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AGE AND YOUTH IN ACTION



Gray Panthers Calls for Seniors' Right to Be Heard in PPW Bike Lane Debate; Condemns Ageist, Hate-Filled Language Designed to Dismiss Seniors' Safety Concerns

[Gray Panthers, NYC Network](#), one of the City's oldest advocacy groups, today condemned the horrible ageist commentary that has characterized much of the debate surrounding the Prospect Park West bike lane and called for seniors' right to be heard.

"The amount of hateful, snarky, and dismissive ageist remarks that we have seen in the debate about the Prospect Park West (PPW) bike lane is incredible," said Jack Kupferman, NYC Network Co-Convenor. "We must fight ageism everywhere, and many people have belittled seniors who have real concerns about the safety of the PPW bike lane, many of whom belong to Seniors for Safety and Neighbors for Better Bike Lanes, simply because they are over the age of 55. While we are not taking sides in the bike lane debate, we do soundly support seniors' right to be heard and we condemn those who would shy away from real debate by resorting to name calling and abusive language based solely on age," he added.

"It's clear that a large percentage of seniors have legitimate safety concerns about the PPW bike lane, and those concerns need to be taken seriously. A poll by Assemblymember Brennan shows, for example, that 73% of those polled who are age 50 or older feel less safe or no safer since that bike lane was installed. If we really believe in democracy and vigorous debate, then we cannot dismiss this group based on age. Imagine the cry that would have gone up if there had been racist remarks used to dismiss legitimate concerns about the bike lane. We feel the same way about

ageist remarks; they are always unacceptable and are a way to keep seniors' voices from being heard," said Mary Springer, NYC Network Co-Convenor.

Here are remarks from one commenter: "Can't these folks move to Florida already? Plenty of room for parking down there. And they probably won't live long enough to experience what climate change has in store for the Sunshine State."

Another commenter found it necessary to cite the age of some of the leaders of Seniors for Safety and Neighbors for Better Bike Lanes: "Let's be generous and say that Jasmine Melzer was 30 when this story was published. That would make her near 60 now, but she's probably older. Lois Carswell is 78, according to a few reports where she's quoted. Norman Steisel is pushing 70. Louise Hainline graduated from college in 1969. If she was 22 when she graduated she'd be about 64 right now. Marty Markowitz is 66. How selfish to waste your golden years fighting against the future."

"One commenter actually listed the address of one of the senior leaders; what was the point of that exactly? It certainly feels threatening and cannot in any way lead to rational debate. We saw another comment that wished one of the leaders a heart attack. This is no way to conduct a public debate," said Kupferman.

"As our founder, Maggie Kuhn said, 'Stand before the people you fear and speak your mind -- even if your voice shakes,' and we encourage all seniors to do just that. We hope that our elected officials will support our demand for civility and support for the right of seniors to have their say and to have their concerns taken seriously on the PPW bike lane. We also encourage seniors to continue to speak out about the PPW bike lane and to not go silent," said Judy Lear, National Gray Panthers Chair.

About Gray Panthers: Now in its 40th year, Gray Panthers is an intergenerational, multi-issue organization working to create a society that puts the needs of people over profit, responsibility over power and democracy over institutions. We work to eliminate injustice, discrimination and ageism wherever they exist. Find us on the web: [Gray Panthers \(National\)](#); www.graypanthers.org [Gray Panthers, NYC Network](#), wwwgraypanthersnyc.org