



Using *Coming of Age in Aging America* in Your Work

The *Coming of Age in Aging America* documentary and accompanying website (www.theagingamericaproject.com) have been designed as tools to change the conversation about aging and how our new longevity will bring systemic a transformation of our society -- today and in the future.

The film tells a complex important story and this ToolKit is meant to both simplify and make concrete the issues.

We have found that while most know that, as one interviewee put it, ‘there sure are a lot more old people around, very few understand that those old people are the vanguard of an historic transformation – societies across the globe in which there will be as many if not fewer young people than older people. We have added two decades to our lives. Fewer still understand that this is not a Boomer problem – it is a permanent phenomenon that will require change now – for our citizens today and in the future.

The net result of not understanding this is a skew in our discourse about aging. Default thinking among the public goes something like this: “how do I get to age well?”; “This tsunami of old people is going to cost too much, bankrupt Social Security and Medicare and send the deficit reeling?; “I have to care for my aging parents AND my growing family and I can’t do it” and “We’re all going to get grouchy and frail and get Alzheimers”.

Coming of Age in Aging America’s central thesis is that an aging society is not just about old people – it’s about all people now and in the future. It’s about our fundamental institutions, policies and systems and how to approach re-engineering them.

This toolkit is meant to help stakeholders do their important work in an environment whose thinking has not yet shifted. No question – there will be a shift in thinking. Your work – and *Coming of Age in Aging America* – is designed to help you and your colleagues with that.

Eight Ways to Use the Series to Advance Your Work

1. Facilitate In-Service Training for Providers

Screening the films and using their accompanying discussion guides can provide modules for trainings of all kinds – from urban planners to medical care providers.

2. Brown-Bag Lunches

Many workplaces hold lunchtime events and provide release time for voluntary activities. Suggest a series of brown-bag lunch events devoted to screening and discussing *Coming of Age in Aging America* and your staff's assumptions about their own life course, and how ageism and bias are an impediment to social change.

3. Engage policymakers

Once allies are brought together eager for change, they can convene policy forums and screen the film, or even a few clips, as part of a healthy discussion with civic leaders and policy makers about initiatives that can make a difference in your community, your county, your state—making clear the benefits to all.

4. Build new allies across sectors

To the extent those working for living wage jobs and benefits, racial justice, affordable housing, transit and infrastructure improvements, zoning, food access, environmental justice, more green space, workforce development, philanthropy, and even immigration succeed in their efforts, then the conditions for older people are likely to improve.

Using the lens of our new longer-lived society can help stitch this work together and build a stronger, broader base of support. Don't forget to reach out to your public television and radio station community affairs directors.

5. Generate student involvement

The series can be used in a wide range of courses—sociology and political science, policy administration, urban planning, architecture, economics, labor studies, public health, education, psychology, medical schools and nursing. Films can be screened in class or assigned outside class as readings. They can also be used in residence life programs.

6. Engage the media

Invite selected members of the media to attend your events. Help them appreciate how any discussion of our aging citizens is incomplete unless it also includes the lifecourse context and how social conditions, history, racism, corporate policies and government action can help or hinder creating a health aging society.. Invite your local PBS radio or TV station to produce a wrap-around on how focusing on local issues to accompany the broadcast of *The Raising of America*.

7. Engage members and constituents This can be done by contacting faith communities departments of public health, your local AARP office, your local Office of Elder Affairs, and recreational facilities like the YMCA. The first step in mounting a screening is to determine who the host is. It may be you – it may be a collaboration.

8. Foster community dialogues

Public screenings at churches, schools, libraries, theaters, high school auditoriums and

elsewhere provide opportunities to engage broad and diverse publics and to inspire them to imagine and support specific initiatives that address our new longevity. They encourage public to demand greater accountability from government and business leaders. Consider reaching out to the media, especially your public radio or television station, to cover your event or even produce their own show rooted in your community.

A Five Step Process for Using the Film in a Group Context

Consider the difference between watching and using the series. Watching is a passive activity; audiences receive information and afterwards might have some time for a Q&A. Using the series engages participants in active, results-oriented, critical and creative thinking from the moment they arrive, even before the film screening begins.

Consider how you might ask audiences to examine or articulate their preconceptions about aging and longevity before they watch. What are their conceptions of the traditional lifecourse – one that imagines retirement from the workforce at 65? What do you want them to keep in mind as they are watching? How will speakers challenge and inspire? What concrete actions can audience members take immediately? What actions can lead to a leadership role over the long term?

A first suggestion, perhaps too obvious: try to build in awareness of our new longevity, an aging society and its challenges and opportunities in every political conversation about meta-issues. At no point in this last electoral cycle was an aging society mentioned! So our society keeps its head in the sand when it comes to embracing – and instituting – change, without which we will face significant problems.

Here's a five-step process that will help you plan a great screening, inspire audiences to action and trigger collaboration among colleagues:

- 1. Build internal consensus and capacity**
- 2. Choose your audience**
- 3. Prioritize ways your audience can take action**
- 4. Find success stories to spotlight**
- 5. Choose what to show, which speakers to invite, and which co-sponsors to engage**

1. Build Internal Consensus and Capacity

What role is your organization best positioned to play?

Before bringing people together, clarify whom you want to reach and who from your organization or coalition needs to be engaged first so you can have full support to create a strong and effective event.

Use the following questions to assess and increase the level of commitment and expertise within your organization and/or planning committee. How you answer these questions will help you plan internal screenings and discussions that can lay the groundwork for internal efficacy, an effective education campaign, for building partnerships or for advocacy.

Knowledge & Skill

We would strongly recommend review the work of the MacArthur Network on Aging and its 2015 *Daedalus* publication

Mission & Vision

Your mission and vision has carefully crafted and guided much of your work. Remind yourself and your colleagues what it is and why. Remind yourself and colleagues how external factors and alliances help advance your mission. Many mission statements are not regularly updated. Look closely at yours and adjust if necessary – for clarity and contemporaneity.

Inclusivity

How knowledgeable, skillful and committed to reimagining and constructing institutions and policies for an aging population? Does everyone know how to move the conversation beyond ‘how to age well’ – and individual perspective — to the ways structures and systems impact older peoples’ and younger generations’ ability to age we? Where are areas of resistance?

How does advancing equity and social justice fit into the mission of your organization? How do these translate into practice in the realm of aging and longevity?

How inclusive is your membership or your staff and leadership? How can you reach a wider audience and/ or share power, particularly with groups who are most impacted by your work? Whose voices are included and heard?

How do your existing programs, policies and partnerships address and tackle social conditions – like housing, education, financial stability, work for all citizens as the confront our new longevity? What will it take to realign them?

Is it clear to your leadership, staff, members, constituents and/or clients how your work fits into the larger context of a productive and longer-lived society? What would it take to make this connection?

What activities, organizations, trends and media coverage outside your organization are advancing or hindering initiatives that benefit older people and position aging as a lifelong process? How might you tap into the momentum other groups bring to this issue?

Whose backing would help you champion this conversation across sectors and silos, across impacted communities and to other levels of your organization?

Who within your group has the time, resources and capacity to take the lead in developing an action plan for your event(s), supervising publicity and logistics, and overseeing follow-up activities? Do they have the backing and full support of the leadership and members?

Align your own organization

Use the series to improve staff and leadership knowledge, skills and commitment to reframing the idea of aging from an individual to a societal perspective? You might use the lifecourse lens to consider the impact of your own programs, policies and partnerships on staff and the community. Or ask how your organization can take a leadership role in drawing attention to the strengths of older people, their contribution from financial to experiential, the value of intergenerational communities, policy changes that make working longer more possible and reduce poverty that many older people now experience.

2. Choose Your Audience

Coming of Age in Aging America can be used with a wide range of audiences to advance many goals: winning support for a specific policy, building alliances across sectors, and beginning community dialogues among others.

The key to planning a screening that is focused, relevant and inspiring is:

- Determine who your audience is
- Set clear goals (*what you want to accomplish*)
- Define clear objectives (*concrete outcomes you can use to measure success and learning among participants*)

Screenings can bring together many organizations who work with children but rarely communicate with each other—service providers, urban planners, corporate and business leaders, public health workers, material designers, architects, counselors, care providers, and scholars.

3. Prioritize Ways Your Audience Can Take Action

How will you translate the energy generated during your screening into concrete action?

It is essential offer your participants a range of concrete ways to take action, from simple steps that can be done immediately to longer-term efforts that can make a larger impact. Be sure to consider who your audience is, their expertise and areas of focus to tailor “next steps” that build on their strengths.

Your participants can...

Organize screenings within their own organization

Identify programs and initiatives within their organizations that can incorporate the series as a training tool

Plan local screening events with PTAs, book clubs, neighborhood associations, churches, tenant groups, libraries, etc.

Partner up with local organizations working on ‘aging issues’ and intergenerational initiatives. Village to Village is a good example.

Partner with your local AARP group. They are well positioned to reach the public, link policy makers and stakeholders, and to host screenings. Since they are a funder of the film, they will have an incentive to work with you to organize screenings and trainings.

Broker partnerships between traditional aging network organizations and organizations from other sectors (e.g., housing, education, employment, political orgs)

Change the conversation through op-eds, letters to the editor, call-ins to radio shows, blog posts, etc.

Organize a policy forum for government officials and civic leaders to learn about early childhood

Create messages for social media (newsletter, Facebook posts, Twitter feed, Instagram, etc.) Messaging is critical to communicating the *scope* of the challenge of an aging society. Framing your mission effectively is often difficult.

We highly recommend three important publications by FrameWorks Institute:

- [Aging, Agency, and Attribution of Responsibility: Shifting Public Discourse about Older Adults](#) (2015), PDF
- [Gauging Aging: Mapping the Gaps Between Expert and Public Understandings of Aging in America](#) (2015), PDF
- [Generations: The Pernicious Problem of Ageism](#) (2015),

4. Find Success Stories to Spotlight

How will you inspire your audience to action?

Since no society has ever yet confronted the challenges and opportunities a longer-lived society brings, success stories are only now just in the making. There's an upside to that: watching a story 'in process' brings viewers in to, as surrogates, imagine addressing the issues along with the community, workplace, family or other institutions.

Whatever story you suggest, it should bring home the idea that change is possible – even structural and systemic change. And even in this political atmosphere.

Framing your story

Frameworks Institute in Washington DC are past masters at the art of framing. Visit their website www.frameworksinstitute.org for insights into framing. Framing has much to do with how your audience will best respond to your story. For instance, with *Coming of Age in Aging America* – will your audience respond best to an 'innovation' framing? Or to a 'social justice' framing? Or to a 'this is big for our society and will surprise you'. Or 'change is a-comin' and we can manage it'. But two easy hints: don't frame (or start) your story as a crisis – even if it is. And avoid the 'individual' v. the collective framing. Context! Individual stories can be discarded if they aren't an exact 'fit' with your audience's own experiences.

And try to tell your story in three 'acts' – a traditional structure. Act One lays out the 'scene' and its elements and ends with an 'inciting incident or thought'; Act Two deepens the conflicts suggested in Act One; and Act Three resolves to story – and for advocacy and leadership a veiled (not rah-rah!) call to action with an example of a success story is a good way to end. The end note should be positive but also echo the rest of the story.

Find Success Stories to Spotlight

Offering profiles of strong contributing older people as leaders and contributors to society.

Taking care not to inflate an image of older people as 'wise sages' or profiling 'super agers', what older people are having an impact on the lives and environment of your community? For instance, in Lexington MA, a 70-pluser is waging a strong campaign against plastic bags. Her story is about the plastic bags' impact on the environment – and only incidentally on her age.

Improving services directly related to the present aging population and their caregivers.

How for instance does Meals on Wheels help older people? How and where might a Senior Center and a day care center partnered for the benefit of all? Is there a Village-to-Village network in your community to profile? What is AARP doing to directly address the needs of older people in your community?

Improving working conditions

Most older people – and many middle aged Americans – know they can work, and work best, if their schedules can be flexible and acclimate to their serious needs across the lifecourse. Is there an employer in your town that does this? With the idea of retaining the best of their workforce – young and old. Is there an employer in your area that has changed the physical working environment – seating, flooring, size of computer screens – to, as Chris Farrell says in the film, 'is good for all workers?'

Advancing living wages and benefits

A living wage sets into motion the conditions necessary for all workers to flourish. But for older workers, it enables them to work longer, save more, maintain their health. With 80% of older women staring down poverty in older age and fully a quarter of our population dependent solely on Social Security for their income, can you find an employer who understands – and responds – to this need?

Improving schools

We as a society are now facing a situation in which fewer younger people will need to support more older people – this being a time-honored social contract. The film depicts this change in demographics as a pyramid turning into a barrel. Without adequate education in the early years, adequate income to save and support will be difficult to come by. Is there a group or program in your area that acknowledges the connection? Is there a robust program in your community that brings the expertise of older workers right into the formal classroom?

Improving social inclusion

The data is clear: older people watch television more and more often alone than other age cohort. Many eat their meals alone. Older people in the suburbs are especially isolated, leading to health, emotional and cognition deficits and physical and financial dangers. How, especially in America's suburbs, are there programs to overcome this isolation? How are some communities altering the built environment to create conditions for intergenerational connectivity? Are there educational programs not billed as 'lifelong learning' (which signals classes for older people) in which multiple generations learn and grow together?

Promoting justice

Many researchers have found that the social justice framework is a powerful way to frame your story.

Unjust stereotyping of older people—ageism—is the only bias that each of us who lives beyond age 50, will experience – regardless of race, gender or gender identity. All of us. We will all age and theoretically be victims of this bias.

Additionally researchers have gathered empirical evidence that providing stories and data that are counterfactual to bias, that demonstrate the positive attributes of the aging process. This helps to reduce ageism.

Stories that depict the injustice of ageism and its costs in health and in the workplace especially can be powerful motivators in telling the justice story.

Further many have warned that there is a war between the generations – that 'entitlements' will favor older people and take resources away from younger generations. What stories are in your community that refute this common (and highly inaccurate) bias? The State of Kansas for instance has found that older people contribute vastly more in taxes and consumption than younger generations – increasing the tax base and the power of local business? Is there such a story in your community?

5. Choose what to Screen, which Speakers to Invite and which Co-sponsors to Engage

The episode or video clips you choose to screen and the speakers you invite should be decided based on the goals and objectives for your event and the actions you'd like audience members to consider.

What to Screen?

Be creative. Be intentional. Ask yourself:

- What are we trying to accomplish with this screening event? What kind of conversation are we trying to spark?
- How much time do we have? Should we show a few five-minute clips or the full one hours documentary
- What issues are most relevant to our audience? Should we stick to the most relevant parts of the series or show segments that will broaden the conversation?
- What will provide your audience a fresh perspective?

For example, rather than show the clip on ageism, why not show the clip that discusses how early the aging process begins and how strengths and weaknesses emerge at every age.

Or engage them in the data (the pyramid v. the barrel) and how immigration of a younger population helps to stabilize and enlarge our economy?

Or foster conversation about the surprising data on Social Security – especially the notion that there is a wage cap to contributions and lifting that cap is one of many innovations possible? This has been a surprise in virtually every screening we've had.

Audiences also resonate to the 'midlife squeeze' and intuitively understand a new logic around the lifecourse. Is it really possible to change?

Who Are the Right Speakers & Panelists?

Speakers and panelists can go a long way toward creating a powerful conversation.

Be sure speakers and panelists can demonstrate how larger social conditions are embedded in an aging society

Ask yourself:

- Which speakers and panelists help audience members connect their aspirations for older people and our intergenerational interdependency?
- Who can link the content of the film to your local landscape for families with young children?
- Do you need a policy perspective? A community perspective? Business? A cross-sectoral perspective? The big picture?
- Do you need expert voices to share the stats and figures specific to your geographic area? Community organizers who can connect social conditions to who has power?
- What expertise/experience/perspective will inspire audience members?

Be sure panelists have previewed the film before the screening so they have a chance to process their reactions prior to the event.

Which Co-sponsors?

One of the critical points of *Coming of Age in Aging America* is that an aging society is not just about today's old people. As James Jackson put it, 'An aging society is about all people'. Ask yourself, what would a cross-sector of sponsors look like?

- People and policies in transportation, business, housing, wages, urban development, public health, and economic policy?
- Co-sponsors from a variety of organizations, across sectors, issues and communities?
- Housing organizations, women's groups, health care providers, business leaders, transportation authorities, and public health organizations?
- Young people, young people, young people! From high-schoolers to students at your local colleges.

Reaching across these sectors will not only diversify the views you bring to the screening conversation, it will diversify the audiences that join the conversation—something that will benefit us all.

Detour Away from Old Thinking

While *Coming of Age in Aging America* explores the transformative effect of our rapidly aging society, the conversation can easily slip back into conventional stories about aging.

To ensure a productive conversation about how we as a society might change the aging conversation – and action – to systemic innovations we ought to:

- 1. Ask new questions**
- 2. Recognize and avoid pitfalls**
- 3. Prepare your facilitator(s)**

The facilitator should understand the big picture and be able to guide a conversation to connect the dots between systems and structures and aging over the lifecourse. “The Big Picture In Four Minutes” is a popular overview animation and additional attribute of the *Coming of Age in Aging America*, found on the website.

1. Ask New Questions

Ask questions that pivot the conversation to changing social structures and systems.

Here are some examples of ‘turning’ a conventional question into a more production conversation.

Usual question: ‘How can we get older people to exercise more and eat healthier?’

Turning question: ‘What are the obstacles older people face to accessing good food and an environment that encourages safe exercise?’

Usual question: ‘Why don’t more people save for their old age?’

Turning question: ‘How can we lift some of the midlife burdens that prevent savings and triggers a desire to get out of the workforce as soon as possible, *and* is this where paid family leave might be considered?’

Usual question: ‘Don’t we have to reduce benefits to salvage Social Security and Medicare before they go bankrupt?’

Turning question: ‘What savings are already in place to maintain solvency as well as create innovation that will help all people work longer?’

2. Anticipating Public Thinking and Avoiding Pitfalls

They sound something like this:

“An aging society is not a ‘burning platform’ issue. We have much bigger social problems to deal with.”

As John R. Rowe, MD has said, we are only just beginning to see the implications of an aging society. As a society, we have known this time would come – in 2030, one third of the population will be over 65. By 2050, half the population will be over the age of 50. These demographics bring opportunities – but also problems. It is a creeping crisis unless we begin now to undertake changes that may take decades to complete.

“There are more young people than there are older people...”

This is a widely held belief, if one considers ‘young people’ as those under the age of 50. But to most people ‘young’ means the much vaunted 18–34 year old demographic, the demographic that still drives many consumer and media products and is regarded as an engine of the consumer economy. The reality is that it is not true. The demographics are changing rapidly. By 2030 there will be more people over the age of 50 in our society than under the age of 50. Not understanding this leads to minimizing the importance of the enormous financial contributions of older cohorts to the economy, their value in the workforce, and their needs as they age. It also leads to ignoring issues that will take at least a generation to fully address – altering our built environment and transportation systems, for example.

“Older people already have too big a piece of the economic pie of the nation. Now they’ll be taking even more at the expense of our children.”

There are two approaches to this statement. One is that elder poverty and neglect is enormously persistent. Many older people are susceptible to poverty and therefore misery than is usually acknowledged. Many of those who have been low-income workers throughout their lives may live shorter lives – sadly. The inequality, inequity and stratification endemic to our society are even more pronounced among older adults.

A second approach is that older people contribute enormously to the lives of their families and society in general – both financially, in terms of skills, experience and what we call ‘wisdom’. Think of childcare in their family, financial assistance for a down payment on a home or education for their grandchildren. The data are clear: older peoples’ contributions to the society can be monetized in the billions.

“Old age is a couple of decades out for the young and middle aged. They can’t hear the urgency of the issue so we’re just preaching to the choir here.”

Again there are multiple responses – even rebuttals – to this idea. First is the science: we humans begin the aging process much earlier than we think – in our late twenties, in fact. Most 40 year-olds need eye glasses to read – the result of aging eye tissue. And the process of

aging is relentless and universal. Second, the kind and quality of aging for the present older generation and generations going forward will rest on practices, behaviors and choices made all along the lifecourse. We have the best chance of being a productive aging society if we enable those choices all along the lifecourse. A strategy for communicating this to younger generations as well as the media and other public institutions will be imperative.

“This is a phenomenon that’s so big, it’s really impossible to do anything worthwhile about. It’s better just to wait and see how it all falls out.”

This fatalism is a common reaction to large social issues. It is truly difficult to engage our imaginations and decision-making in a realm that has never before existed in human history. Think of trying to imagine a world with the Internet – unprecedented global connectivity – with its clear problems and advantages. Were we to encounter the question of ‘what to do with the Internet’ in 1980, we would also feel daunted, though we would start at the other end of the spectrum: contemplating its productive and happy implications.

The reality here is that change will happen in an aging society, whether we design it for the common good or wait for some organic or market-based solution. One reason intentional change will take a generation to implement is because it will invariably start small, in families, communities, regions, and states.

Housing will be at the top of the list among changes that could and should be local, and that means, for instance, that low cost actions can be taken immediately (and facilitated by political leadership): creating a city plan, for instance; changing zoning laws to allow for multigenerational accommodations. This is the place where individuals can exercise agency over their lives by participating in town meetings, planning boards and holding their local policymakers and leaders accountable.

On the national front, the vast physical infrastructure work that our nation needs offers an opportunity to reengineer countless systems for a longer lived society — if at the same time they are redesigned and built for use old and young. Again public pressure can be applied to ensure that this happens.

The above represent only some of the default public thinking you may encounter at a screening. The better prepared the facilitator is for these, the more productive the screening will be.

3. Prepare Your Facilitator(s)

It’s important to have an effective facilitator. Because *Coming of Age in Aging America* challenges long and deeply held assumptions, viewers may react quite differently: some may be disturbed and overwhelmed, while others may feel validated and inspired by what they see.

An effective facilitator will be attentive, set clear directions, engage people, maintain an environment of calm and mutual respect, and is knowledgeable about group dynamics as well as the social determinants of early childhood.

An effective facilitator will also have some command of the content – salient data, past and present policy, the needs expressed by an older population, the deep corrosive power of ageism.

Here are some facilitation tips to help you anticipate the conversation and create a successful experience.

Pre-Screen the Film and Background Materials

- “Pre-process” the film ahead of time so you are not managing your own reaction while trying to facilitate a discussion. Transcripts are available on our website.
- Read background materials to develop your own understanding of how the social conditions families experience affect the trajectory of their young children—for better or for worse. Come ready to share additional information to “ground” discussion and move people towards action.

Also, we recommend the MacArthur Network on Aging’s research papers captured in an issue of Daedalus quarterly publications:

www.amacad.org/content/publications/publication.aspx?d=21706

Know Your Audience

- If you are bringing disparate groups together for the first time, know what their issues are and where their areas of difference and resistance might be.
- Make sure your goals and expectations are appropriate for the audience present in the room, not the group you wanted to have. Be flexible about outcomes.
- Consider your audience’s interests and vulnerabilities. Tailor your language and your framing of the issues to their knowledge and experiences. Let their needs determine the topics and style of discussion.
- Guide the Discussion
 - Allow time for processing and acknowledging people’s reactions.
 - Take the time to make people feel comfortable and allow them to be heard. Various audience members may have a different stake in the issues, especially if it’s a diverse group, and believe that their struggle or perspective is the most important. As a result, discussion about the film can become fraught with emotion.
 - Create group agreements so that everyone knows they will be heard and no one can dominate the discussion or silence others. Ask the group to explore ideas together rather than debate positions.
 - Encourage active listening without judgment. Manage but don’t avoid disagreements, remembering that conflict can be constructive.
 - Invite people to participate, allowing for different styles of engagement. Ensure that different stakeholders are given voice.
 - Encourage participants to go beyond the individual framing (the ‘I know someone who... thinking) to wider societal thinking. A question like: do you think that individual story represents the experiences of others and what can be done to address the issue? Can help deflect that direction.



“There are some that would say we just, as a society, cannot afford the greatest gift we’ve ever achieved in humankind, which is longer life. If we look at aging the way we have for the past 200 years, we will turn it into a crisis, rather than a celebration. ... Longevity changes everything.”

– Dr. Joseph Coughlin, MIT AgeLab

What will it mean for all of us to grow up, live, and age in a society where half the citizens are over the age of 50? ***Coming of Age in Aging America***, a new 60-minute documentary from filmmaker Christine Herbes-Sommers and Vital Pictures, tells the story of this spectacular social transformation—its dimensions, challenges, and opportunities. Presented by Twin Cities PBS and distributed nationwide by American Public Television, ***Coming of Age in Aging America*** will air on WORLD Channel on June 30 and July 1, 2017 (listings at www.worldchannel.org), and on local public TV stations in the spring and summer (check local listings). It will also be available online for free at the Next Avenue website (www.nextavenue.org) in July 2017.

It’s widely accepted: most Americans are living decades longer than any generation in human history. This a staggering new and permanent transformation. And it’s not just Americans, we are an aging globe. But how will we live? Rather than looking at aging as an individual predicament, ***Coming of Age in Aging America*** (www.theagingamericaproject.com) makes connections to social policies and institutions, tackling topics such as how we work and where we live and how those arrangements could—or should—be updated to meet the current reality. It uses specific situations and characters as examples illustrating the kinds of stories playing out in cities, communities, and families all across the country. The film examines the current social security system; looks at the data being collected on the aging brain and body at MIT AgeLab; explores a town re-designing itself for multi-generational use; and observes a large medical system remolding its work environment to both retain older workers and welcome younger ones.

Through interviews with experts—including John W. Rowe, professor at Columbia University’s Aging Center; Lisa F. Berkman, professor of public policy and director of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies; Laura L. Carstensen, professor and director of the Stanford University Center on Longevity; Joseph Coughlin, director of the MIT AgeLab; and urban planner Scott Ball—***Coming of Age in Aging America*** examines the exploding population shift, its impact on society, and the need to see the reach and magnitude of the changes an aging America will bring.



The film premiered at the American Society on Aging this spring to a full house and an overwhelming reception. Screenings are scheduled this summer in Atlanta and at the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics conference in San Francisco, among others. Additional video and print resources, including a Toolkit to assist organizers in creating successful screenings, are available at the project website.

Coming of Age in Aging America is aimed at creating conversation and action to productively shape America as an aging society. Content was developed in collaboration with the **MacArthur Network on Aging and Society** in collaboration with Northern Lights and The Frameworks Institute. Funding has been provided by the John A. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Sloan Foundation, AARP, and the Silver Century Foundation.

About the Filmmaker / Vital Pictures

Vital Pictures (www.vitalpix.com) is a Boston-based production company whose films and media projects explore provocative and timely sociopolitical and economic themes by “connecting-the-dots” between often invisible social systems and their historical construction, using meticulous research, storytelling, and innovative production design. They produced *Gaining Ground*, *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*, and *American Denial*, and collaborated with California Newsreel on *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*; *Race: The Power of An Illusion*; and *The Raising of America: Early Childhood and the Future of America*.

Christine Herbes-Sommers, president of Vital Pictures, has produced more than 100 hours of documentary, dramatic, and educational programming for public television broadcast over the last 40 years. She was honored with her first duPont-Columbia Award for *Joan Robinson: One Woman's Story*. She and California Newsreel also won a duPont-Columbia Award for the series *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*. With California Newsreel she also produced *Race – The Power of an Illusion*. Herbes-Sommers was Executive Producer of *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*, winner of the John E. O'Connor Award from the American Historical Association, and **Producer** for the Emmy-nominated *American Denial*, both broadcast by Independent Lens on PBS.

About TPT – Twin Cities PBS

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About American Public Television

American Public Television (APT) has been a leading syndicator of high-quality, top-rated programming to the nation’s public television stations since 1961. For more than 10 years, APT has annually

distributed one-third or more of the top 100 highest-rated public television titles in the U.S. Among its 300 new program titles per year, APT programs include prominent documentaries, news and current affairs programs, dramas, how-to programs, children's series and classic movies. *AfroPop*, *America's Test Kitchen From Cook's Illustrated*, *Rick Steves' Europe*, *Front and Center*, *Doc Martin*, *Nightly Business Report*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Vera*, *NHK Newslines*, *Lidia's Kitchen*, *Globe Trekker*, *Simply Ming*, and *P. Allen Smith's Garden Home* join numerous documentaries and performance programs popular with public television viewers. APT licenses programs internationally through its APT Worldwide service. Now in its 11th year, Create® TV — featuring the best of public television's lifestyle programming — is distributed by APT. APT also distributes WORLD™, public television's premier news, science and documentary channel. To find out more about APT's programs and services, visit APTonline.org.

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- Encourage people who experience power in their work— executives, managers, policy makers, service providers— to listen as a student and consider how they can use their power to widen opportunities to reimagine a new lifecourse.
- Encourage professional audiences to bring their whole selves—not just their professional side but also their experiences caring for older family members while raising a family and preparing for their own longer lives.
- Take advantage of teachable moments. Ask someone speaking to say more, go deeper, rephrase or consider an alternative or opposing view. Guide the group towards opportunities and solutions.
- Remind everyone at key points during the event of our common goal: to assure that, as Joe Coughlin says at the beginning of the film, an aging society is a cause for celebration, not a disaster.
- Given the tight timeframe of most events, be sure to save enough time to share ways to get involved, and provide audience members the opportunity to participate. Too often speakers run long at the cost of audience voices.

It is up to you to organize the time effectively and efficiently, assuring audience members the opportunity to be heard and engaged... and therefore increasing the odds that collective action can be taken.

So enjoy your screening and the new thinking and collaborations it will bring!

Publicize Your Screening with these Additional Tools:

Here are the downloadable, high resolution postcard and poster files to publicize your screening.



What will it mean for all of us to grow up, live and age in a society where half the citizens are over the age of 50? That reality is closer than most of us are willing to imagine. Never in human history have so many lived for so long – and not just in the United States. It is a global phenomenon ushering a spectacular social transformation. *Coming of Age in Aging America* tells the story of its dimensions, challenges and opportunities.

"Remodeling our culture and systems to align with our changing demographic reality is one of the great challenges of our time. *COMING OF AGE IN AGING AMERICA* is a vital part in this work. This is a film that our society needs...now!"
— Nathaniel Kendall Taylor | Executive Director, Frametalks Institute

"*COMING OF AGE IN AGING AMERICA* eloquently examines the need to be flexible and embrace the fact that our generational diversity can be our country's greatest asset."
— Donna Butts | Executive Director, Generations United

"This is an impressive film. It presents the issues in a way that have not been presented before: an even-handed assessment of both challenges and opportunities, along with some clear-eyed practical ideas that help to avoid the scary-scape. This is a wonderful thing" to offer based in the aging community... it is an important work."
— Laura Carstensen | Director, The Longevity Institute, Stanford University

For more information, visit www.theagingamericaproject.com
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“There are some that would say we just, as a society, cannot afford the greatest gift we’ve ever achieved in humankind, which is longer life. If we look at aging the way we have for the past 200 years, we will turn it into a crisis, rather than a celebration. ... Longevity changes everything.”

– Dr. Joseph Coughlin, MIT AgeLab

What will it mean for all of us to grow up, live, and age in a society where half the citizens are over the age of 50? ***Coming of Age in Aging America***, a new 60-minute documentary from filmmaker Christine Herbes-Sommers and Vital Pictures, tells the story of this spectacular social transformation—its dimensions, challenges, and opportunities. Presented by Twin Cities PBS and distributed nationwide by American Public Television, ***Coming of Age in Aging America*** will air on WORLD Channel on June 30 and July 1, 2017 (listings at www.worldchannel.org), and on local public TV stations in the spring and summer (check local listings). It will also be available online for free at the Next Avenue website (www.nextavenue.org) in July 2017.

It’s widely accepted: most Americans are living decades longer than any generation in human history. This is a staggering new and permanent social transformation. So how will we live? Rather than looking at aging as an individual predicament, ***Coming of Age in Aging America*** (www.theagingamericaproject.com) makes connections to social policies and institutions, tackling topics such as how we work and where we live and how those arrangements could—or should—be updated to meet the current reality. Through personal stories and expert interviews ***Coming of Age in Aging America*** examines the exploding population shift, its impact on society, and the need to see the reach and magnitude of the changes an aging America will bring.

The film premiered at the American Society on Aging this spring to a full house and an overwhelming reception. Screenings are scheduled this summer in Atlanta and at the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics conference in San Francisco, among others. Additional video and print resources, including a Toolkit to assist organizers in creating successful screenings, are available at the project website.

Coming of Age in Aging America is aimed at creating conversation and action to productively shape America as an aging society. Content was developed in collaboration with the **MacArthur Network on Aging and Society** in collaboration with Northern Lights and The Frameworks Institute. Funding has



been provided by the John A. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Sloan Foundation, AARP, and the Silver Century Foundation.

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About the Filmmaker / Vital Pictures

Vital Pictures (www.vitalpix.com) is a Boston-based production company whose films and media projects explore provocative and timely sociopolitical and economic themes by “connecting-the-dots” between often invisible social systems and their historical construction, using meticulous research, storytelling, and innovative production design. They produced *Gaining Ground*, *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*, and *American Denial*, and collaborated with California Newsreel on *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*; *Race: The Power of An Illusion*; and *The Raising of America: Early Childhood and the Future of America*.

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