman, a lifelong advocate for older persons, currently serves as President of Gray Panthers, NYC Network and he states it's a matter of urgency. After spending his childhood at the family-run rest home for the elderly in Rockland County, New York, Jack's passion for activism came to life after spending time with many fascinating personalities, with infinite stories to tell.

For more information about a Gray Panthers internship see: <http://www.graypanthersnyc.org>



President of Gray Panthers, Jack Kupferman explained:

“There have always been children, there have always been a lot of young people. But, now the world has never seen the dramatic increase in the number of older persons. As they age, it’s easy for them to not be thought of and remain invisible”.

Globally, Kupferman has had a key role in assuring that the concerns of older persons are prominently featured in the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. He also co-chairs a small fund to promote innovations in ageing services for NGOs in the least developed nations.

One project funded microfinance-lending opportunities for older women in rural Pakistan. A more recent project addresses basic literacy needs for older persons

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in the least developed countries. In partnership with other passionate advocates, his leadership in building coalitions that work toward a global instrument to protect the human rights of older persons are ongoing and effective.

Today, not only do The Gray Panthers work closely with the United Nations, and NGO'S in developing countries it also works closely with its own community to initiate effective change.

Which is why one of the Gray Panthers main priorities is about the quality of care for older persons, those who are most vulnerable. For instance, Gray Panthers' concern sparked a thorough examination of regulations of New York's Nursing Home enforcement mechanisms.

Whilst the protection of the ageing individuals has always been a priority for the organisation it went above expectation with its role in examining Emergency Planning concerns for older persons and those with functional needs after Superstorm Sandy which cost \$68.7 billion in damage across the US, with New York being declared in a state of 'Major Disaster'

"The Gray Panthers envisions a world where the old and the young have much to contribute to make our society more just and humane, and in which each reinforces the other in goals, strategy, and action."

"Gray Panthers NYC deems the current threat to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid to be a matter of urgency. We commit to initiating and/or supporting whatever actions necessary to defend against the diminution or elimination of essential services designed to keep older persons living with independence and out of poverty."

Importantly, in his work-a-day capacity at the NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA), he successfully supervised and enhanced the appeals process for the NYC Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption program – NYC's \$100 million programs for rental assistance for seniors – during the period it was administered by DFTA. Among other current responsibilities, Jack oversees contractors providing legal assistance to NYC's seniors.

With the importance of inter-generational solidarity at the heart of the charity, Kupferman has developed an internship program for motivated college students to become agents of change for ageing.

In fact, creating awareness of the risks of ageism among the younger generation is crucial. “It’s not taking care of the elderly, its taking care of us. We are all going to be old. We’re all dying, that’s why it concerns us all”.

Whilst the Gray Panthers like many charities in the 21st century gain publicity through the media, it is reliant on its volunteers to actively resist ageism in its mission for protection and equality. Which is why in true Gray Panthers style, it’s internships are open to applicants from all backgrounds, even going a step further and offering virtual internships, to not discriminate against overseas candidates.

So what is it like to work, shadowing some of the most influential people in the state of New York?

Joe Belletti, a Gray Panther's intern, told all.

“A Gray Panthers internship gives an inspiring cause, a great purpose, and a great deal to learn. However, while all of these things are fantastic, there is something this internship gave me that is perhaps better: Inspirational people. While working at Gray Panthers this summer I was surrounded by truly sensational people dedicated to fighting ageism, true celebrities in the world of ageism advocacy.”

In 2050, there are to be an estimated 2 billion people over the age of 60, but with that figure representing a quarter of the current world population, we are certain of one thing. This generation cannot be ignored. For the sake of us all.