**Amateur Participation in Cultural Creation – Ageism – Climate Change**

Recommendation – to ensure that older populations of all ability levels have equal access to engaging in the creation of cultural opportunities. There are more people in the world over the age of 60 than there are children under 5 years old. Despite their growing percentage, the aging demographic is frequently excluded from participatory initiatives (and policies), most especially at the amateur/beginner stages, to create art in public-facing spaces.

Active participation across the skillset spectrum for this population subset not only addresses caustic discrimination patterns of ageism and elitism that have so entrenched themselves into our society, but equally as important, inclusivity of this type de-emphasizes dominant cultural norms that celebrate and reward the pursuits of perfection and endless production.

Participation by senior citizens in culture creation (such as in arts) is frequently lauded for the benefits provided to individuals (including preservation of mental dexterity and maintaining of physical fitness). Considerations, however, of the larger societal implications of these activities, though duly acknowledged, often stop short of examinations of their role in combatting ageism; and rarely, if ever, do they explore the welfare gains at the intersection of ageism, climate change, and art creation.

Recognizing how the connection between the older novice and his/her influence on community values can reduce greenhouse gasses, conserve resources, and be a vital motivator for environmental stewardship, any cultural activities that dynamically incorporate non-professional older adults will help mitigate climate change.

Recognizing that older people are disproportionately vulnerable to experiencing adverse health effects linked to climate change, any cultural activities that mitigate ageist stigmas will save lives.

**Culture and Ageism/Climate Change/Health**

The health consequences of climate change are no longer denied; heat-related illnesses, respiratory ailments, and infectious disease transmissions are all expected to rise as a result of our warming planet. Older adults, many of whom have weakened immune systems and other age-associated ailments, are especially susceptible, even more so when compounded by social isolation and feelings of depression often experienced by this demographic.

We are a society that discriminates against age. We prioritize the potential of younger generations over the wisdom and experience of our elders. This is no different in the creation and dissemination of culture, where the quest for the next ingénue takes center stage.

Ageism in medicine is also common. The life-and-death decision-making healthcare practitioners are describing in treating Covid-19 patients has laid this prejudice bare in striking fashion. American medical schools devote only a few weeks to the study of older adults, and there is no requirement to teach geriatrics. The inclusion of older subjects in medical research was not mandated by the National Institutes of Health until 2019.

In the arts, inclusion of amateur adult creators in public forums as is critical. Highlighting only a small handful of talented/professional adults perpetuates stereotypes of irrelevance for those lacking in exceptional skills.

Older adults have been relegated to the sidelines, on stage and in life. We need them to feel mattered. We need them to be made visible. Integrating older people into our cultural activities is foundational to combating ageism. especially as consequences of climate change begin to mount. We need medical professionals to take senior healthcare seriously, and we need society to care more about senior citizens, to see them as human. Depression and isolation exacerbate health problems. Community builds resiliency.

**Culture and Ageism/Climate Change/Resource Depletion**

As humans, we have a moral obligation to help sustain and protect the life around us, ideals that current economic structures are wont to stray from as human worth becomes increasingly confounded with material wealth and productivity outputs. It is impossible, indeed self-defeating, to sustain continual growth, be it as an individual, or as a planet.

We must shift how we describe success such that we value contentment as the critical purpose to strive for. Similarly, we must dismantle society’s unrealistic and increasing reverence for perfection, pointedly in trends that include the curation of the cultural arena for older populations. Society rightfully recognizes the importance of arts for children by allocating (albeit still insufficiently) resources to diverse and enriching program development, often expressly designed for elementary training.

Opportunities for beginner-level learning, however, precipitously decline as participants age, and remaining resources are streamlined into refining talent. This is a mistake. To aim solely for perfection is an abnegation of that which makes us human. It reinforces the principles of endless productivity that disconnect us from each other and the natural world, and that ultimately contribute to the release of greenhouse gases and the depletion of resources.

We must provide opportunities to embrace, and crucially to publicly showcase, imperfection in cultural endeavors, not necessarily as a path to improvement (as is frequently the understanding with children’s activities) but as an end-product in itself, an outlet for emotion, joy, resilience, connection, “human-ness”. Equal and pervasive practicing of such undertakings by all ages, additionally serves to normalize mediocrity not as something about which to be ashamed or discouraged, but as an accepted standard, powerful in its own right in transforming behaviors and building community.

**Conclusion**

Fundamental to the input submitted here is ensuring that access to the rights to create culture, to play the music, to act, to sculpt, etc. are made available to elder members of society, and most crucially to those with minimal previous experience.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation will require actions rooted in human connections as much as in technology.

When allocating resources for arts and culture, we must consider the role of older members of society in deliberating matters of community development. Arts programs where adults do more than observe is just as important as programming for children. We need happy adults to foster happy children, and we need happy communities if we want to see the world thrive.

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