Brainstorming with Ken Dychtwald

Ken Dychtwald, PhD., bestselling author - noted futurist - thought leader - and activist on aging issues (as well as a Gray Panther of long duration), is collaborating with the American Society on Aging on an interview series of the Living Legacies in the field of aging.

Gray Panthers NYC is excited to partner with the American Society on Aging to bring you this impactful program. Beginning next Wednesday, June 23, and airing weekly through September 8, this web series features interviews with diverse legendary pathfinders who have spent decades in the field of aging, health, and social services. Each interview will be conducted by Ken Dychtwald, PhD, to capture the wisdom and character of gerontology's pioneers to inform, inspire, and guide current professionals in the fields of aging and related services for years to come. The series is kicking off with Paul Nathanson, JD, a national leader in legal services and elder justice. You can register and watch all 12 episodes and earn a digital badge from ASA and USC's Leonard Davis School of Gerontology with the following link (**Learn More and Register**).

Intergenerational Activism

As part of our support of Ken and this important interview series, the Gray Panther NYC interns had the opportunity to brainstorm with him about a number of issues. We dove into the "how" to encourage young people to the importance of aging issues and intergenerational advocacy. Without surprise, we concluded that a primary way of engaging young people not already involved in gerontology is through social media. Most individuals aged 15-35 use these platforms, primarily Instagram and Twitter, as their main exposure to news and entertainment . Directing resources to social media focused on younger audiences allows aging activists to get a "bigger microphone." This mechanism would hopefully inspire young generations to take a stand and rise up against ageism.

Importantly, we addressed another topic - confronting ageism. One of the interns immediately noted ageism in the cosmetic industries. Beauty companies earn large profits off

Chloe Sisselman, Gray Panthers summer intern

anti-aging technology in their products that claim to eliminate wrinkles, make one look younger, and more. However, these products associate ugliness with aging, which is far from true. Combating this stereotype, Maggie Kuhn, as Ken described, would sometimes put glitter in her wrinkles to accentuate them. Perhaps if aging was associated with wisdom and experience, other generations would be more inclined to advocate for their elders, as they would not view them as frail, but rather wise and beautiful.

Interns' Inquiry

During our discussion, Ken asked the interns for potential areas he might address about the field of aging during his interviews. Since none of us are explicitly studying gerontology, our questions addressed many different points of view, making for a captivating discussion. The inquiries included:

- How have the experts' views changed? How has the field or terminology changed or stayed the same?
- How would the experts have liked to change the focus of their advocacy so we can do better?
- How do we fix inequalities in aging (ex. non-white residents dying at a disproportionately higher rate)? How do we know when treatment is offensive?
- How is aging similar or different throughout varying cultures?

Additionally, Ken had the interns consider more "provocative" topics, challenging our critical thinking. This realm of thinking led for fascinating questions regarding:

- Normalization of sex among older adults
- Medicinal marijuana use
- The belief that with age, individuals lean more towards the political right
- Fostering openness and acceptance towards the LGBTQ+ population

Until this opportunity with Gray Panthers, we never had even a cursory understanding of the enormous universe of questions and concerns to create a better society for all generations. All of us are excited to learn even more through the Living Legacies interview series. Please join us and register.

Chloe Sisselman, Gray Panthers summer intern