

Try YODA: Youngers + Olders Dismantling Ageism (Transcript)

Duncan Magidson 00:00

Welcome. I'm so excited to welcome you to today's event. This is try YODA, youngers and older is dismantling ageism in just a minute. You're going to be lucky enough to hear from our three incredible guests, plus the moderator, who's my dear colleague and friend, Marci Alboher, in this conversation that's all about ageism, power dynamics, and what we can do about those things to build a better future. My name is Duncan. I am the Director of Digital Communications and engagement at CoGenerate, and I'm 31 years old. You'll hear later on that we will identify all of our ages. That's a practice that we do here at CoGenerate. I'm also a ceaseless advocate for building more cogeneration, intergenerational collaboration into every aspect of our lives. And the reason that I'm so passionate about this is because it's so needed. A 2021 study by the Stanford Center on Longevity found that despite there being about equal numbers of people from every chronological age from zero to about 70 plus cross-age relationships are extremely rare. To put it another way, we are the most age diverse society in history and the least age integrated. So we're really laser focused on that age divide at CoGenerate because that separation of generations is linked to a raft of problems, including generational conflicts, an epidemic of loneliness and social isolation, and, of course, ageism, and that's the grounding for our conversation today. The YODA framework that we're going to be talking about is founded on this idea that to bust out of our age silos, we have to tackle ageism and power dynamics head on. So let's do it. I'm going to turn things over to Marci, who I mentioned before. Marci is CoGenerate's Chief Engagement Officer, and I'm so excited for her to moderate today's conversation.

Marci Alboher 01:50

Thanks, Duncan. It's so good to be side by side with you, Duncan, as we always do. And I'm really excited to bring on our panelists who you're going to meet, where you're going to launch right into this. And as Duncan modeled, I'm going to share my age. I'm 59 you don't all have to share your age, but if, if you want to throw it into the chat, it helps us know who we're reaching these days. And I think you're going to learn a lot about some different frames for how we look at how we show up in the world, around age and power, and recognizing the power we have at different ages and in different settings in our life, how that plays out. So I'm going to ask our three panelists to all come off camera now and join us. I'm going to start with Ashton Applewhite, 71, Ashton is the person who informs almost every conversation I have in public and in private about ageism, and I think that is true for many people today. Ashton is the author of "This Chair Rocks" which really rocked the world in how we think about ageism. And she is also the founder of the Old School Hub, which is a hub for ageism and age equity awareness. You'll spend more time with all of that, I'm sure after this call. Right on my screen is Christina Gray. Cristina is 37. I had a chance to meet Cristina in person in Orlando, where she and Ashton presented at the American Society on Aging conference. She is the Associate Director

for the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative, and she is a deep expert on all things DEI. And she's actually really brought an age lens into that field where it hasn't always been centered, I think. And to her right on my screen is Maya Joshi, who is the founder of Lifting Hearts with the Arts, if you're familiar with our webinars, you saw Maya just a couple of weeks ago because she was a guest on another webinar that we did, which was my first chance to meet Maya, but I'm sure I'm going to be spending a lot more time with Maya. Maya is an undergrad at Princeton University, but she's home for the summer, and she is going to she has a really good front row seat at how things are playing out with olders and youngers through the program she runs through being a student and now in this aging and intergenerational world. So I'm so excited to have all of you, and I'm going to just kick us off. We're using this acronym all over the place. YODA and I used to have a dog who looked like YODA, so YODA feels very endearing to me. And like many things you've done before, Ashton, you put a name to something to make it easier for us to talk about and remember. So tell us where the YODA idea came from, that we're going to unpack today.

Ashton Applewhite 04:53

We'll know we're getting someone where when George Lucas sues me, but we can wait for that to happen. My work is to raise awareness of ageism. And, you know, I see, I see evidence of the change all around us in all over the place. But what is something that an idea that came to me when I met Christina Gray, my colleague on this, on this webinar was through an event in Montreal last fall when we brought older and younger people together to talk about to talk about a world without ageism. And Christina said something at that talk that really stuck with me. She said, Do all ages have a voice? And I realized, not really, and this has to change. So I reflected on the very welcome fact that more and more people and organizations are bringing all ages together like obviously CoGenerate's amazing work. Thank you for hosting this event, and we know that just bringing people together across age gaps reduces ageism. But we also know that just having all ages in the room is not enough, and if we want to make real change, right to bust up age silos and and hierarchies to understand why spaces and organizations where all ages have a voice are so rare. I realized that we need to talk about power, because social power shapes who gets invited to the room and who what we talk about and who does all the talking, and when we ignore who has power in a relationship, we perpetuate existing orders, existing hierarchies, and things don't change. So that was the light bulb, and that is the crux of YODA, the need to bring olders and youngers together to talk about power. And as Duncan said so eloquently, because when we join forces, we obviously are more effective, and we can make, you know, combine to make the change we want to see more effectively. So it's that simple and that complicated, because talking about power is really complicated. And as Marci said, I wanted to give the concept a name, so I dubbed it YODA, Y, O, D, A, youngers and olders dismantling ageism. And you'll hear more about it today, and you'll get a link to the article and other stuff that describes it in more detail.

Marci Alboher 07:28

Right. I'd like to hear now from Christina, and then from Maya, and like, how you came into this. And Christina, obviously you were a co conspirator in this, and I don't know if I said and you were 37 putting you in kind of in the middle seven our panel, yeah,

Christina Gray 07:45

I came into this work pretty roundabout. I actually started as a young person, so I went to my first protest when I was age eight, and that's because the grown ups in my life had brought me and cultivated this piece that led me to be a teen activist for many years. And so I was really working on the oppression that young people face, not being hurt in schools, not being hurt in systems, which led to a career in diversity, equity and inclusion. And I would do these trainings that would say, Oh, we talk about all of these identities, including age, and it was very rare we would name that there was oppression against older people, but it wasn't talked about. It wasn't woven into the work. So I came to the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative, and now the primary focus is the marginalization of older folks and people with disabilities, with that root cause of how our culture values productivity and quickness and those pieces to weave them together so and I met Ashton at that old school retreat in Montreal.

Marci Alboher 08:58

I just had to ask when, when you talk about that that work of kind of younger people and how they are unheard or oppressed in the system. Do you use the word adultism? Is that a word you like?

Christina Gray 09:09

So I do use the word adultism. I think it is both, uh, marginalization based off of age. So John Bell coined the term adultism, I believe later, in response to Butler's ageism. And adultism is really about this, like under 18, and so we'll talk about this later, about the two strands of social change. But there's something about how we center adults in the world, and when you are under 18 or under 16 or under these real fresh marks, your life is completely different than 19 or 20, and so things show up differently, whether older or younger as a young person or older or younger than to do so we do use adultism, okay.

Marci Alboher 09:56

Okay, Maya, how did you. Find your way into this conversation. And I just wanna say, explain your work. And I'm curious of whether you think doing intergenerational work necessarily means you have an opinion on ageism.

Maya Joshi 10:14

Yeah, I think they honestly go hand in hand. And so a lot of my work over the past five years has been with Lifting Hearts with the Arts, which initially was just like a small idea to bring together older adults and younger adults during the pandemic for just like Zoom or even FaceTime calls in a time where we were just like, all stuck, you know, in a certain amount of square footage and not able to, you know, see friends or family. And then there was a lot of interest from people my age and people of different ages, and then we just kept growing and growing and adding more programs. And so the goal of Lifting Hearts with the Arts generally is just to bring together different generations to build long-term friendships. And that sounds like a lot of fun, and it is, but that also means that there are a lot of obstacles. And so quickly, as we, like my team and I started, you know, working on this program. And even if it was something like cold calling

different care communities to partner with, we kind of realized that ageism goes in more directions than just one. So instead of, like, introducing myself as like, to a care community, like, Hi, I'm Maya. I'm 15. Trust me, you work with me on this, I was like, you know, maybe we'll get better results if we say, like, Hi, I'm Maya. I'm calling from a nonprofit, or a 501 c3, and like, you know, maybe putting my age a little bit down low. And so since then, like, as we've kind of learned and grown over the last few years, we've kind of started to work on strategies to figure out, how do we equip ourselves and the people around us with tools to combat this ageism, this, like, multi directional ageism as a way to, kind of us in these generational divides and gaps that we're facing.

Marci Alboher 11:50

Yeah, I mean, you've, you've already kind of gotten right into it, like I was going to ask you all, kind of what older people need to understand here. What younger people need to understand here, but I'm kind of wondering if that's the wrong way to look at this. Like, I love Maya, how you just kind of frame this as it's multigenerational. And I think that example you just gave of, like, you know, you were doing something at a pretty young age, and you then had to hide your age. And so I kind of want to ground us in, like, When are the times when, when age is an advantage, when might it be a disadvantage? Like, just jump in each of you.

Christina Gray 12:34

So I think it's situational. And generally, when we talk about in movement building. When we talk about social change, they'll talk about this double helix. There's the policy change and the cultural change. And I think generally, you are at an advantage when you're older around policy change. So the way you get to make laws, the side laws, and we even see in who gets elected, who who is our leadership, who's in our legislative and the cultural change, I think you're often at an advantage if you were younger in the cultural piece. So if you think about the pop stars now, you think about Madonna. Madonna doesn't have quite the influence she did when she was younger. Taylor Swift probably won't have quite the influence when she's older and who they're going to so it's situational. But that's two ways to look at it, if you're talking about making social change there.

Ashton Applewhite 13:33

Yeah, I love that. And the the and that when, when Christina talked to me in Montreal about that dynamic. That was another thing that lit the fuse, like, I have to figure out how to talk about this, because the synergy between and generally, broadly speaking, of course, there are exceptions. Older people have more money, we might have more time if we are retired, than younger people, you know, who are still, you know, working full time and so on. So the synergies are so apparent. And I think this, that's why this is one of the reasons this is so so great, such a good initiative.

Marci Alboher 14:08

Maya, are you sitting with anything?

Maya Joshi 14:11

Yeah, I mean, I think, honestly, any age comes with its challenges and benefits. Like, I think, you know, for me, there was such a difference in when I was 17 and when I was a minor and like, what I was able to do then versus now, or, like, I didn't even realize you had to be 21 to check into a hotel room, which is something I recently learned. But also as a young person, because I'm in school, I'm surrounded by a bunch of other young people and a bunch of like, professors and mentors and advisors who are able to provide me with literally just advice about whatever it is I ask them, in addition to people I meet through other circumstances. And so I think that's a huge benefit of being a young person. And then I guess on the other side too, if sometimes it feels like you kind of have to prove yourself a little bit more to enter certain spaces, which makes sense like I do. Really know much at all about ageism or intergenerational connections when I first started. But by, you know, going to different webinars, or, just like, watching different YouTube videos and seeing what people were doing, I kind of learned, you know, what exists and how I could get involved, if that makes sense.

Marci Alboher 15:15

Yeah. I mean, here's a random one. Ashton and I were in a gathering a few months ago where we asked this very same question, and someone said she was recently in Italy and learned that she couldn't, that she couldn't rent a car if she was over the age of 70. And that was like in her group, she was the only one under the age of 70, so she had this advantage. And that is like, you know, all of this is, sometimes there's these arbitrary cut offs, like you said, with renting a hotel room. And so these are things like you just, if you haven't had the lived experience, they hit you once you do.

Ashton Applewhite 15:55

Another example is all the 30 under 30, or, you know, all these. And there are now a few, like 60 over 60, but in general, tons of programs or geared at people under a certain age, very few. And ideally they wouldn't need to be age targeted at all. It would really be about the kind of work you do.

Marci Alboher 16:13

Yeah, you know, on the flip side of that, I just want to go back to what, what Christina said about cultural power and pop music. For example, we have been tracking these cross age partnerships in music, these collaborations that we think are really important for kind of dismantling ageism. And like the first one was like Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett. And like them coming together was this audience share play too, like you had all these young people who are, like introduced to the standards because of this new collaboration. Now there's been, you know, endless of these musical collaborations. And you know, we know that contact theory means when we see people, you know, different people across difference, we get more comfortable with it. So, you know, we're just we're just hoping to kind of see more of that infused in the culture. So in terms of getting things done together and actually really wrestling with the hard stuff around ageism, you both. Ashton and Christina identified naming power differences as the main thing, it's often the elephant in the room. What does it take to get safe enough to name a power difference and then to go about trying to dismantle it? And let's say we know, if you can

learn from other places, you can but what do we know in when that happens, in an in an age difference situation? Do you have any examples that come to mind?

Christina Gray 17:45

I'll jump in. So you cannot solve a problem without talking about it. So it's not just that there is power there, but you have to talk about it. So that requires two things, one, an internal look at yourself, to understand where and if you have power and a partnership with somebody else. So we have a guide that I believe we're going to distribute after the webinar, with lots of tips and guidance, but here's what it can look like in practice. So the original, the original pamphlet, came out because Ashton was offered an additional spot to present at the American Society on Aging, and she's Ashton Applewhite, right? When you look at our bios, one of these things is not like the other. And naming that might feel a little weird, but that's naming power dynamic, right? And so instead of saying this is what I'm going to do? She called me and another woman, Denise Webb, and said, Hey, I have a stage. The two of you are great. We've done work together. What do you want to do? And essentially shared that power with us. And during the process, she was very clear and gave reminders, because there was, was that power dynamic that we could do what we wanted to right? And at any point had the two of us gone rogue, Ashton could have said, Whoa, you're losing in the reins. I'm going to pull it back. But she didn't. And then, once we got to the stage, and we all shared our ideas, or they were here, right? And there's Maya and myself. And later you read an article by myself or Maya or you, do you read a book that we recommend, we have now increased our social power. Ashton's has not decreased. It has expanded. So I think there's this myth that when you share social power, you diminish yours permanently. Instead, what we did was create a cohort, a powerhouse of people now part of this YODA, and we can bounce back and forth. So in this situation, Ashton had a lot of social power because it was ASA if Ashton and I decide to go present at a university that's not a Gerontology department. They might not know who she is, and they're going to look at me and I'm closer to college age, and they might listen to me more. So every time Ashton and I come up with some kind of scheme, we spend 30 seconds in a corner saying, who do we want to say this idea? Because we're who? Who is it going to be heard better from? And that's the part of sharing power.

Marci Alboher 20:21

Yeah, love it and love it. Anybody else have a power example you want to put in the room?

Maya Joshi 20:30

I mean, one example is like the dynamic of navigating difficult topics with family members. So like some of our volunteers that are maybe on the younger side, they were expressing kind of this discomfort in being totally straightforward with grandparents or maybe extended family members. But the cool thing about intergenerational friendships, when they are actually, like, truly meaningful and multi directional, are that you can kind of like, ask people questions that maybe you wouldn't be able to because of a dynamic and a power in a in a family. And if you're able to, like, take that power dynamic between somebody who's older and somebody that's younger in a relationship where they have no, like, I don't know, kinship ties or any family connection, then you're able to kind of level the playing field. And people can really just, like,

see each other, meet each other where they're at, and have these conversations and be straightforward and, like, you know, ask what they really want to know about the other person's generation in a way where they feel like they won't get judged. And I think this goes back to earlier, what we were talking about, like, the importance of creating that safe space where those people feel comfortable being vulnerable. And that takes time. You know, it doesn't always just happen right away.

Marci Alboher 21:39

Yeah, I'm going to ask Duncan to come back, because there is an example that come up came up in this work that Duncan and I do, we lead a workshop called GoGeneration at Work, and we're constantly speaking together all over the place, in person, online, and something happened a few a year ago, probably that gave us something to talk about in this space, and I'm gonna let Duncan share it.

Duncan Magidson 22:04

Yeah, you know, Marci and I were speaking at a class at NYU, and this was in more toward the beginning of when we were getting used to what it feels like to speak as a pair. And you know, Marci and I were getting dinner afterwards and kind of debriefing, and I was reflecting on how when the two of us walk into a room because of that age difference and the seniority difference, Marci is such an expert at workplace issues, she really does feel like the senior person and the person who's in charge, and the way we had set up our talk at the time, Marci was opening and closing, and even though the time that we had allotted in the presentation was about equal, that really made it feel like she was the the speaker, kind of delegating portions out to me, or at least that's how it felt. So I kind of delivered that feedback, and it really impacted the way that Marci and I think about what it looks like, what those power dynamics feel like, and how to make sure that we both feel like and are equal owners of that presentation, and practically, that means having me open and closed, and if it's ever in doubt, actually having me take more of the time in a presentation, rather than always having it be perfectly equal.

Marci Alboher 23:26

And yeah, we're, we're constantly looking for other examples here, because it's hard to disrupt power. And you first have to be willing to name it you and then, and then you see it, and then you have to have the safety for whoever might have less power in a situation to be able to bring it up, and then, then you have to creatively do something about it. So there's, there's several steps involved, and I'm just going to encourage people. I'm glad there's been some activity in the chat, but particularly on this question, like, if you've got a power story, please take a few moments to like, put it in the chat to us. We are really curious about this stuff. And I also want to encourage you to pose questions. We're going to be scanning them and in the Q and A we'll leave the last 10 minutes or so for your questions. So please throw them in there so we're constantly looking at them. So I want to go back Ashton. I don't want to fixate too much on language, because I think sometimes we can over index the importance of language. But ever since your book this chair locks rocks, I not only thought differently about ageism, but I talk differently about it, including the language I use. And one thing we all do here, excuse me, is a lot of us are using your language around olders and youngers, rather than old and young or and

it really got me thinking that everyone is older than some people. Everyone is younger than some people. It is a continuum and a spectrum. So can you talk a little bit about why you think the language really does matter, and also, if it is this, if this older, younger thing plays out different when we're talking about, like, different stages of adulthood, or dealing with kids or

Ashton Applewhite 25:23

Yeah, it is, it is, I have to say, fun to hear people using older and younger people. You know, any new I'm a writer. I'm very leery of making up words. We have a lot already, but I arrived at older and younger when I was writing my book, and literally got tired of typing out older adults, and I realized it worked, and I started to use it in my conversation, and people picked it up. I like it for a couple of reasons. For one thing, it's value neutral, or elders is a beautiful word, but it suggests that older people are somehow more senior. There's another word or have more power. And I want, I think, I think age should not be a positive or a negative. It should be just a neutral attribute that we're willing to, I mean, it has all sorts of power, but that we can just that doesn't make you high, doesn't confer status. And the other thing I like about it is the -ER, older, younger, because it emphasizes that we're all on this spectrum and we age in relation to each other. A five year old will assure you she is older than her three year old sister, right? So I think there's something of an idea. And I think the you know, the concept of generations is overused, and it suggests word dropped into these fixed cohorts, which I'll put a note in the chat to an article about why I wrote, why I don't love that. But I think we do think about intergenerational meaning giant age gap, meaning, you know, boomers and millennials, meaning old people in a senior living place, and kindergarteners or whatever. And I'm sure Maya will tell you, there's a big difference between, you know, freshman at college and seniors. It can be as or in a family. Family is a terrific example. You know, what do the younger kids have in common and from the older that's different from the older, but also they could have completely different lives. So not to get hung up on the idea that it has to be a huge age gap in order for the work we're doing here to be relevant and for that language to be useful.

Marci Alboher 27:22

Yeah. Anybody else have some language things you want to put out into the space?

Maya Joshi 27:28

I mean, I think I love the framing of older and younger, and it's interesting to hear different ages and different people's perspectives on terms. And there was this one time I went to a senior care community in Chicago, like, I think last year and my group and I were getting feedback on something we were doing from a group of the residents, and we were like, Should we call it seniors, or should we call it like older adults? And one of the people where he was like, I am a senior, and I identify as a senior, and I want to be recognized as a senior. And I was like, more power to you. Like, yes, embrace it. And there were other people that were like, No, I disagree. So it's kind of fun to have those conversations. And something else that came up that reminded me of what you said was they were talking about how each of them like they're just grouped as this category of older adult, even though they all are from different generations, even though they're in the same senior care community. So it's really interesting to see, like,

how it's easy to like, you said group people in these massive, arbitrary, almost categories when really, like, there's you don't need that

Ashton Applewhite 28:30

Language is a moving target, I'm gonna like a word that you're not and vice versa, right?

Marci Alboher 28:35

So go on. Cristina, yeah

Christina Gray 28:38

This is where I said the platinum rule, right? So there is, the golden rule is, treat people how they want, how you want to be treated. And the platinum rule is, you treat people how they want to be treated. So somebody might come in and say, actually want this word for myself, and then that supporting that individual person, I think since we're talking about power, language holds a lot of power. Language holds a lot of power. So while we don't want to get caught up in policing, I think it's also important for us to take it seriously, because words can be really painful, particularly words that have historically been used to harm and so it becomes this really tricky situation of supporting individuals in a system where we're talking about social power. Social power is not what you as an individual can or cannot do. Social power is what you can make other people do, and words can be a part of that or a tool for that.

Marci Alboher 29:39

How about humor? Where is the place for humor in all of this?

Christina Gray 29:47

I think humor is an in person situation, if, if people's humor varies. And I think I think that. Is also something where there has to be some trust. Humor is also something which could be very funny and could be very harmful, depending on the audience.

Ashton Applewhite 30:12

Mean, also we use humor to deflect discomfort. And you know, you have no sense of humor or whatever. And my sort of go to line on this is that, of course, you're entitled to think that greeting card is hilarious, and often they are funny, but discrimination isn't funny. And even if you understand that it's an in joke between you and your friend, you put that I mean that the great the birthday cards, really, if you think about them, they are appalling. And when you put that on your on your fridge, because you think it's funny you are, whether you realize it or not, saying the word to everyone who comes in and looks at your fridge that that that kind of denigration is okay with you.

Maya Joshi 30:50

Like, I think it's I've heard from people that are maybe, like, in their 20s, or even like seniors in college say, like, Oh, I'm too old for that. Or like, I feel so old. And I'm like, like, 25 I don't know if that's considered old, but then really, like, what is old? And I think, like with the Hume area, it depends on who it is receiving it, and like, what they like to joke around. But in the case where

maybe you have like, a 20 something saying, like, Oh my God, I feel so old, my back hurts, and, like, all of these things. And there's the day next to somebody who's like, maybe 98 who back is maybe in a different situation. I don't know. I feel like it's so situationally dependent.

Ashton Applewhite 31:29

My daughter just turned 40, and they went to a club and danced, and a friend of her, we're going to go out to a club that and just a little bar, but her friend said, Oh, I can't do that. I'm too old. And Morgan, being trained by me, said, You could be too lazy, you can be too tired, you can just not be in the mood, but you can't be too old for it. There are lots of other reasons that are the actual reason.

Christina Gray 31:53

Here's where I think humor can work. So I recently bought a house, and my mother is from a blue collar family, and knows how to do everything that me and my husband don't. My mother is 67 had some muscle issues and couldn't physically do the work. So we started calling her YODA. And every time we couldn't figure we're like, hey, YODA. How do you do this? Hey, YODA, the screws not coming loose, Hey, yo, right? Because she had all of the knowledge and that we needed her for those pieces so. But there is a positive piece to that, as opposed to that, to the discrimination.

Marci Alboher 32:37

Yeah, I mean, I think that's kind of flipping the script a little of trying to think of something again that somebody is offering rather than, you know, positioning a need. It's just like an asset frame again. And I think whenever we can do that around age. It's kind of contributing to thinking differently. And I know in yours, it wasn't just age. And I think something Duncan and I are always saying, and this came up in the comments, someone was talking about the intersection of age and gender. And in your instance, I think there is an intersection of age and maybe living in another time when we had to do more things. But also it sounds like your mom, you feel like, you know, you maybe live in a professional world, and your mother lived in a world where you had to do everything. And I think like, it's never just age, like age is never the only thing in the room, and we have to think about what's going on with other identities that we have and other parts of our personality that we have. And I think you hit on that too, Ashton, when people are quick to go to age but it's like, I don't like to dance, like, it doesn't matter, like, you know, like, it could be a lot of things going on in that situation.

Ashton Applewhite 33:54

Right? I'm not in the mood, right, right?

Marci Alboher 33:57

So I want to talk about Maya and Christina. Like Christina, you mentioned, you know your closeness to college age, and Maya, you're actually on a college campus, and we know that young I'm seeing increasingly more and more young people like showing up in ages and work in age equity, work in intergenerational work. Do you think that kind of ageism and awareness

around aging is having a moment, or are you all feeling like you're outliers and you're these very solitary voices?

Maya Joshi 34:36

I think it's having a moment in the sense of like moment being something that's so much longer than just, like a little moment, as in, like, it's like a massive movement, and I think it's something that has been building for a long time. It's just that nowadays, with social media, it's so much easier to share things and, like, find people who are talking about similar things that you're interested in. And like, it definitely goes both ways. Like on social media, there's definitely this like trend, I think I saw a little while ago about like, product retinol, and like, eight or nine year olds using it for their skin. And I think people associate retinol with like, wrinkle prevention or wrinkles, and it's really not healthy for like, young kids to use. And I think that kind of translates to this, like, fear of getting older that definitely exists within my generation and maybe the generation below us. So I don't know. I think it goes both ways. But I mean, I think this, this idea of, like ageism and combating this idea of anti aging, and just like learning more about how we can connect with people who are different from us in age and other facets, is something that is happening now, and I think will keep happening for a very, very long time, because it's being built on the work that's been done long before you know I existed.

Marci Alboher 35:54

Yeah, Christina, what's your take?

Christina Gray 35:58

I hope it's not a moment. It's definitely on the rise. I think that activists, it's becoming more clear than ever that my liberation is intertwined with your liberation, and as more people step up around sexism and racism, the deeper you get, the more you understand that we cannot eradicate racism without eradicating ageism. We cannot eradicate sexism without eradicate, these are all intertwined. So I think there's a cohort of people stepping in because of that space. I think it's also a testament to the work that has already been done around intergenerational relationship building. Every time I meet a young person who is involved in this work, they tell me about some very positive, usually childhood experience with somebody of their grandparents age or older, not just their parents. And so I think that we're seeing some of the effects of that where it used to be, if you really liked your grandma, you became the director of a senior center. Now, right? There are so many more options, right? And I hope that, I think the number one thing we can do to cultivate the next generation of anti ageist activists is have these positive really, my daughter is at home with her grandmother right now, probably renovating my house, hopefully, but to have those positive, and I think we're seeing some of the effects of that as well.

Marci Alboher 37:22

Yeah, I want to pop up some questions that I'm already seeing in the comments, and you can each jump in if this speaks to you. So we've talked a lot about like, naming those power dynamics and having the kind of safety to do that. If, what would you say to someone who is trying to kind of call out, or at least try to address a power dynamic they see, whether it's in a workplace context or a volunteer project they're working on, or maybe even in your extended

family, like any way to try to approach a conversation where you don't feel like you do have the power to name what's going on, but you see it very clearly.

Ashton Applewhite 38:13

I mean, it is situational. I learned a lot about this from upping my anti racist game during Black Lives Matter, and learning about encountering microaggressions, and when you know it depends if it's your boss or you hear someone being on the receiving end of a comment you didn't think was okay, you maybe don't want to point it out in front of them. Maybe you want to talk to them privately and say, I heard this. Did you hear it? How can I support you. And now you know it is important to speak up if we can, and it does take courage, because social change is uncomfortable. You know, if everyone stays in their comfort zone, we don't, you know, we just accept the status quo. That said, I also think it's really important to remember that you can't start too small, even if all that happens, and I don't mean to diminish it, make it diminutive, even if it's a small shift in your own thinking internally, you are different. You're different when you step out in the world. You're different when you look at those, those birthday cards, and so, you know, any single comment, it helps move the needle. Don't feel like you have to go become a god help you a full time anti ageism activist. And one tip, a really useful all purpose comment. When you encounter a comment that you think isn't okay, whether it's ages or sexist or racist or you're not even sure whether it is. What do you mean by that? And just let that sit, because you don't want to throw someone back on their back heel and be defensive, because then they just dig in. But that does encourage them, force them, frankly, to reflect on what did they mean, and hopefully that gives you an opening to start a conversation.

Christina Gray 40:02

And I would add, while it's certainly ideal to address the situation with a person that said it, do not underestimate the power of talking it over with your own friends or family, right? So speaking up doesn't always necessarily mean and frankly, I think it's probably a good idea to run it by your friends or a trusted person before speaking up, but the process of reflecting through the experience, and then you've had that conversation with a peer. The other thing I say is, the bad news is they're probably going to be ageist again. The good news is you're going to have another shot, right, so you can decide, right? And so Ashton's questions are great, just questions by time and to practice. And I tell people, practice in the mirror. What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that? It sounds so silly, but it will become muscle memory, and you will have another chance, unfortunately.

Marci Alboher 41:02

Maya, do you have any suggestions here?

Maya Joshi 41:04

Yeah, I mean, I think the Why did you say that, or what do you mean by that, is, like, my go to because it offers them a chance to kind of expand, like you both were saying. And I think, like, if we, if we even take it, like, out of the workplace and just like, into the most I don't know, like at home, chill level, like, even the idea of like, I don't know, dress your age or act your age, like, those are just like, there's so many subtle examples that happen, and you know, they might not,

you might not even like clock that as ageism, just because, like, they're so ingrained for like, something like, act your age or like, dress your age, that can be somebody can say that to someone who's 70. Someone can say that to someone who's 17. So 17. But like, I think just like realizing that we do have these tools of questions that can apply, be applied to things that, like somebody might say in their personal life, but maybe also a reflection of what they would say in the workplace, you can, kind of like, step in in that moment, if you're willing to.

Marci Alboher 42:00

Yeah, yeah. I also want to say something that we've thought a lot about at CoGenerate, which is this is another reason why it's never easy to be like the the first or the only. This is true of any kind of situation, but if you're trying to age diversify a team, it is always better to bring on a few people who are younger or older, not just one, and then those people together can talk about something they've experienced, and together figure out a strategy that makes sense to bring it up in that environment, but it's really hard if you're the only one. So for any of you who are out here listening, who have hiring power or are involved in leadership. Keep that in mind as you are building your teams and trying to age diversify them, I guess, or diversify them in any way, really. But Ashton, you looked like you wanted to add another thought.

Ashton Applewhite 42:54

I was just thinking in the context of Maya's wonderful example. Another good comeback is like, what does age have to do with it? And again, why can be a little aggressive, although so tempting, but just like what you know, what is age? How does that relate to age? And then people again, have to reflect, yeah,

Marci Alboher 43:15

yeah. So I wanted to, there's a there's a few comments that talked about internalized ageism, and you have all kind of alluded to that. But is there anything, anything you can share about what we should know about internalized ageism? And I know Ashton, you covered this extension in the book, so you want to kick us off.

Ashton Applewhite 43:37

Well, I would just say we are all ageist if we grow up in the West, in cultures that barrage us with negative messages about how awful it's going to be to age past youth, and how disastrous and tragic it will be to encounter any kind of impairment, and we all internalize that most bias is unconscious. Most of us do not want to be on you know, bias the most necessary and most difficult step is to acknowledge that bias. But the good thing is, because all change starts with awareness. You can't challenge something if you don't know what's there. And the minute you realize that it's in you the way it's in everyone, it is really like letting a genie out of the bottle, because that opens the door to you seeing it in the world around you, in the media, in on social media, in magazines, blah, blah, blah, and at the dinner table. And then the next step automatically is, oh, it's not just me. It's in our culture, our economy, our society. It's a collective issue, and that means we can come together and do something about it in gatherings like this one and in countless other ways.

Marci Alboher 44:47

Any other thoughts about the internalization of our ageism? I think

Christina Gray 44:54

Here's the very tricky part with the internalized ages. So everything Ashton said is. True, and then we get into the intergroup dynamics. And I think what is underneath this tension is a looming resentment that one group has a power that the other one doesn't have. So when I and this is what helps me keep my humanity, when people say horrible things, right? It's that I'm like, I don't believe in my heart that this is what you believe. I think you're really hurt. So when I hear young people say, like older people, they don't know what they're talking about, they're frustrated because they don't get a say in their own life, right? And when I hear an older people, older person, say, You're too young to be sick, I hear them frustrated that they're getting sick as they're older and that right? So they're and I think we all have this internal piece that might look a bit ugly, but until we start to unpack that, it's really hard to have those authentic relationships. And I think what Ashton was saying in the beginning is, um, we can have all of it, right. We can right. So I might not have, um, the knowledge of how to do something, but I can get that from my mother. And my mother might not have the physical capacity anymore, but she can get that from me. But if you're caught in the resentment of this other age group has what I don't, there's so much pain under ageism, and part of that internalized ageism is also healing.

Ashton Applewhite 46:35

Thank you for such a vulnerable take on that and so empathic. Christina, I just want to say that, if I had to say what is one thing I hope YODA will accomplish, it is to undermine old versus young framing, because it's so common, and it's the way the system deflects us. It's divide and conquer. That's what all prejudice does find a scapegoat, immigrants, whoever, and then people are fighting about whether it's men or women or stay at home moms versus moms in the workforce or whatever. And when you get to power, which is not easy and which is fraught, you are instantly, not instantly, but you are then automatically thinking about larger systems, because there is resentment and it's hard to talk about, but we are but it is never about age. It might be about class. It might be about values, it might be about systems. So that's my goal for YODA is to, is to derail old versus young framing and make us look at what's really going on.

Maya Joshi 47:33

Yeah, and going off of that. And, like, the flip side, I guess, of what you were saying, Christina, like, I think having a really positive relationship with somebody in a different generation or different age than you can really help, like, reduce that resentment and that, like, the stigma or the difference in opinion and like, part of the reason, the main reason I'm involved in this work is just because of the positive relationship I've always had with my grandparents since I was growing up, and to the point like they're on this webinar right now watching and so like, you know, just to give them a shout out, but also, like, I think having that relationship, whether it's through family or, you know, through people you meet, is so important, whether it's like that neighbor that might live down the hall from you, and like, taking a second to just be like, Hey, do you have some advice for me on this, whether they're younger than you or older than you? Like,

it really might feel uncomfortable in the moment, but could create so much more comfort later on.

Marci Alboher 48:26

Well, that leads to me to a little bit of a closing kind of try this at home piece. I would like each of you. I'm going to just do a rapid fire. I'd like each of you to give us something everybody can do when they literally, like, end the webinar and go back out into whatever world they are living in. So you can choose it to be something you can do, either in your personal life or in the work that you do. But one thing you'd like us to consider doing, I'm going to start to give you a moment to catch your breath. So a few years ago, in the pandemic, like many other people, I stopped dying my hair. And the reason I did it was twofold. One was I felt like I was hiding something about myself. Here I am. I'm like in the aging space, talking about aging all the time, and I was masking something, and I felt really dishonest. I felt and I also had no idea what my hair looked like, because I had been coloring it for so long, I didn't know what would happen when I revealed it. But I started looking on Instagram, and I saw all these, like, silver models and like, I really have to say, like I saw a reframing of what it could be like. And I was very happy once I let go of this and I let my hair go natural and now younger people, women especially, are among the people who are always coming up to me saying, like, Wow, I can't wait until I have hair like that. And I was like, oh. And I missed, like. Salt and pepper stage, like I missed a whole stage of it because I covered it up. And I do think the tide on certain things will change if we buck the narrative. And kind of we had because we were becoming a place where nobody knew what it looked like to have natural hair, and then many of us did it at once, and it was like this great reveal. So I think, like any way you can change the narrative by doing something in your own life, is what I would suggest. So who wants to go next? Maya, you look like you got one?

Maya Joshi 50:34

Yeah. I mean, I guess, like one thing would just be to find somebody that maybe like you see sometimes, like, if you live in a condo building in the elevator, or, like, down the block from you, ideally, somebody who's a different age than you, who, like, it feels like, slightly uncomfortable to go out of your way and, like, make a connection with them, if that already doesn't exist, and just like, start up a conversation, like, ask them what they think about, like, your shoes. I don't know that's kind of random, but just like, asking them for some sort of, like, their opinion on something, and asking them, like, why they think, like, you know, using that as a way to start a conversation, just because, I think, you know, it's easy to in our in our groups where we're living, if, whether that's at school or at home, in different areas, to like, nestle into our own groups, whether that's like people who look like us or People who are same age, and I think taking that one step out of your comfort zone could, just like, move the needle and potentially be the start of a friendship. And it may or may not work, but you won't know if you don't try. So I don't know that's just an idea.

Ashton Applewhite 51:35

I will follow that up, because mine is a riff on the same idea, and I'll let Christina bat clean up with some more radical organizing idea. But, you know, making a significantly older or younger friend is itself an anti ageist act. And so my, my and, and I, I've heard that it relatively few people

in the US have a friend who is more than 10 years younger or older than them. You can't just go grab, you know, an old slash young person say, hi, let's be friends. But you can, you know you might be taking the garbage out. You might live together, and if you wonder how to do it, Another idea is to think of something you like to do and find a mixed age group of group to do it with, or this is all these things are easier said than done, but try to break the habit, which we all have, of making a beeline for people your own age when you enter the room, or if you having a party. You know, I think I at least am trying to mix it up in in terms of, you know, other identities. My friends are very age diverse. So it seems easy. I know it's not easy, but think about who you can invite that is not the same age as you. Or if you get invited to an event where you think everyone's going to be much younger or much older, try not to use that as a reason to not go. You know, there are always going to be some people, a few people who maybe look at you as kids, but that's not because they're older or younger. That's because they're jerks, and most people are not jerks, and we'll be really happy to see you there.

Marci Alboher 53:10

Christina

Christina Gray 53:12

I'm so glad they said that, because that was like three and four on my so, um, I'm gonna go rogue and say there's two. One read the YODA primer. They're going to send around a form it. I know I wrote it, but it's weird. Really is oh good, and really, really is helpful, and you will get a lot more from that. So that's a side one. The other thing that I want folks to do is to get a piece of paper and write down a few things. One, write down your secret, most yuckiest, most embarrassing shame. Like, what is your secret ageist thought? What is your secret ageist thought? You don't have to do it right now, but like, because that's going to tell you. Where are you? A little bit wounded. Where is your internalized ageism? What? That's part of the work that you have to do as part of that healing before you can share and exchange power. And the second thing to write on the piece of paper is, what privilege do you have around your age? What do you get to do that other people don't get to do, because spoiler, that's the thing that you need to share. If Maya and I are going somewhere, guess who's renting the hotel room, right? Like it has to be me. So start to write down, where do you have to do that healing, and where do you have power that you can share? And because you've already done the friendship building that Maya and Ashton told you to you'll start to have this person where maybe you give them this exercise, and then they become your YODA partner, where you get to share that power to dismantle ageism.

Marci Alboher 54:55

I love all of this. This is the beginning, not the end. We did this conversation to get you familiar with YODA. You're gonna if you've registered here, you're gonna get a follow up email with a YODA primer, primer, primer that Christina and Ashton have been talking about. We're gonna share Ashton's email because she actually wants to know if you are doing a YODA activity, we're going to be tracking that we want to see if this is happening out in the world. Duncan nicely added a few things that you should just know about that are coming up from CoGenerate Like tomorrow we have a CoGen 101, which is a regular thing we do to introduce people more

to our community, and we do want to know when you when you get the email from us. Feel free to reply. We check the inbox all the time. We're also going to save this chat and make sure if there's anything to lift up, that we share those resources. A lot of you did have good resources to share. Our audience is always really on it. And I just want to thank you all for spending this time with us today. Go out and YODA in the world. But before you click off, just take a moment please to just do this little survey.

Ashton Applewhite 56:15

And if I can add one thing while people are filling out the survey, I put a link to the article which describes YODA in greater detail, and I just you will see, if you read it, that there is no one right way to do it. You can do it at any scale. I don't own it. I don't want to own it. If you have a conversation that centers it with your uncle, email me and tell me about it, because I posted about Old School, there's a repository there for all the ways in which people use the idea. If you come up with some questions or a good strategy, tell me about it. I'll put it out old school, with or without your name, whatever you want, so that other people can learn from the ways in which we take this idea out in the world. And thank you.

Marci Alboher 57:00

Thanks all and see you at the next one. Bye.