

Fried green tomatoes

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Ageism, like racism or any other form of bias, characterizes individuals on the basis of their membership in a group. Many do not see ageism as being particularly harmful because unlike gender bias or prejudice it does not affect only one group of people; it affects the entire population (if they are fortunate enough to reach an age to be jested about.) Reaching middle tends to be a period a very emotional period, especially for women moving closer to or going through menopause.

In the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes*, we meet Evelyn in quite a state: her children are moving out, her marriage is dull and lifeless and she is the butt end of two very cruel ageist jokes in what seems to be a period of less than a month. To better understand ageism and how it was affecting Evelyn, we can simply compare the two incidents at the grocery store and how she dealt with them. In the first scene, Evelyn is almost knocked down by a young man rushing out of the store. She chases after him, shocked but genuinely curious as to why he is being so mean to her. " Move it fat cow!

Beat it you old bitch! " Evelyn is left in tears wondering, " Why are you being so mean to me?! " Later on, at the same grocery store she is confronted with more ageists, this time two girls. As the girls steal her parking spot without an ounce of guilt, they let Evelyn know that they are faster and smarter. " Most people, especially younger people, barely notice that age is being made a stigma. But the message is that being old is repulsive, embarrassing or unthinkable is visible everywhere in our society. " (Crawford, 367) To these teenagers, Evelyn is nothing but an insignificant bump in their day.

Like many adolescents, these characters are too wrapped up in their own lives to acknowledge, or even respect, her presence. To Evelyn these comments are detrimental; they solidify the demise of her youth. The clip also shows examples of older women being stereotyped. " Older women repeatedly say that their aging bodies are the first cues that others use to classify them. When (older women) interact with strangers in public settings " all anyone seems to see is an old woman. " (Crawford, 401) The teenagers in both scenes see Evelyn as fat, old and slow.

A slightly less obvious stereotype can be seen in the production of Ninny's character. Ninny might as well have been a page out of Crawford's book; she describes grannies as follows: " her gray hair, worn in a tight bun, and her outdated, unfashionable clothes signify that she has not kept up with the times. " (401) Ninny is a sweet old woman dressed in floral prints, hair in a tight bun and refers to menopause as " the change. " While Ninny is a very positive character in the movie, her image is the typical media stereotype of a " little old lady. "

Evelyn's experience with menopause has both physical and psychological effects on her. Her worries that " she is too young to be old and too old to be young " are taking a toll on her relationship with herself. She is having a very difficult time accepting this - she eats compulsively and worries because " she can't even see her vagina anymore! " Unfortunately for women, the changes that they go through (getting fat, old, etc) are not only " in their heads. "

These changes tend to make society look at them differently because women tend to be evaluated through their bodies. Crawford, 403) Crawford explains menopause in further detail, pointing out that at times a woman may be irritable or disturbed by hot flashes but there are no studies that actually point to menopause causing depression. Many cultures, like Japanese and Mexican report that they do not get hot flashes as much as women in the US. African-American women do not see menopause as a significant period in their life. Western culture, however, has taught us that quite simply a woman that is aging is unattractive and crazy.

Sarcasm aside, Crawford reports that women in the US and cultures with similar attitudes as the US are the women that feel the effects of menopause the most. This is highlighted in the movie with both Evelyn's current distress and Ninny's past going through the change. " I used to burst into tears for no reason at all! " Many people also like to think that women are crazy during menopause.

The joke sums up part of Evelyn's menopausal attitude: crazy and bored of her husband. Americans, therefore, have taken matters into their own hands. In the beginning of the clip, we meet Evelyn as a sad, frumpy woman who eats her emotions and lets others walk all over her. In the following scene, however, we meet an entirely new Evelyn. She is well dressed, bold and vivacious. This As Evelyn moves pushes through her midlife depression, she becomes increasingly concerned with her appearance. She loses a considerable amount of weight, wears bright make up and more fashionable clothes.

Sales of anti-aging cream and numbers of cosmetic surgery define the way Western culture looks at getting old: its bad. Evelyn's attitude towards the end is a little bit difficult to analyze. She seems happier and more confident yet it also seems that her new attitude comes with a vengeance, she is very open with her distaste for skinny women, horny men and young people.

According to Dr. Nosek in her journal article *The Effects of Perceived Stress and Attitudes Towards Menopause and Aging Symptoms of Menopause*, a woman's reaction to menopause simply reflects her views on aging.

Women that are indifferent to middle life do not display any particularly obvious menopause traits. Women who do not want to age and have self-esteem and body awareness issues have very different attitudes and symptoms during menopause. Evelyn has had her children and husband to take care of all her life so she was able to better hide her distaste for her looks and simple life. Now, however, she feels useless and it is very apparent that she is not comfortable with her appearance.

" A woman's perception of symptoms alerts her to changes in her body and may propel her to explore ways to alleviate or manage the associated distress. (Nosek) In this case, Evelyn's experiences with menopause were an expression of both her fear of aging, thinly disguised by her contempt for all things skinny, young and fashionable and by a new found independence she had from her kids and husband. As women get older, they begin to value their relationships with other females more, especially because men tend to

live a relatively shorter time than women. This is apparent with Ninny, who finds solace in Evelyn's weekly visits.

“ Older women tend to be involved with rich networks of friends and family. Compared to men in the same age group, they have more friends and feel closer to their friends. ” (Crawford, 414) Evelyn benefits from her visits to the retirement home as well. As an older woman, Ninny is able to point out to Evelyn that what she is going through is normal and give her some advice. Evelyn also finds inspiration in a character named “ Tawanda ” – she mentions her quite often after her outburst at the grocery store. The friendship is mutually beneficial to the women who are in very different stages of their life. To Ninny, caring for Evelyn is a natural task that ends up being quite rewarding, she sees the improvement in Evelyn's life and it is obvious that she is partly responsible for it.

It is obvious that Evelyn is seeking support in her time of “ change ” – seen both in her weekly visits to Ninny and the women's group that is briefly mentioned at the beginning of the clip. Crawford depicts the costs of caregiving to be very trying for a woman because on top of caring for children she must care for the elderly. The author points this out, perhaps in a feminist point of view, assuming that the woman has had to balance a career and caregiving most of her life. For Evelyn, this is quite the opposite. Evelyn's life has been solely dedicated to caring for her children and husband.

Now that her children are gone she seems to realize that her and her husband have drifted apart and her life is not as busy as it once seemed.

With no particular meaning or direction in her life, she begins to eat out of boredom and look for other activities to fill her void. Rather than having an elderly person to care for, Evelyn goes out and volunteers to visit one. Crawford discusses care giving as having both psychological and economical costs but this is not true for Evelyn. The psychological benefits she receives from visiting and caring for Ninny outweigh any negative costs that it may have had.