

Speakers Series

October 3rd, 2020

Legislation Committee Report

Speaker Series reflections on Dr. Dan Levitt's message on the *Gendered Lens of Aging*

Dr. Dan Levitt's message and missive was one of celebrating aging, of recognizing the inherent risks associated with aging but also advocating for the independence of the aging individual. During his message the participant was asked to consider or rather reconsider what is "old", expressing that we should consider our lives as measured in thirds which would mean that we are young, middle aged and spend the last third of our as "old" and to consider aging as another third of our lives on the aging journey.

Dr. Levitt asked the Speaker Series participants to reconsider the media narrative and in doing so instead of affirming that 80 is the new 50 we collectively need to push back with 80 is 80; to celebrate the number for what it is and the good that accompanies growing older. Dr. Levitt emphasized that doing so would work towards debunking youth culture as the ideal. This debunking was picked up by women's clothing brand Chico's in their new slogan of #HowBoldAreYou. The campaign used by Chico's brand proposes the use of the statement "I'm not growing older, I'm growing bolder". In doing so we take on a more purposeful role in aging.

In further getting participants to rethink aging Dr. Levitt conveyed to participants that a shift in our current cultural climate towards the acceptability of Ageism is needed. That though we firmly rally against other "isms" such as sexism, racism, etc. not rallying against ageism is detrimental towards aging. Members were asked to reconsider the use vernacular such as "She's still...driving, living on her own, working, exercising etc. at her age" to reassess our words and to choose phrasing that aligns with a more positive view of the aging journey by saying "of course she still...at her age". Furthermore, we need to call out ageism as strongly and firmly as we would other "isms" and to be intentional about discontinuing ageism jokes.

For those on social media Dr. Levitt recommended members follow Baddie Winkle, a lively, fun senior with a following almost 2.5 million on Facebook and Instagram and others like her who are proof that those over 60 are anything but boring.

Check out Dr. Levitt's recent article publish in The Province on International Day of Older Persons as well as his op-ed piece on the in The Vancouver Sun on the aging journey published in the spring.

<https://theprovince.com/opinion/dan-levitt-with-international-day-of-older-persons-start-embracing-elderhood-as-the-next-big-thing>

<https://vancouversun.com/opinion/dan-levitt-a-new-hope-for-rethinking-the-aging-journey/>