

# AGEISM AT A GLANCE

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?



**24** ILLUSTRATIONS  
TO BETTER UNDERSTAND  
THE PHENOMENON OF AGEISM  
AND HOW TO COUNTER IT



Made by seniors  
for the young  
and old



Observatoire Vieillesse & Société  
Observatory on Aging & Society

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We also want to thank the Government of Québec, and more specifically, the programme Québec Ami des aînés (QADA), which enabled us to translate **Ageism At a Glance** into English and promote the awareness of ageism.

A hard copy of this document is available at the following address:



Observatory on Aging & Society (OAS)  
4565, Queen-Mary Road, Suite C2628  
Montréal, Qc, H3W 1W5  
[www.ovs-oas.org](http://www.ovs-oas.org)  
Email: [info@ovs-oas.org](mailto:info@ovs-oas.org)  
Telephone: 514 340-3540, extension 3927

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# Preface

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The motivation behind **Ageism At a Glance** is to highlight the pervasiveness of ageism, a form of age-based discrimination that stigmatizes the elderly. Compared to sexism and racism, ageism is a more tolerated form of discrimination in Canada, and it is our hope that this publication will help raise awareness of its impact and thereby increase care efforts towards seniors and foster healthy intergenerational relationships.

You will find illustrations presenting various instances of ageism encountered by seniors in their daily lives in the contexts of family, work and social relationships. There are thirteen sections representing everyday situations where ageism is prevalent. Various themes were chosen to illustrate manifestations of ageism in specific sectors such as education, the workplace, healthcare, media, politics, arts, etc., thus presenting a variety of interactions between seniors, the general public, younger generations and various places where seniors meet discrimination.

We hope that this document will be a source of inspiration for you and a reminder of the experiences and challenges that many seniors face on a daily basis. It will also serve as an effective awareness tool for both young and old.

We wish to thank the team members who worked on the development and production of this comic strip:

Diane Ginette Brûlotte  
*Author and Project Manager*

Marie-Claude Dugas,  
*Drawing*

Denise Destrempe,  
*Supervisor*

Émilie Proteau-Dupont,  
*Concept*

Ioana Maria Raus, Alida Piccolo,  
Denise Duhaime, Ali Zia,  
Edmund Tobin  
*Starting layout, Translation  
and Revision*

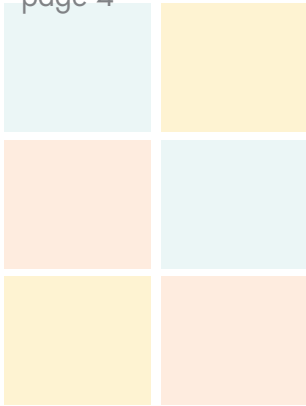
Gloria Jeliu, Imane El Mahi,  
Paula Lazar, Eduardo Varela  
*Collaborators*

A special mention to Noémie Ross who created this graphic design book.

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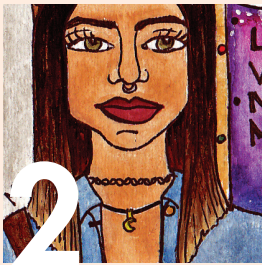
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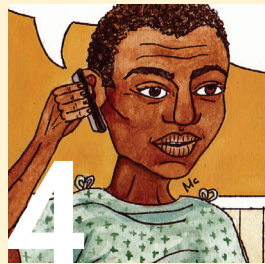
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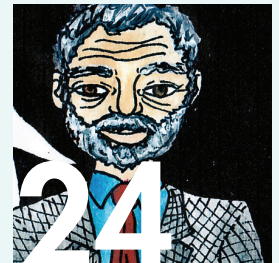
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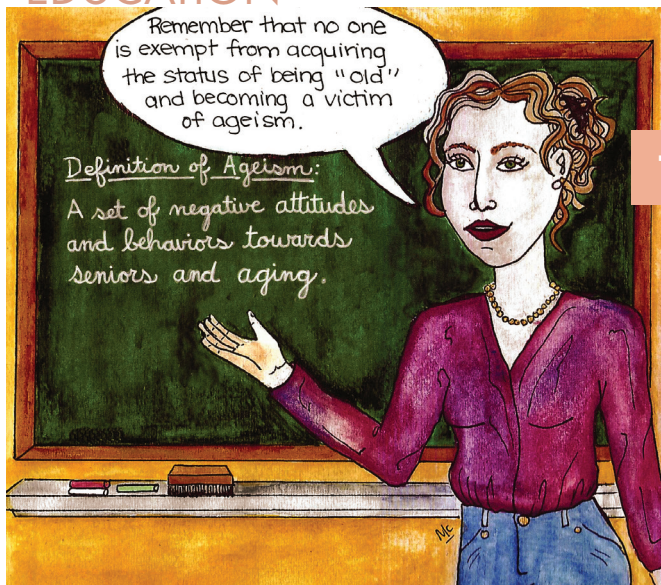
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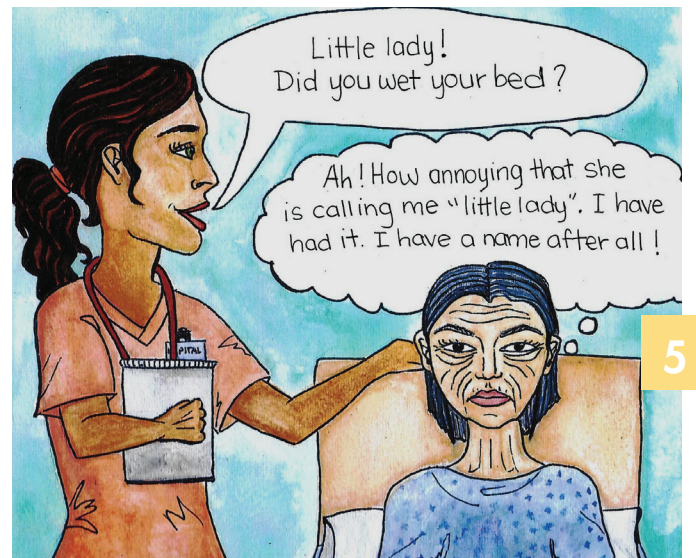
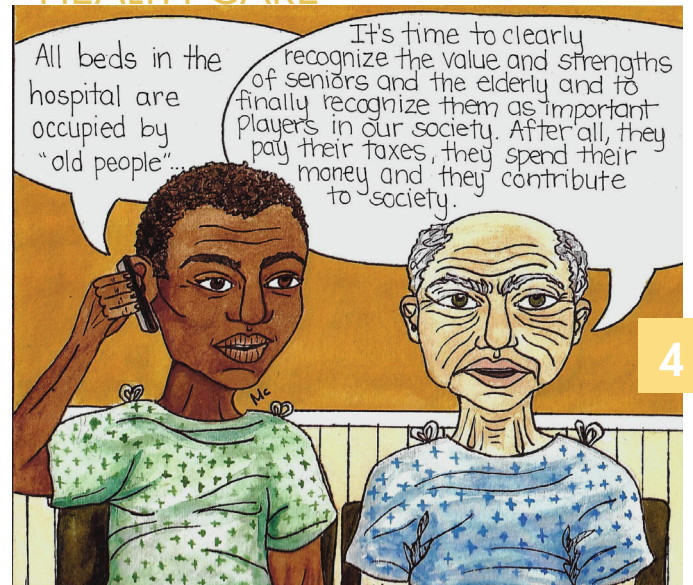
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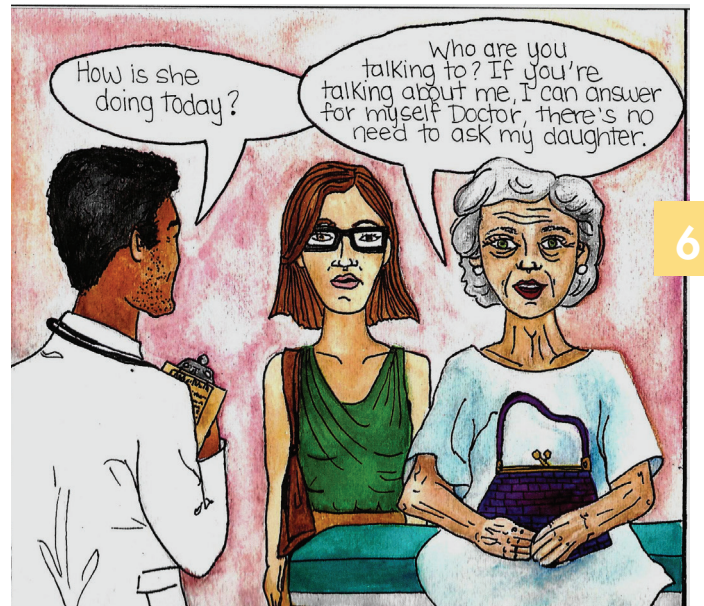
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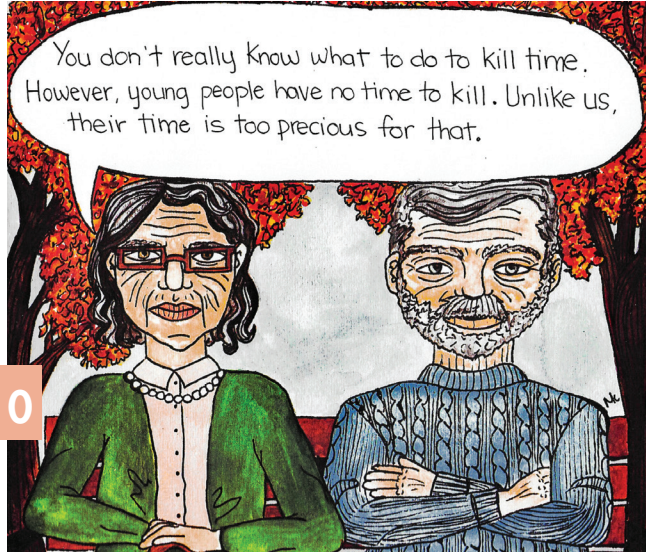
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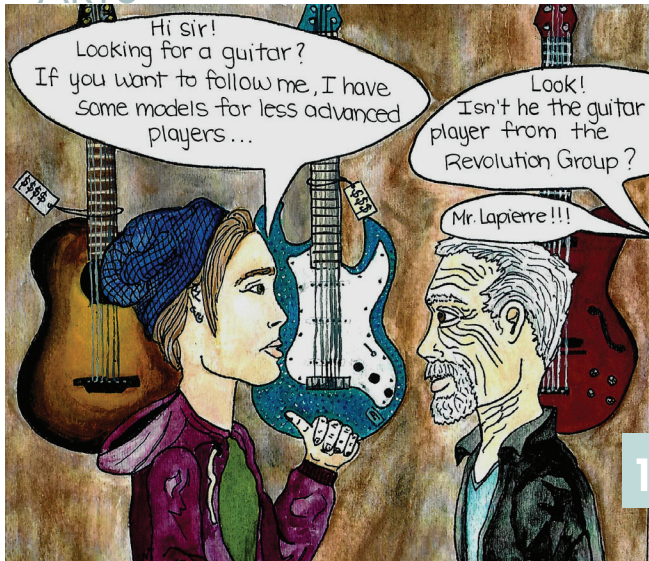


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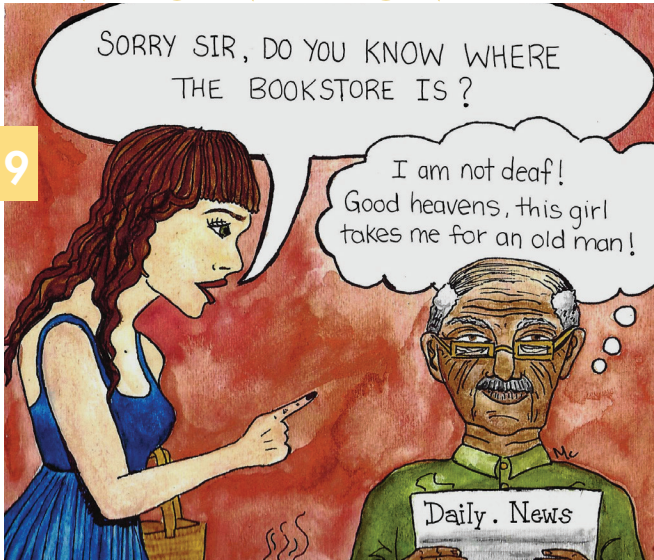
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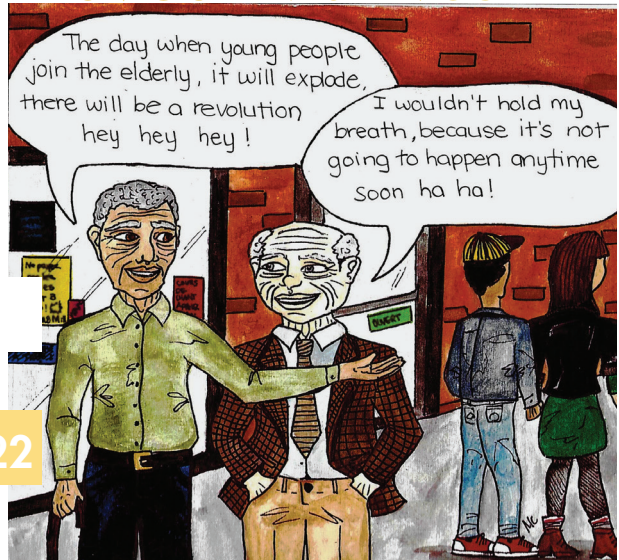
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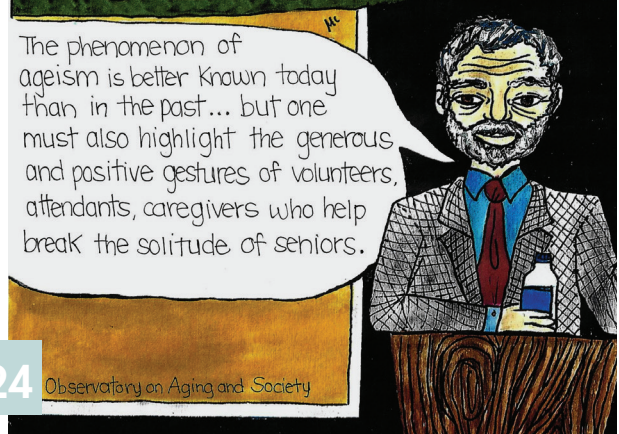
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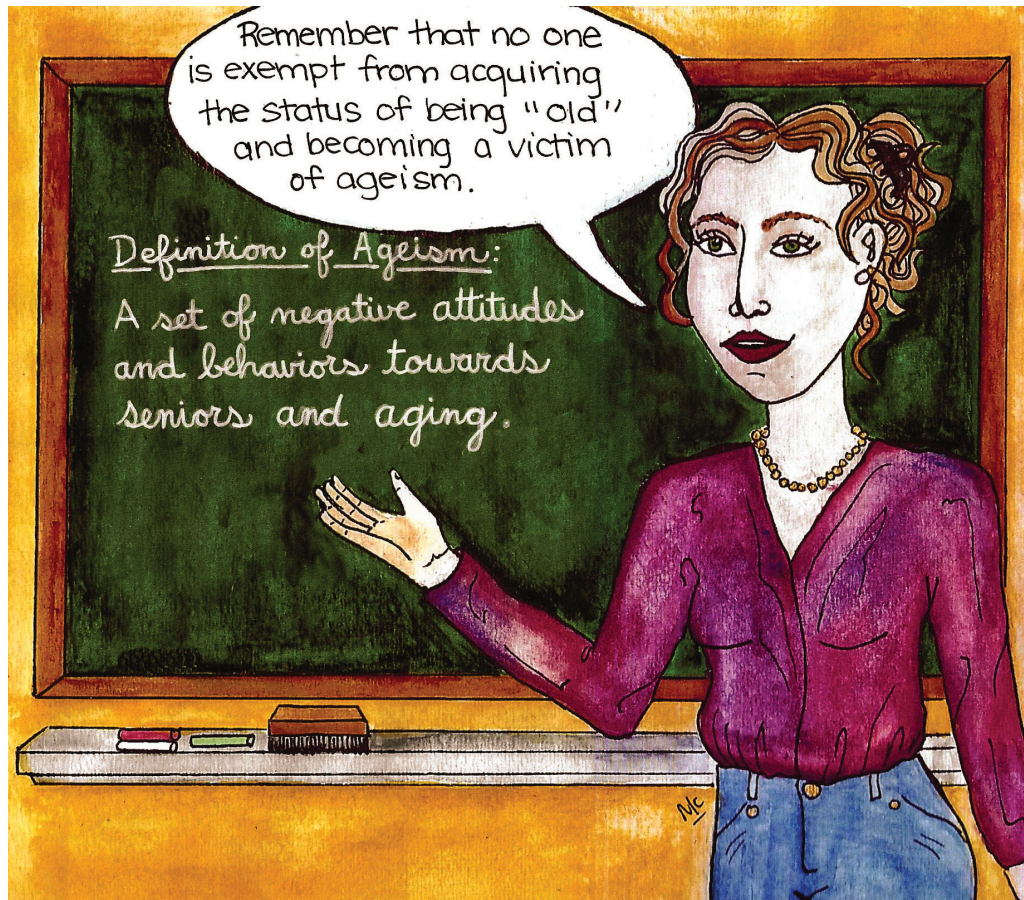


# 24 illustrations

## EDUCATION

# 1

### "AGEISM": WHO CAN BE A VICTIM?



Ageism is stigmatizing a person because of his or her age. Ageism is a serious matter!

According to Martine Lagacé (2010), ageism is a process that excludes older people from society in complex, harmful and ambiguous ways. This leads to multiple mistaken beliefs and preconceptions. She also explains that ageism can sometimes be associated with other stigmas, thus generating a combination of detrimental effects on both the physical and mental health of a person. Fortunately, as Martine Lagacé points out, the simple act of recognizing this problem is the first step towards progress. [1]

# EDUCATION

## 2

### SOCIAL THREATS BLAMED ON THE AGING POPULATION

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Puijalon and Trinzac (2000) point out that the word “ageism” has entered our vocabulary because it represents a new social reality. The *Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* reminds us how much seniors contribute to society, in particular within our communities and culture, by not only teaching the younger generation, but also being involved in social, economic and political spheres. [2]



## WORKPLACE

# 3

### DEVALUATION OF WORK EXPERIENCE



According to Desmette, Iweins and Yzerbyt (2015), a company's workplace policies are likely to shape attitudes toward older workers. Thus, these authors argue that ageism in the organizational context is not systemic, but still exists in the workplace, predisposing workers to stigmatize the elderly. [3]

# HEALTH CARE

## 4

### COST OF RETIREES TO SOCIETY

Danis Prud'homme, Chief Executive Officer, Réseau FADOQ, underlines that the contributions of seniors in our society go far beyond financial considerations. In fact, seniors are very active socially – taking part in many activities including volunteering and caregiving – in addition to their work experience and expertise being unmatched. It is high time we eliminate the prejudice we call ageism. [4]



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# 5

## FAMILIARITY



Dr. Kergoat, a geriatrics specialist, maintains that a caregiver's approach will differ depending on the age of the patient. She explains that faced with the disabilities of the elderly, caregivers respond with less understanding than with their younger patients. Relations between patients and doctors therefore become asymmetrical, to the detriment of the patient – leading to incongruous behavior towards older patients. [5]

# 6

## INFANTILIZATION OF THE PATIENT

All too often, professionals are observed to communicate certain paternalistic, condescending and infantilizing behaviors and remarks towards older patients. Just like everyone else, seniors must be able to express their needs and desires freely and be consulted and listened to without fear of triggering contempt. [6]



# MEDIA

## 7

### HOW TO ADDRESS THE ELDERLY?



According to Puijalon and Trinzac (2000), the image we build of ourselves is based on the perceptions of others. This image is not an accurate representation of ourselves, and although we may want to challenge it, we know it will prevail. It is therefore not surprising that the media's portrayal of seniors can lock us into our old age by influencing our self image. [7]

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## POLITICS

# 8

### RETIREES ARE COSTLY TO SOCIETY

In fact, there are many harmful misconceptions about seniors. The contributions of seniors, which must be recognized by our society, go far beyond financial considerations, explains the Chief Executive Officer, Réseau FADOQ. Seniors are socially active, whether as volunteers or caregivers, and participate in the broader economy. [8]



# SELF AGEISM AND STEREOTYPES

## 9

### REFUSAL OF NEW LEISURE ACTIVITIES

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Ariette Dugas (1994) argues that the best way to avoid growing old would be to never feel old! A positive attitude is necessary to feel more optimistic. Why should you deprive yourself of experiences that could prove beneficial, enriching and enjoyable? Let's be good to ourselves, because after all, we deserve it! [9]

## 10

### SELF-DEVALUATION – DIFFICULTY IN OCCUPY ONE'S TIME

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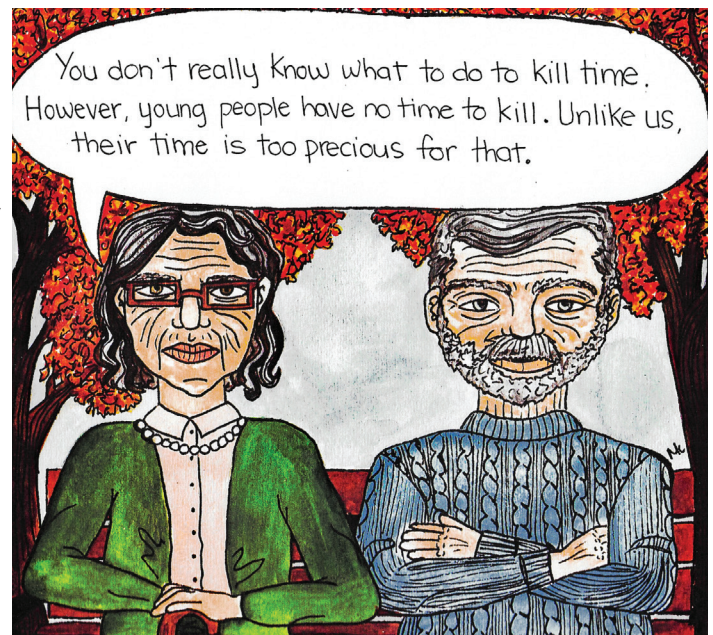
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How should seniors occupy their time? This is the basic dilemma, according to French sociologist Dominique Thierry, and a question directed specifically to retirees as they rearrange their lives after retirement. However, occupying new-found time is an extended process, Thierry says. In fact, it is constantly evolving, as certain activities are abandoned, new schedules adopted, priorities are shifted and lives reconstructed. [10]



# 11

## FINANCIAL INSECURITY



We would all like to have a lot of money and be able to afford the lifestyle we'd like. It's reassuring not to have to worry about money. Because financial insecurity often results in a lack of confidence in our ability to cope with life events and unfortunate setbacks. To avoid the anguish of not having enough money, you have to be confident, reasonable, optimistic and unafraid of the future. [11]

# 12

## WRONG PERCEPTIONS OF THE ELDERLY

Why do erroneous and negative perceptions of seniors and the elderly persist, when they do not reflect the reality in 95% of cases? Clearly, it is another form of ageism. [12]



## ARTS

# 13

### MISCONCEPTIONS DUE TO AGE

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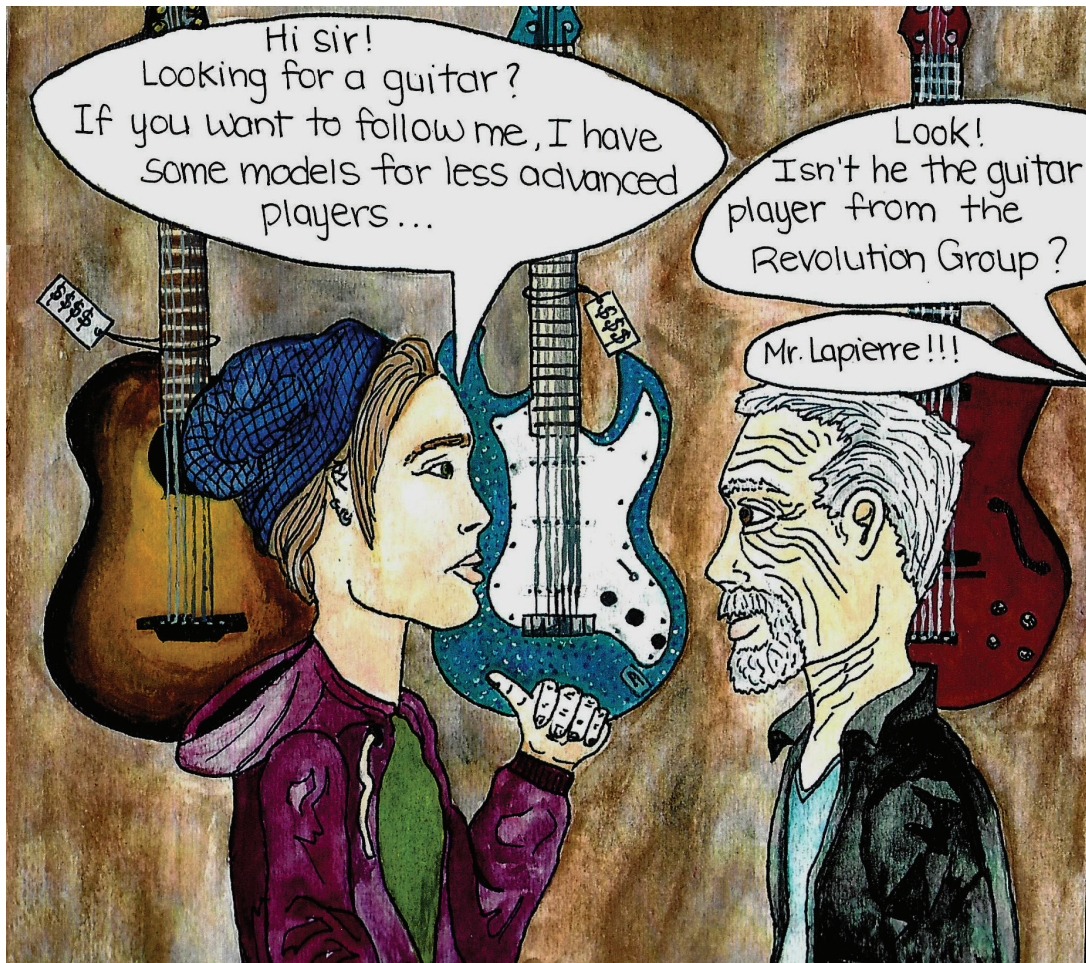
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The arts milieu is by no means exempt from ageism. However, according to Denis Blanchard, artists play an important social role, particularly in the arts community where they convey the realities of aging, thus better explaining the phenomenon of aging and reconciling us with the human condition. [13]

# 14

## GENERATION GAPS: DEROGATORY COMMENTS

Older adults do not go unnoticed when traveling and attending events, notes Pauline Robert, an observer who denounces reductionist and demeaning comments about seniors. For example, not all seniors travel by charter bus! Their attendance contributes to the success of a show and the growth of the tourism industry in all of its facets. Furthermore, they are remaining active and pursuing their interests and a particular lifestyle, which deserves our greatest respect. [14]



## INNER CIRCLES – FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS

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INFANTILIZE, INSECURE,  
POINT OUT COMPETENCY GAPS

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Puijalon and Trinzac (2000) remind us of the importance of our cognitive abilities. When dealing with comments coming from family members, we must remember that we are responsible for our self-image relating to old age. After all, we have the age that we give ourselves – an attitude adopted by many people who age well. [15]



# 16

## FINANCIAL ABUSE



Many elderly people are victims of financial exploitation from loved ones or unfamiliar individuals alike, explains Marie-Hélène Dufour, doctoral student in law. Seniors are sometimes seen as having accumulated considerable money and wealth. They are vulnerable and prone to abuse. Those who exploit can steal money or objects from the elderly, in small or large quantities. [16]

# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS

# 17

## REFUSAL TO USE NEW TECHNOLOGIES



Information and communication technologies are present everywhere, explains researcher Charmarkeh from the Paris-Sorbonne University. However, not all users benefit equally from them. In fact, websites rarely take into account vision problems, and the cognitive and motor skills of the user. As a result, older adults may find it difficult to use these technologies. This supports the misconception of resistance or refusal to use them. [17]

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## REFUSAL TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

According to the Centre Facilitating Research and Innovation in Organizations (CEFRIO), an organization studying Internet trends, there was a 10% increase in regular Internet use by seniors between 2009 and 2013. Many people use Facebook and other social media networks. Although many seniors lead their lives without using the Internet, a representative of the Retiree at Home organization (Retraite à Domicile) points out that these new technologies have certain advantages and can be of great service. [18]

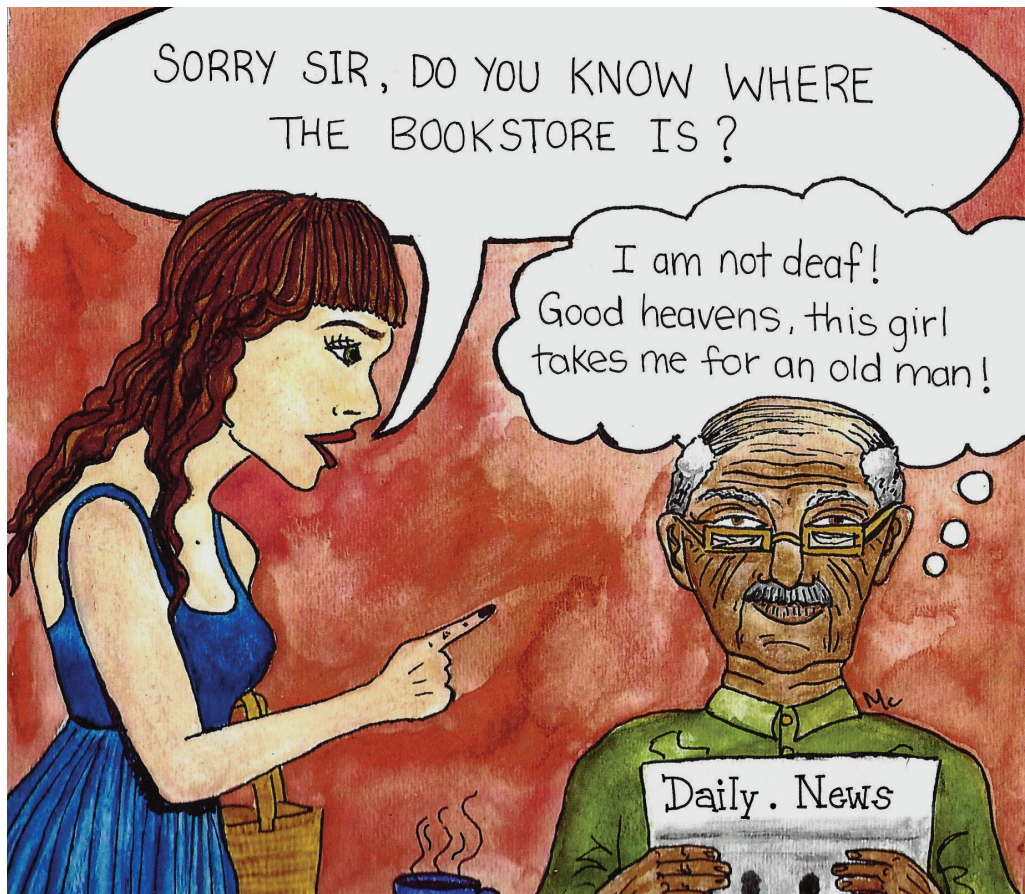


# INTERGENERATIONAL

## 19

### SPEAK LOUDLY

According to research by Statistics Canada (2015), 19% of Canadians between the ages of 20 and 79 suffer from hearing loss – and this rate is likely to increase with age. However, it is wrong to believe that all elderly people have hearing problems, when in fact, only a third are affected by hearing loss, explains Simon Dufour, a hearing aid acoustician. Thus, “speaking loudly” simply because a person is an older adult constitutes ageism and can have negative repercussions such as shame and anger, explain Puijalon and Trincaz (2000). [19]



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## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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### REFUSAL TO GIVE UP THE "RESERVED" SEAT



There is often a generational gap. This can hamper understanding and empathy between individuals, thus creating difficult situations. As mentioned by Puijalon and Trincaz, many young people express anxiety at the idea of approaching older adults outside of their own family circles. The opposite may also be true. As such, we must stop considering "others" as part of an undifferentiated mass, and instead take the time to consider them as interesting, unique individuals, while trying to understand their points of view. [20]

# 21

### BENEVOLENCE TOWARDS SENIORS: AN ANTONYM FOR AGEISM

We would have to find a term to serve as an antonym for ageism in order to describe "benevolence" towards seniors and the elderly, explains Mr. Rochette, a senior who is active in his community and writes for the bimonthly OAS publication. Such a term would put the focus on good treatment and on these acts that help to make life easier for seniors. This also means highlighting gestures that help seniors live their old age better and feel respected. [21]



# HUMOUR AND SELF-MOCKERY

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### SENIORS' HUMORISTIC VIEW OF YOUNGER GENERATIONS

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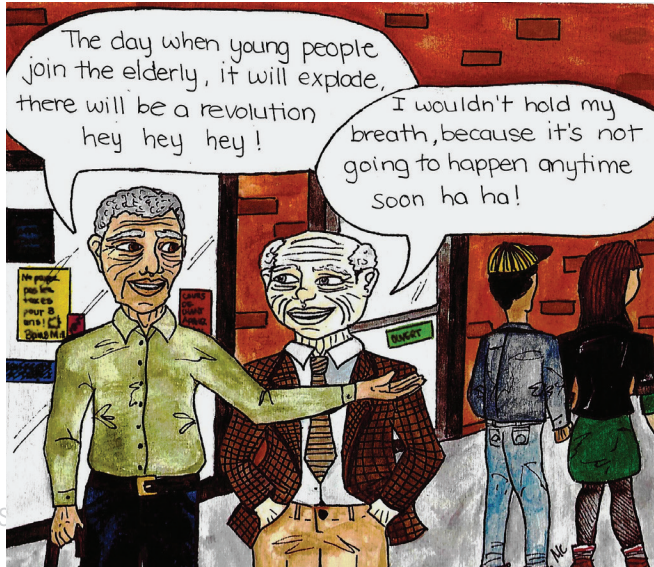
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As Jérôme Cotte explains in his master's thesis on humor and laughter as political tools for emancipation, humor can be used to either free us from oppression or to calm our anger. Laughter follows to underline the return of mutual recognition, a possible sharing or an openness to come. In short, humor emancipates. [22]

## 23

### AGE PHILOSOPHY

Not appearing old has become imperative to avoid being considered "old", or even of being judged as "being old". This attitude nourishes ageism and denies the normal process of getting older, as Puijalon and Trincaz point out. In fact, the term "old" refers more to one who has more years to his or her credit than most of his or her contemporaries. We are therefore "old" in our relationships with those younger than ourselves. [23]

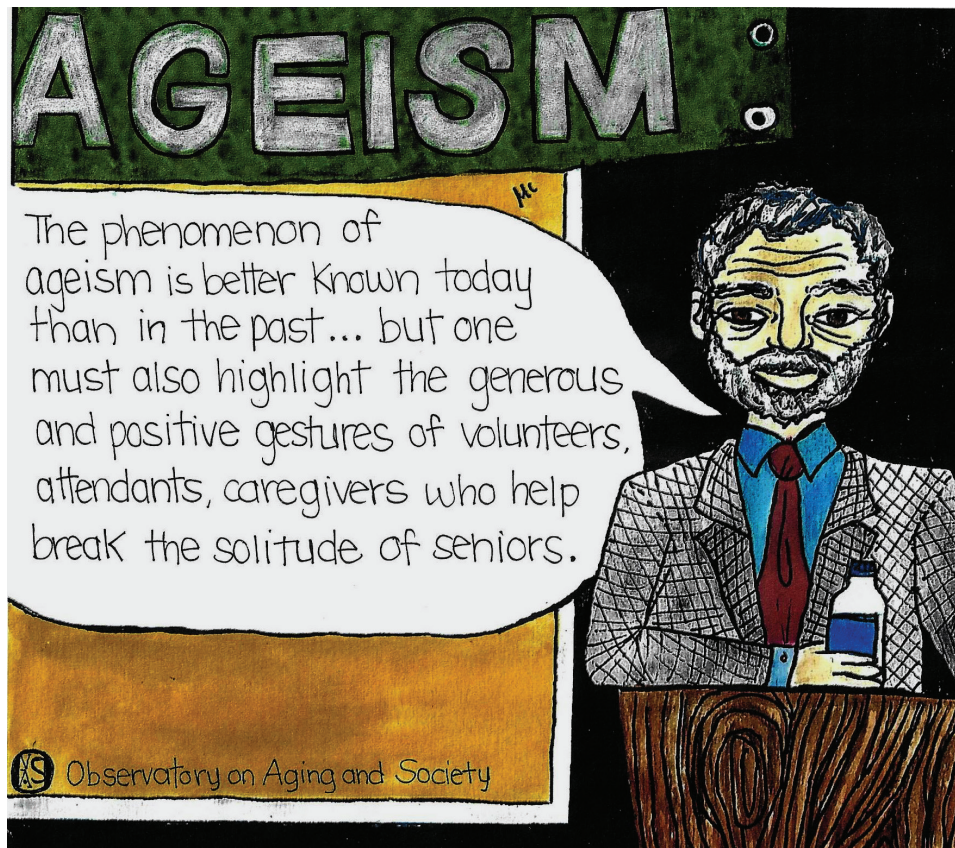


## GENERAL PUBLIC

# 24

### "AGEISM": A BETTER KNOWN PHENOMENON

In addition to ageism being a form of abuse, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes that ageism negatively affects the physical and mental health of older adults. Certainly, this phenomenon is now more widely known and better understood, and any effort to denounce or counter ageism can only help the well-being of seniors. [24]



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## **OBSERVATORY ON AGING AND SOCIETY (OAS)**

FOUNDED OVER 17 YEARS AGO, OAS IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION WORKING FOR THE WELL-BEING OF SENIORS, MOST NOTABLY BY COMBATING AGEISM. THE MISSION OF THE OAS IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF SENIORS AND ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF AGEISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

NOTABLY, THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) MAINTAINS THAT AGEISM HARMS THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY.

It is thanks to the generous contribution of its numerous volunteers and the undeniable support of the *Institut universitaire de gériatrie de Montréal* that the OAS can fulfill its mission. The OAS is a recognized and credible resource in the field of aging, capable of provoking social reflection in order to improve the lives of the elderly.



Following the reading of our publication, we wish to inspire the creation of a new term, which would be an antonym to ageism. This term should encompass the following values: commitment, consideration, generosity, altruism, appreciation, recognition, tolerance, respect and appreciation for the elderly in our society.

