

Voices of Advocacy: Older Women Speak Out An Educator's Guide

This educational resource can be used in many different settings including classes and workshops in women's studies, aging and gerontology, social work, nursing, voluntarism, advocacy and international development. It can also be used as a discussion tool for staff and volunteers working in government and voluntary agencies that promote active aging and the participation of older people in civil society.

The use of the video and accompanying handouts (free for downloading at www.grannyvoices.com) will stimulate conversations and reflections that address the following **learning objectives**:

- To increase understanding of the positive aspects of active aging and how older women are breaking down negative stereotypes about growing older in today's society
- To increase appreciation for the power and passion that older women bring to the fight for social justice and the rights of women and children
- To increase knowledge about how to engage and nurture the empowerment of older women as activists, leaders and learners in contemporary society
- To increase understanding of how the HIV/AIDS pandemic is affecting families, grandmothers and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa, and how Canadian grandmothers stand in solidarity with their sister grandmothers in Africa.

Set-Up and Timing

1. A session using this video will take a minimum of 30 minutes. However, you will have a much richer discussion (and be able to explore and expand on the topic) if you set aside 60 to 90 minutes. If you have more than 15 participants, it is recommended that you break into smaller groups to address some of the questions so that everyone has a chance to speak, followed by a brief discussion as a whole group.

3. The video is in the same format as commercial videos you rent or buy. It can be played on a TV and DVD player or on a computer with a DVD play application. If you are showing it on a computer (or from a computer through a projector) make sure you have speakers to project the sound and ensure that everyone can hear the dialogue.

3. Preview the video to test your equipment and ensure that the video can be viewed and heard by all in your meeting space.

A Sample Session

1. Introduce the topic and learning objectives.

2. Show the video (10 minutes).
3. Open the discussion by asking some key questions:
 - a) What were some of the feelings, reactions and thoughts you had while watching the video?
 - b) There are 6 stories in the video that represent some key themes. Which of the following resonates most with you and why? (can be done on an individual basis, as an open exercise or discussed in small groups)
 - Breaking down stereotypes about older women: How does the Grandmothers movement overturn negative images about women growing older in Canadian society? What new images does this video help create?
 - The Baby Boom generation: Are they different from other generations of older women? Is there an “activism gene in one’s DNA”? How does this compare to your experience?
 - Empowerment and healthy aging: How do older women become empowered? Is “raging” good for your health?
 - Building community and social support: How does a feminist model of operating help to build community at three levels—within a group, and at community and global levels? Why is friendship and social support particularly important as people get older?
 - Solidarity not charity: What is the difference between solidarity and charity? What motivates older women to advocate for and with their sisters across the globe?
 - Understanding advocacy: How do you understand/define advocacy?
 - Making a difference: What can we learn from the Hummingbird Story about engaging and nurturing older women’s involvement in voluntary activism?
4. Discuss the answers to these questions and the reflections of participants as a group.
5. **Optional: Provide more information** on active aging, older women in Canada and Africa, and key principles for engaging and nurturing older women as voluntary activists, the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, etc, (see handouts). This can be done at any point in the session or provided as take-away notes.
6. **Optional assignments**
 - a) Interview an older woman (age 60-plus), such as your mother, aunt, grandmother or friend. Describe her experience and opinions about being involved in advocacy/

activism when she was young, middle-aged and now. Ask her to identify the kinds of things she felt/feels strongly about and how she stood up/stands up for those things. Compare this to your own experience and views. Identify and reflect on the similarities and differences.

- b) Choose one of the “Facts” from the handout *Some Facts about Older Women in Canada and sub-Saharan Africa* and expand on it. Provide additional statistics, background information and references about this point. Discuss how this fact affects the lives and health of older women in Canada and in sub-Saharan Africa.

Handouts and Background Material

Some Facts about “Older” Women in Canada and in sub-Saharan Africa

This handout provides information about demographic trends, health, income and the living experiences of older women in Canada and in sub-Saharan Africa

Ten Principles for Engaging and Nurturing Older Women Activists

This handout provides nine principles for successfully engaging and nurturing older women as activists for a cause. These principles are drawn from the experience of the Canadian Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

Further Information and Recommended Sources

This handout provides information about the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign and the National Advocacy Committee, and suggestions for further reading.

Guiding Principles for Grandmother Groups

These principles, which were developed by the Greater Vancouver Area GoGos, provide a value-based foundation for the work of grandmother groups

September 2011