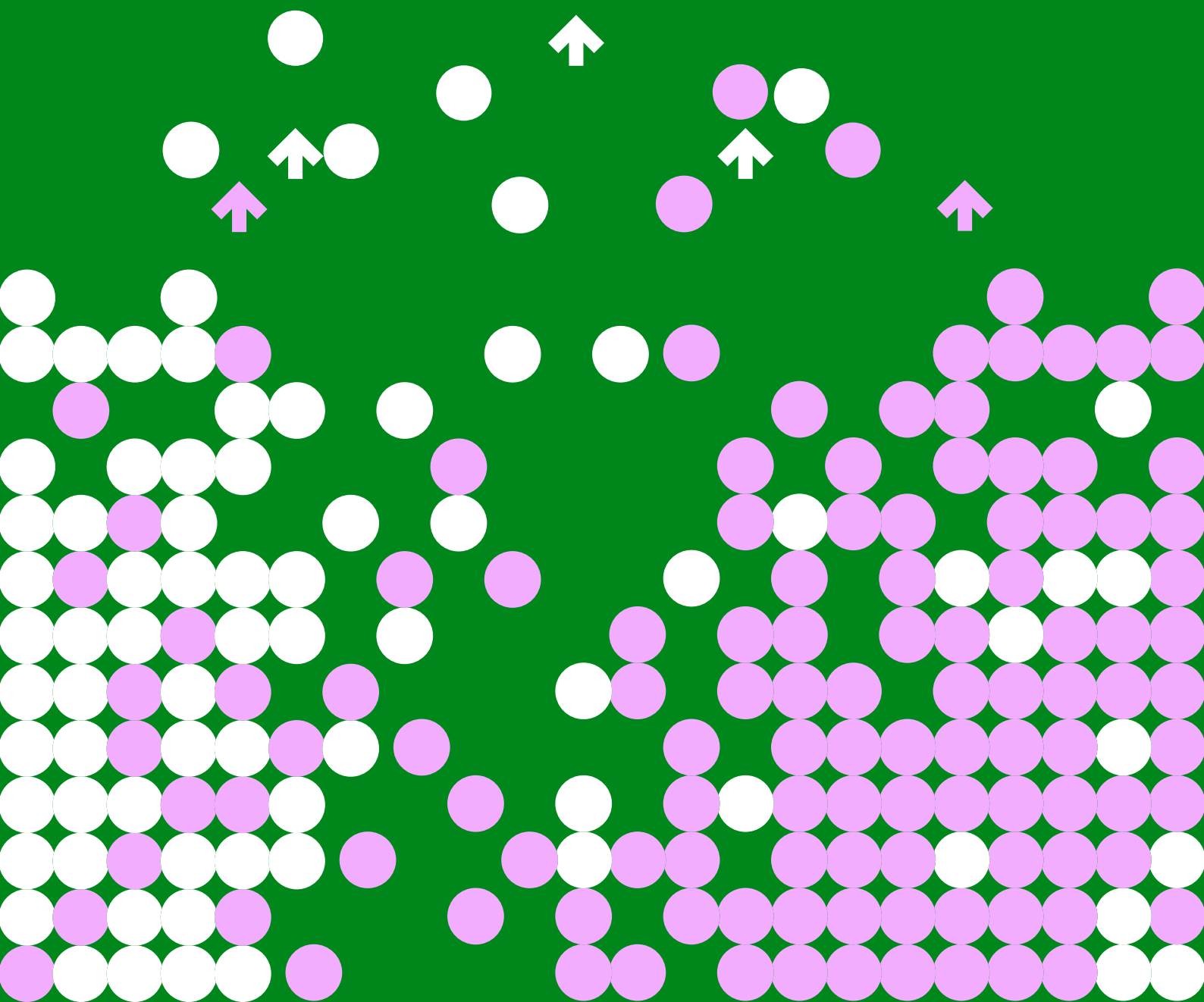


EVOKE

PATH FOUR





Path four

Throughout time, storytelling has always connected our past, present, and future. It allows us to understand the world, empathize with one another, and bridge generational gaps. In today's world, a remarkable transformation is underway. We aren't just passive listeners to societal narratives; we're becoming their authors. The intergenerational stories we share matter in our evolution toward a more empathic, more collaborative global community. This also means challenging the unfair treatment of ageism. Ageism, much like any form of discrimination, is the unjust treatment of individuals solely based on their age. It's a societal issue that we can stop.

Consider the *Wiser Than Me* with Julia Louis-Dreyfus podcast. This podcast amplifies the voices of women over 70, sharing their vibrant stories of living. These narratives shatter outdated stereotypes, unveiling the richness and value that life continues to offer as we live longer. Similarly, organizations like the AARP Purpose Prize celebrate the extraordinary contributions older individuals make to our communities.

Storytelling is a superpower. It has the potential to build trust, forge connections, and reshape the grand narratives of our society. On this final path, there are three essential aspects of storytelling that relate to intergenerational connection:

Stories that build relationships:

We'll explore how storytelling becomes a vessel for passing down traditions, mending emotional wounds, and creating bonds that transcend generations.

Listening to connect:

The art of listening plays a pivotal role in the world of storytelling. We'll discover how attentive listening fosters empathy-based connections between different generations, strengthening the ties that bind us.

Stories from a group perspective:

The stories we tell as a society influence our collective perspective on living longer. Together, we'll examine how we can intentionally change these narratives to nurture cultures that embrace aging with inclusivity and positivity.

In the words of Marc Freedman, **“One of the most inaccurate and harmful stereotypes about older people is that their best days are in the past.”** Indeed, the old paradigm of working for a few decades and then retiring no longer aligns with our longer, healthier lives today. We all yearn for connections, a sense of purpose, and opportunities to contribute, regardless of our age.

Karen Worcman, of Brazil's Museum of the Person, reminds us that listening to someone's life story isn't a mere recounting of events—it's a profound act of healing. It transforms not only the storyteller but also the attentive listener, forging bonds that bridge generational divides. Through shared narratives, we can heal, learn, and grow together—linking the lessons and wisdom of the past with a brighter future for all ages.



Spotlight Organization: Museu da Pessoa (Museum of the Person)

With over 7 billion people on Earth, there are as many distinct life stories as there are individuals. While some stories find their way into family lore, novels, autobiographies, or even become the subject of movies, the vast majority remain untold and unheard. What if we paid more attention to these untold stories? What if we listened to the narratives of people around the world?

The Museu da Pessoa, a virtual and collaborative museum of life stories, developed a methodology that allows anyone and everyone to record their story and also to contribute to those who are interested in recording the stories of older people, making this listening a way of connecting generations.

Founded in 1991, this museum invites everyone—regardless of age—to participate and share their unique narratives. Individuals can recount their personal journeys, organize their collections, and explore the life stories of people from all walks of life in Brazil, and beyond. Here, anyone can start a collection, be a curator or a visitor.

It honors not only its own mission but also the endeavors of all museums that recognize the worth of human experiences. These institutions are testaments to the choices and perceptions of individuals, groups, and societies that deem certain objects, facts, or moments in history as valuable.

Their value lies not solely in altering the course of history or glorifying a specific moment, but rather in revealing the multifaceted nature of our shared humanity. Through the democratization of memory, collaboration, and social justice, this museum seeks to transform each person's history into a heritage of humanity.

In essence, this museum reminds us that stories have the power to strengthen connections, break down barriers, and illuminate the beauty of our shared human experience. Through storytelling, it encourages us all to become active participants in the ever-evolving narrative of humanity.



Tool Ten:

Drawing an Individual Timeline

DIFFICULTY: ●●○○○
FOR: ORGANIZATIONS

Drawing an Individual Timeline is a powerful tool that helps individuals visually map out the major milestones, setbacks, values, and influential people in their lives. It allows participants to reflect on their personal journeys, fostering a deeper understanding of their life narratives. This tactile and creative exercise helps individuals curate their past, identify key moments that have shaped them, and see patterns across a diverse group. This can be done in a variety of settings, such as family, community, organization, and more.

BASICS:

When: Can be done in a variety of settings to create story and meaning in a group context.

Time Needed: At least one hour for participants to draw their timelines, plus additional time for group discussions.

Materials: Paper, Scissors, Glue, Colored pens, and Images (these can be taken from magazines, newspapers, or photocopies of old photographs).

Objective: The objective is to encourage adult participants to create a visual representation of their life stories through timelines. Participants are guided to identify major life milestones, setbacks, enduring values, and influential individuals who have played significant roles in their lives.

STEPS:

1. Distribute Materials:

Distribute paper, scissors, glue, colored pens, and images to the participants. Ensure that there are enough materials for each participant to construct their timeline. Participants can bring their own visual materials or use images provided by the facilitator.

2. Set Context:

Instruct each person to draw a timeline of their life story. They can present this as a paper poster for display or create a digital presentation if technology is available.

3. Guiding Questions:

Pose thought-provoking questions to stimulate participants' thinking about the construction of their timelines. These questions may include:

- * What are the major milestones of your life?
- * Why do you consider them milestones?
- * What are the main stumbling blocks or setbacks?
- * Why do you consider them setbacks?
- * What are your permanent values?
- * Who are the most influential people in your life?

4. Making the Timeline:

Allow participants at least an hour to draw out their timelines. Encourage creativity and personal expression in the visual representation of their life stories.



5. Group Discussion:

Organize participants into groups of three or four to share their stories with one another. Encourage each group to identify the main similarities and differences that appear in their timelines. This fosters dialogue and connections between participants.

6. Sharing with the Larger Group:

Select one person from each group to present the identified differences and similarities to the larger group.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Emphasize that participants are the curators of their own past and that the exercise is not about merely putting facts together in chronological order. It's about selecting and articulating the essential happenings and events that have shaped their lives.

Consider placing a limit on the number of events participants can include (e.g., 10 events, comprising five milestones and five setbacks) to encourage thoughtful selection.

Use this exercise as an opportunity to discuss the concepts of memory and history, helping participants differentiate between personal memories and broader historical narratives.

Encourage participants to view their life stories as part of a collective and connective narrative which opens the door to exploring the construction of collective and connective narratives within a community, family, or group.

[Source: Museu da Pessoa](#)

Photo: Museu da Pessoa





Tool Eleven:

Truth & Reconciliation Oral History Project

DIFFICULTY: ●●●●○

FOR: ORGANIZATIONS

The HBCU Truth & Reconciliation Oral History Project, sponsored by several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other educational institutions, conducts video interviews with individuals of African American and Latino/a origin to document their personal stories of racial discrimination. This initiative aims to foster healing, reconciliation, and social change by providing a platform for people to share their experiences and be heard. These video interviews serve as a powerful tool for connecting generations, promoting understanding, and advancing equity.

BASICS:

When: Can be organized for students during a semester, or as part of community projects.

Where: Virtual via Zoom or similar applications.

Objective: The primary objective of the Truth & Reconciliation Oral History Project's video interviews is to create a platform for individuals of color to share personal stories of racial discrimination and its impact. By documenting these narratives, the project seeks to

promote healing on a personal level and reconciliation on a national scale. Additionally, the recorded interviews inform educational policy changes and facilitate spiritual growth within communities. This grassroots effort is driven by the belief that sharing these stories and being heard can activate healing and compassion within society.

STEPS:

1. Interview Preparation:

Students are trained to conduct interviews with individuals who have experienced racial discrimination. These interviews are designed to provide a safe and empathetic space for storytellers.

2. Recording Sessions:

Video interviews are conducted, allowing storytellers to share their personal experiences, emotions, and insights related to racial discrimination.

3. Documentation:

The recorded interviews are meticulously documented, transcribed, and archived by participating HBCUs and universities. This documentation is essential for preserving the stories for posterity.



4. Academic Research:

The project's themes and narratives are used for academic thought, research, and praxis related to racial discrimination and reconciliation. This research informs educational policy and contributes to grassroots organizing efforts.

5. Community Sharing:

The stories are shared within communities, creating an opportunity for validation and healing. The act of sharing and documentation serves as "forensic" evidence for storytellers in the face of communal disbelief.

6. Engaging the Church:

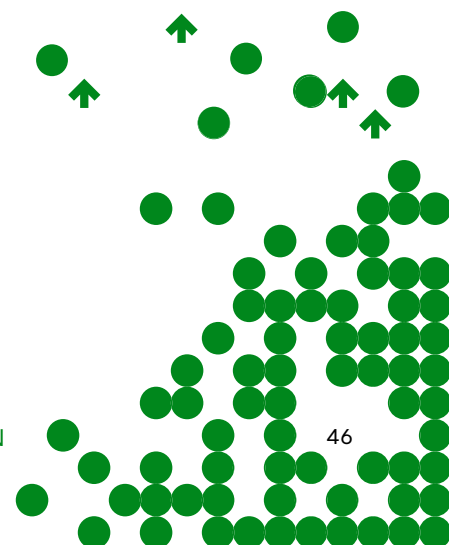
The stories are employed to engage the Church and its moral authority to address racial equity and relationship building. The Church is encouraged to play a leading role in addressing these issues.

Reasons why this tool is powerful:

The HBCU Truth & Reconciliation Oral History Project's video interviews are powerful tools for bridging generational gaps and fostering understanding. By providing a platform for individuals to share their stories, this initiative humanizes experiences, validates feelings, and promotes healing. The act of being heard and the documentation of these narratives serve as a form of evidence, lending credibility to the storytellers and their experiences. Moreover, these stories engage the Church and its moral authority in addressing racial equity and societal change, appealing to the heart of humanity when facts and figures fall short.

This initiative is a testament to the power of storytelling in creating connections and advancing social change. It allows generations to come together, learn from each other, and work towards a more equitable and compassionate society.

Source: HBCU Truth & Reconciliation Oral History Project





Tool Twelve:

Uncovering The Hidden Me, The Hidden You

DIFFICULTY: ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

FOR: INDIVIDUALS

Uncovering The Hidden Me, The Hidden You exercise encourages participants to share deeply personal experiences, including struggles and failures, in a safe and supportive environment. By doing so, it helps individuals transcend labels, discover shared threads that connect them, and build stronger relationships. It's a powerful tool for fostering empathy and understanding among adolescents and adults.

BASICS:

When: This exercise is ideal for adolescents and adults who either wish to have or already have a strong relationship with another person participating in the exercise (for example, through mentor or fellowship programs or peer coaching).

Time Needed: 60 to 90 minutes.

Materials: Pen and paper.

Objective: This exercise prompts participants to delve into and share their personal experiences and pivotal decision points in life. The goal is to broaden their understanding and connection with others.

STEPS:

1. Setup: Divide the larger group into pairs or trios.

2. Write about experiences: Provide each individual with two sheets of paper, each

folded in half. The top of each sheet should have "best" and "worst" written on opposite sides of the fold. On the first sheet, have participants create two lists: one for the best things and one for the worst things that have happened in their lifetime. On the second sheet, ask them to list the best and worst decisions they've made in their lifetime. Ask each person to find a quiet place without electronic devices and spend 20 to 30 minutes completing their lists.

3. Listen to partners: Once ready, each pair or trio should find a quiet space to sit together. Each person takes turns reading their lists aloud to the others, who listen for similarities, differences, and recurring themes.

4. Reflect: The larger group discusses the similarities that emerge. Encourage participants to share their admiration for what they've learned about their partners, as well as any unexpected insights. Explore how this newfound understanding might influence their interactions within the group in the future.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- * This exercise is ideal for a group where trust is established.
- * Encourage active listening.
- * Maintain confidentiality.

Source: [Thread: The New Social Fabric](#)



Tool Thirteen:

The River of Family Life

DIFFICULTY: ●●○○○
FOR: FAMILIES

The River of Family Life was adapted from the River of Life method by Joyce Mercer. The Ashoka Indonesia team adapted the exercise for an intergenerational family setting. During the process, all generations in the family can be involved in discovery, reflection and connection.

BASICS:

When: Ideal for families seeking a memorable reflective experience.

Time Needed: 60 to 90 minutes.

Materials: Large paper or poster board, markers, and a quiet space.

Objective: The River of Family Life aims to provide families with a reflective space to explore and share their journey, fostering understanding, empathy, and the identification of key family values and lessons.

STEPS:

1. Visualize: Ask family members to visualize their family life as a river. What does it look like? Are there twists, turns, rocks, or waterfalls? Encourage them to associate these elements with happy or challenging moments in the family's journey.

2. Frame: Identify important events in the family's life, categorizing them by specific periods (e.g., since the parents' marriage). Discuss when these events occurred and their impact on the family.

3. Guide: Identify the significant influencers or key relationships that played a role in shaping the family's important events. Discuss how these influencers contributed to the family's journey.

4. Contextualize: Explore the connection between the family's events and external factors outside the family. Consider natural disasters, economic crises, pandemics, or any other relevant contextual elements that may have influenced the family's journey.

5. Reflect: Discuss and reflect on the values or key lessons learned from the family's life journey. Engage all family members in this discussion, encouraging open and honest communication.

6. Share and Inspire: Once the family has created their River of Family Life, encourage them to share their story with friends, within their social circle, or on social media. Emphasize the potential for inspiring others with their unique family journey.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- * Create a comfortable and safe space for open discussion, where people listen rather than react.
- * Encourage each family member to actively participate.
- * Emphasize the importance of understanding and respecting different perspectives within the family.

Source: [Adapted from the River of Life method developed by Joyce Mercer of Yale University, as implemented by Gerakan Pembaharu Keluarga \(Gaharu Keluarga\) in Indonesia.](#)



Amplify Change: Strengthening Cultural Identities



Ageism is a deeply entrenched societal problem that perpetuates biased beliefs, discriminatory behaviors, and institutional policies that sort and separate individuals by age. On a cultural front, it often manifests as the perception of older people as being in a state of decline, leading to the reinforcement of negative stereotypes and attitudes. Simultaneously, on an economic level, ageism is driven by advertising and marketing strategies that seek to capitalize on these stereotypes. These industries often promote and sell anti-aging products, perpetuating the notion that aging is something to be feared and fought against.

The 21st century has yet to fully acknowledge the evolving needs of aging populations who no longer fit into the old molds created by these cultural and economic forces. These systemic obstacles lead to numerous harmful outcomes, such as negative effects on health, isolation from society, financial insecurity, a decreased quality of life, and even higher economic burdens on society. Furthermore, ageism intersects with and exacerbates other forms of prejudice and discrimination, compounding the difficulties faced by older individuals.

WHAT ARE WAYS TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM?

One powerful way to challenge and change the systemic issue of ageism is through the voices and actions of older individuals, particularly older women who are rewriting the narrative of aging, promoting positive aging as a counterpoint to the pervasive ageist stereotypes and biases. Additionally, holding companies and industries accountable for perpetuating these stereotypes is crucial. By advocating for responsible advertising and marketing practices, and encouraging businesses to value the diversity and contributions of older individuals, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

REASONS WHY IT'S POWERFUL:

This movement towards positive aging is powerful because it challenges the deeply rooted societal norms that equate aging with decline and diminished value. Instead, it celebrates the wisdom, experiences, and resilience of older individuals, reshaping perceptions of aging as a time of continued growth, vitality, and contribution to society. It redefines what power means in the context of aging, emphasizing self-acceptance, self-confidence, and the pursuit of passions and interests regardless of age.



SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THIS WORK:

- **Media representation:** Older people are increasingly visible on social media platforms like TikTok, where they challenge ageist stereotypes and discuss positive aging. They use these platforms to share their experiences and wisdom, and redefine the roles they are playing today.
- **Body positivity:** The movement of “sexy grandmas” and older women celebrating their power after menopause is shifting the conversation around body image. These women challenge the notion that beauty and desirability are confined to youth.
- **Empowerment through education:** Older individuals are participating in educational endeavors, whether through formal courses or informal self-guided learning, to keep their minds active and stay engaged with evolving society.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY:

Despite the progress being made, several obstacles persist in the fight against ageism. These include deeply ingrained stereotypes, institutional biases in employment and healthcare, and societal expectations of aging as a period of decline. Ageism can also intersect with other forms of discrimination, making it more challenging for some older individuals, particularly older women, to assert their voices and challenge these biases.

HOW CAN YOU HELP:

Raise Awareness: Educate yourself and others about ageism, its consequences, and the power of positive aging. Share stories and examples of older women challenging ageist norms.

Support Age-Positive Companies: Make a conscious effort to patronize and support companies that embrace age-positivity in their practices and marketing. By endorsing businesses that prioritize inclusivity and diverse representation of age, you help drive positive change in the marketplace.

Challenge Stereotypes: Be mindful of your own attitudes and language around aging and actively challenge ageist stereotypes when you encounter them.

Support Inclusivity: Advocate for inclusive policies in healthcare, employment, and other areas that promote equal opportunities regardless of age.

Listen and Amplify: Listen to the voices of older people and amplify their messages of empowerment and positive aging. Encourage their participation in public discourse.

Promote Intersectionality: Recognize and address the intersection of ageism with other forms of bias, including sexism and racism, to create a more inclusive society for all generations.

In conclusion, rewriting the narrative of aging, as exemplified by older people embracing positive aging, is a powerful way to combat ageism and reshape societal perceptions of older individuals. It challenges ageist norms and fosters a more inclusive and equitable society where people of all ages can thrive and contribute.