



INTRODUCTION

Amplifying Activisms

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In her well-known address “How Does Change Happen?” Angela Davis, professor and long-time activist, draws on the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott to illustrate her wider argument: that every major social movement in history has depended on the daily, often-forgotten work of groups of women (Davis 2007). Her address provides one salient example—one of many—in which “ordinary” women have trudged through the least glamorous work, unrecognized, unthanked, and omitted from historical narratives. “Often those who contribute most powerfully to movements for radical social change,” she explains, “are erased in the histories that are transmitted from generation to generation.” Davis eloquently captures the spirit of this book, and so I have chosen to open with her words:

I'd like to use the civil rights movement as an example, because everybody in this country knows who Reverend Martin Luther King is ... but we don't know about Jo Ann Robinson—how she and the members of her organization were trying to start a boycott. They had tried on several occasions and then, finally, when Rosa Parks got arrested ... they stayed up all night long mimeographing. They stayed up all night long making those leaflets, and that's how the bus boycott got started.... That was really unglamorous work.... If they hadn't worked that mimeograph machine, if they hadn't gotten people to go out and distribute all of those leaflets at six o'clock in the morning when people—particularly when people who were domestic servants—were getting on the bus ... it wouldn't have happened in the way that it did. And that's a very different story ... a story about the erasure of women's contributions.

Davis's words are a poignant call to action—a plea for a critical look at whose actions are most recognized within activist movements and how the history of social change is constructed and remembered. This book takes up her call. Drawing on varied perspectives across four generations, it investigates those “quieter” or less glamorous contributions that typically fall outside the purview of historical memory. It works to amplify the diverse activisms of women and those beyond the gender binary,¹ specifically exploring how gender, class, skin colour, ability, sexuality, Indigeneity, and age combine to inform their different and uneven experiences of activist aging.

Why activist aging? And how does this connect to the story of the bus boycott?

I open with Davis's lecture because I believe that her words—and more generally the monumental moment she describes—offer insights not only into the erasure of women's contributions but also into dynamics of age and aging. According to some, Parks's infamous act of defiance might not have happened at all had it not been for the actions of little-known Claudette Colvin nine months previously (Hoose 2009). Like Parks, Colvin refused to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus; she too was arrested and later became one of four women plaintiffs in the Supreme Court case that successfully overturned bus segregation laws in Alabama. Yet, while Parks (like King) has attained heroic status, Colvin's name (like Robinson's) has been nearly erased from the Montgomery story. Why? As Colvin explained in an interview in 2009, Parks was a respected, professional woman in her 40s, while Colvin was 15 years of age at the time, darker-skinned, and of lower social status (Adler 2009). Colvin then became pregnant and, as a young, unwed mother, her credibility was further diminished. As Hoose (2009) said, “Then she became pregnant ... and that was that.” Colvin was not considered to be an appropriate face or body around which to mobilize protest.

The stories of Robinson, Colvin, and Parks thus serve as a critical reminder that, while women's “quieter” roles within social movements are very often erased and forgotten, women's similar contributions to social change can be differently valued, unequally recognized, and disparately remembered, even within the same movement.² They also raise a series of questions particularly pertinent to this book: Among other factors, how did Colvin's age affect the perceived validity of her resistance? Had Parks been older at the time of the boycott—in her 60s or beyond—would she have commanded the same legitimacy?

Collectively, these women's stories illustrate the two central themes that interweave this volume: (1) the importance of understanding, recognizing, and valuing diverse activisms, particularly those most frequently omitted from the historical record; and (2) the need for analyses that explicitly engage with dynamics of age and aging, while simultaneously considering people's differing power, privilege, and prominence

within social movements. Both Robinson and Colvin are among the frequently elided social changers whose actions have propelled transformation, while Colvin's experience also reveals how gender, class, education, skin tone, marital status, and age intersect to influence who ultimately gains heroic status and who is forgotten.

Situated in the contemporary North American context, on the land known to many First Peoples as Turtle Island, this book begins an exploration of how people of different backgrounds, ages, and abilities are engaging in a variety of activisms across different movements. Through research, conversation, poetry, personal reflection, and photography, this volume delves into the largely unexplored theme of activist aging, asking why and how different social changers engage in acts of resistance, resilience, and resurgence at different times in their lives, and what it means for them to age as activists. In some small but profound way, this collection aims to unsettle existing assumptions about activisms—about what is typically considered “activism” and who is assumed to be an “activist”—and to decentre colonial, Eurocentric, heteronormative,³ and ableist conceptions of activist aging.

BUILDING (FROM) RELATIONSHIPS

This book has its roots in my own long-standing journey as a researcher and activist, some of which I present in various chapters throughout. While this is the outcome of a project that has both grown out of relationships and worked to build new ones, this book has most directly emerged from my program of research, and so it feels important—and accountable—for me to begin from my own journey and position within this. Over the past dozen years, I have had the privilege of working with and alongside many extraordinary individuals—people who spend their time mobilizing in a variety of ways and contexts. So many of these indomitable and brilliant people have profoundly informed my journey: hundreds of organizers who have been part of my research (most of them older women, but also many activists of all genders and ages), an even wider group of mobilizers with whom I have connected in my own activisms, and dozens of critical thinkers—students, activists, and fellow professors—whom I have learned with and sometimes mentored. This book draws together some of these varied and influential perspectives to capture a complexity of activisms and knowledges in a way that would simply not be possible in a single-authored monograph.

This volume brings together 28 contributors who have all lived and worked in a number of different territories across Turtle Island: While our life geographies vary significantly, at the time of writing we all reside in Canada. Born and raised as a settler⁴ on the territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk) Peoples, in the city now named

Montreal, my own ancestral roots lie in Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. At the time of writing/editing, I live and work in Nogojiwanong, on the territory of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg (Mississauga Anishinaabe), upon which the mid-sized city of Peterborough has been built.⁵ Over the course of conceiving of this book, working with contributors, and carrying the volume through to publication, I have come to understand ever more intimately how this territory—its lands, histories, and peoples—has influenced the intellectual and political directions of the project.

Nogojiwanong, known for millennia as a gathering place to First Peoples across the region, became a meeting place for many of us as contributors: a place where every one of us has, at some point, lived, visited, or spent time; a place where many of us have gathered together, across enormous difference and across four generations, to learn from each other and to build relationships. It is here, as a professor at Trent University, that I launched Aging Activisms⁶ as an activist-research collective, aiming to create thoughtful spaces and relationships in which we, as academics, activists, and artists from different communities, might critically and productively challenge ourselves and each other. This volume springs from these spaces and our connections.

For me, Nogojiwanong is also the place where I have come to struggle differently, in a more daily and embodied way, with what it means to be a white settler-academic-activist-parent. It is here, in Michi Saagiig territory, that I have been blessed with opportunities to listen to and learn from Anishinaabe Elders; to participate in sunrise and water ceremonies; and to most intimately witness the radical vision, poetic brilliance, and mobilizing know-how of students, peers, colleagues, friends, activists, and artists from Indigenous communities across Turtle Island—people who are working tirelessly toward decolonization and cultural resurgence.⁷ These experiences and connections require me to continuously ask myself: What does it mean for me to research and write about aging and activism, and to do this as part of my work for social change, as an occupier of and on stolen land? What does it mean for me to hold a certain critical/feminist/decolonial politics and vision for a world I would like to leave to my children, while simultaneously building an academic career in the field of aging studies—a field that has frequently been critiqued as overlooking Indigenous knowledges and critical race perspectives?

In Nogojiwanong, I have also begun to re-engage in and with certain activist spaces—actively attending and organizing protests and rallies after a decade of near-hiatus from this kind of work. Before moving here in 2013, my focus was certainly on “quieter” approaches to social change: educating myself and others, exploring research as a tool for change, and, most immediately, gestating and nurturing the two young people in my life. As I have been stepping back into these

more outward activist roles—roles that were very much part of my younger adult experiences—I have become more aware of my own changing embodiment. I re-enter older, with grey hair, with a body that has given birth twice, and often with young children in tow. In these spaces I have fielded comments about how my hair and children (and implicitly light skin tone) mark me as safe, non-threatening, and respectable. I sit uneasily with this, perhaps because comments such as these serve as a reminder of the unearned privilege I derive from my body. I am a cis-gender,⁸ (currently) able-bodied, light-skinned woman, now in my 40s, and I am a university professor, too: My body-mind allows me entry into spaces of protest with relative ease and minimal fear. I am not hindered by uneven ground or loud noises, nor am I likely to be targeted by police with excessive force, racial profiling, or transphobic assaults. I move through the world and through these activist spaces easily—more easily than many dear friends and colleagues, more easily than many of the brilliant contributors to this book. I understand that these inequities necessarily inform our relationships.

I try not to shy away from these tensions in this book, but nor do I expect I can resolve them. Instead, these tensions propel my continuous quest to learn—in meaningful, sensitive, and just ways—from the creative and courageous approaches that people with varying experiences of privilege bring to practicing resistance, making change, and demanding justice.

This volume draws on the perspectives of four generations, at times blurring our various roles as academics, students, and “research subjects,” working to illuminate the multiplicity of ways people know and articulate activist aging. I conceived of and co-edited this volume in close collaboration with Melissa Baldwin and Pat Evans. Melissa has co-chaired *Aging Activisms* with me from its inception and was a Trent University graduate student when we first undertook this project. Pat is the former co-chair of the Grandmothers Advocacy Network and my long-time community research partner. With me in my 40s, Melissa in her 20s, and Pat in her 70s, our editorial trio reflects the kind of dynamic intergenerationality and academic-community collaboration—as well as deep care and friendship—that I believe are vital to the sustainability and strength of all radical movements.

We invited contributions from a collection of academics, students, activists, and artists, building from relationships that were in place or were forming in connection with *Aging Activisms*; some contributors then chose to work in similar intergenerational, academic-activist-student collaborations. These contributions highlight the importance of giving space and legitimacy to the many ways, individually and collectively, that we care for each other, for our communities, for past and future generations, and for the land. Our process of working together as

editors, writers, and contributors has developed from and has worked to develop connections among us—connections that are critical, supportive, and radical in ways that we could not have fully anticipated at the start of the project (Pratt 2010).⁹ This theme of connection reverberates throughout the book.

CONTEXT: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AGING AND ACTIVISMS

Throughout the book, all of us as contributors offer reflections on and/or analyses of activist aging. It is important, then, to understand the salience of these contributions within a wider context. Over the next 35 years, the global population over the age of 60 is expected to triple, so that by 2050, for the first time in history, there will be more people over 60 than under 15. Life expectancy is higher for women than it is for men, with populations over 60 estimated to include two to five times as many women as men (United Nations 2013). The emerging global trend is of population aging that is unprecedented, pervasive, and feminized. Meanwhile, evidence suggests that women remain politically engaged longer than previously recognized—many are actively working for social change well past the age of 65 (Chovanec, Cooley, and Diaz 2010).

While many feminist scholars have investigated how gender, class, race, sexuality, and geography combine to influence people's mobilizations, fewer have considered how age and aging intersect with these systems of power (Rich and Macdonald 2001; Twigg 2004). In response to this, some scholars—many of us part of this book—have more recently sought to document and analyze older women's activisms (e.g., Chazan 2015; K. Sawchuk 2009; Roy 2004). However, much of the work in this area remains focused on a few well-known movements of "grandmother activists," certain overt (often highly visible) forms of activism, and the contributions of relatively privileged groups of older women. Scholarship with and of older Indigenous, racialized, and LGBTQIA2S+ activists, the work of those living with disabilities, and the dynamics of aging and intergenerationality across their movements, remain especially limited (Byrnes 2016; Meadows, Thurston, and Lagendyk 2009).

This volume aims to address these profound gaps. I hope it will begin to challenge the too-frequent omission of age, aging, and intergenerationality within social movement literature. I also hope—perhaps most especially—that it might insert critical analyses of activisms into aging studies, drawing on critical feminist, decolonial, race, queer, and crip theories and approaches.

What do I mean by "critical" analyses, theories, and approaches? I draw on this language to refer to certain epistemological, methodological, and political

commitments, which underpin this project and have informed our editorial processes (Brown and Strega 2014): commitments to continuously “unsettle” or “shake up” understandings of activism, pushing toward a pluralized conception of “activisms” that might resonate ever more widely among diverse social changers and with their diverse social change practices; commitments to call into question what and whose knowledges have so far been included in activist-aging scholarship and to redress, albeit in small and imperfect ways, some of the many existing omissions; commitments to intervene in unfounded scholarly and societal assumptions about aging; and commitments to continuously ask how power operates through the unquestioned deployment of certain concepts and categories, including those related to aging, gender, and social change. I enter this project with an intersectional feminist perspective, seeking to understand how multiple systems of power overlap and intersect to create conditions of privilege for some but not for others, including the privilege of knowing in ways that fit easily into textbooks. I also ground this collection in the premise that there can be no justice on stolen land (Walia 2013)—that settler colonialism, as an ongoing process on Turtle Island, needs to be actively resisted. In the case of this book, settler colonialism needs to be contested as it continues to influence the legitimacy given to different ways of knowing and doing aging, gender, and social change.

Through the editorial process, I have come to think about these commitments as a project to broaden and expand the scope of existing scholarship on aging and activism in three interrelated ways.

(1) By Expanding the “What”

The volume’s focus on unsettling activism is about expanding and intervening in popular depictions of activism, in part by challenging widespread youth-centric assumptions. As Naomi Richards explains, “in the public imagination activism is often associated with youth,” who are frequently caricatured as brash and confrontational (2012, 8). Other scholars suggest that the failure to view older people, and especially older women, as activists emerges from one-dimensional understandings of what activism is or can be (McHugh 2012). Social change work that is “quieter”—the work of educating, organizing, advocating, creating, mentoring, and record-keeping, which older women so often do—tends not to be considered “activism” to the same extent as the more outward forms of protest and rally. From this perspective, the erasure of older women’s roles within social movements is likely tied to these wider misconceptions and thus, by opening up the “what” of activism, the volume can more easily challenge dominant perceptions that activists are necessarily (or even usually) young.

But expanding the “what” in this way is not only about extending the age range of whose knowledges and experiences are considered meaningful in analyzing activism. It is also about asking: What do dominant conceptions of activism reveal and obscure, for whom do these resonate, and for whom are these possible and safe? In this way, expanding the “what” is about valuing the activism of people who do not necessarily have the mobilities or abilities required to attend large protests, or who are made disproportionately vulnerable at such protests, particularly in the presence of police. This expansion also responds to the many Indigenous scholars and activists of Turtle Island who have written about not readily seeing themselves in discourses of “activism,” particularly discourses that position their efforts as “working against” systems of colonial and capitalist power as opposed to being in ceremony, doing what they are called upon to do, surviving, or “working to” Indigenize, heal, care for the land and water, and build a just future (Simpson 2011; Stone 2015).

This volume therefore extends “activisms” to include protest and rally *as well as* arts-based intervention, land-based practice, performance, cultural resurgence, creativity, survivance, refusal, ceremony, advocacy, and more (Meadows, Thurston, and Lagendyk 2009; Kauanui 2016; Hodgson and Brooks 2007; Pain 2014). Throughout the volume, we draw on “activisms”—in the plural form—to mean this diversity of ways of acting, resisting, intervening, animating, dismantling, creating, and building. This is, however, just the beginning, and I hope readers will continue to critically ask: What counts as activism? Who decides?

(2) By Expanding the “Who”

We (Melissa, Pat, and I) initially thought this book would focus on older women’s activism, responding to Davis’s call to amplify women’s activism, and adding to this the analytic of age. We then asked: Among “older women,” who remains least recognized, whose knowledges are missing from scholarly conversations, whose work is least valued, who is least likely to be remembered? These critical questions expose the overarching whiteness and heteronormativity of existing scholarship in this area. They also underpin our efforts to ensure that contributions to this book engage in meaningful ways with varied perspectives on activist aging, including the perspectives of social changers and scholars who are racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQIA2S+, and/or living with disabilities.

Furthermore, over the course of this project, contributors called on us to shift our focus from “women’s activism” to the “activism of women and non-binary individuals.” This led us to also ask: Who might the category of “woman” inadvertently erase, and how might this language re-inscribe gender binaries? While all of

the contributors have, at some points, aligned themselves with women's activisms, it became evident that a rigid focus on "women" could not capture their more fluid, complex, and diverse identities. Shifting to a more nuanced perspective of gender and activisms became important to holding this volume's goal of amplifying what is frequently suppressed.

This shift is, however, also only a beginning. The volume remains composed primarily of the contributions of cisgender scholars and activists. Clearly, there is still much work to do, particularly in bringing the perspectives of trans and two-spirit activists into existing scholarship on aging and social movements. Indeed, I hope readers will continue to ask such critical questions as: Whose knowledge remains absent from these conversations? Who else is missing?

(3) By Expanding the "How"

Finally, this book seeks to push the boundaries of the "how"—to open up the question of how knowledge about aging and activisms tends to be produced and represented within scholarly texts, and to begin to make the inclusion of different knowledges and expressions of knowledge possible.

We initially thought this volume would include a series of research chapters written by academics and reflections written by activists. This structure quickly became too limiting. Some contributors asked to share their knowledge orally and/or through storytelling. These brilliant contributions and the spaces they created for intersubjectivity then became central to the book. This led us to invite the beautiful contributions of several poets, whose work opens each of the volume's sections. These, together with the recorded conversations in Chapter 3 and Reflection 3, significantly expand what this volume could offer in terms of decolonial, queer, and embodied perspectives on aging, gender, and social change.

But these, too, are only small interventions. I continue to ask, and I hope readers will as well: How else can many knowledges about aging and activisms be incorporated into such a collection?

DOMINANT NARRATIVES OF AGE/ING: CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS

As I noted, I come to this work as a "middle aged" academic-activist-parent. So, it is perhaps unsurprising that I approach this project keen to challenge youth-centric images of activism—to abandon the idea that activism is the domain of those under 30. Every section of the book indeed contests societal perceptions

that “activists” are necessarily young, advancing an expanded version of who counts as an activist, what counts as activism, and how different knowledges are valued in these conversations. But there is also more to the age/ing critique offered throughout this volume; this collection also aims to make three critical interventions into dominant age/ing narratives.

First, and most obviously, the very focus of this book on activist aging contests assumptions that aging is synonymous with decline, challenging widespread portrayals of older women¹⁰ as frail, burdensome, and apolitical (Gullette 1997; D. Sawchuk 2009; Krekula 2007). As Dafna Lemish and Varda Muhlbauer (2012) explain, ageist and sexist norms tie women’s societal value to reproduction and equate their beauty and femininity with youthfulness. As a result, post-menopausal women are often considered worthless, irrelevant, and “past their prime.” It is undeniable that older women can experience significant economic strain, discrimination, impaired mobility, abuse, and health challenges (Grenier 2006; Wilińska 2010), but these marginalizing, single-story narratives of decline also deny older women’s agency and essentialize their experiences (Sandberg 2013; Matlok-Ziemann 2014). By contrast, every contribution to this book depicts women and non-binary activists—at every stage of the lifecourse and with varied abilities and backgrounds—asserting themselves in a variety of ways, building communities, forging alliances, being creative, laughing, learning, making connections, and often working tirelessly for social change. Each of the book’s four sections highlights, in different ways, activists of “middle age” or older who are deliberately inserting themselves into political spaces; their activisms subvert ageist-sexist-ableist stereotypes and depict a heterogeneity of aging experiences.

Second, by using the language of “*activist* aging,” the volume interrupts dominant health policy and anti-aging industry discourse of “active aging” (WHO 2002). In response to disempowering decline narratives, policy-makers have spent the last 30 years developing plans, policies, and frameworks that promote “active” and “successful” aging. These discourses have been taken up widely by the booming, multi-billion-dollar “anti-aging industry” and used to sell a certain vision of aging (Ellison 2014). However, these seemingly empowering narratives retain youth as inherently positive and desirable and aging as inherently negative and scary. “Successful” aging means remaining youthful (and thus able-bodied) longer, while “active” aging implies ramping up leisure, consumer, and physical activities (Kribernegg, Maierhofer, and Ratzenböck 2014; Katz and Marshall 2003). These discourses thus effectively re-inscribe the very messages they were originally intended to challenge (Calasanti, Slevin, and King 2006). They also reflect and reinforce neoliberal values, tying success to consumerism and leisure (not to political engagement or societal contribution), and positioning individuals as responsible for how actively they age, with no attention to the structural drivers that shape their experiences. As Lemish and Muhlbauer

suggest, “Placing the responsibility for resisting aging and maintaining good health and a stylish appearance in the hands of older adults reflects neoliberal values of individualism and personal choice and responds to market forces that deepen class divisions” (2012, 167). This volume’s focus on *activist* aging challenges such neoliberal, ageist, ableist, and individualistic messaging; it explicitly recognizes aging as informed by systems of structural power and as imbued with possibilities for collective action and positive societal contribution.

Third, the volume considers “aging” as a process that begins at birth and ends at death, not as a condition of “later life.” Throughout the volume, contributors centre the changing dynamics of activism over people’s lives, and attend to the intergenerational dimensions of different forms of resistance. In this way, their contributions shift the volume beyond its initial focus on older activists to a critical lifecourse approach. In this case, the approach is critical of predominant understandings of the lifecourse that assume a series of life stages, linear temporality, or some chronological progression of social, cognitive, or biological development, and that reinscribe heteronormative, heteropatriarchal, and colonial markers of life passage (Rifkin 2014; Fisher, Phillips, and Katri 2017). Intervening from these perspectives in narratives that equate aging with “old age,” this volume examines the non-linear, ever-ongoing processes of change, learning, returning, thinking, and acting that happen from birth to death. It investigates the complex ways that people, as they age, become prominent or invisibilized, powerful or stigmatized, recognizing the socially, historically, and culturally contingent expectations attached to different perceived stages or chronological ages. The volume also explores how people’s level of control over their own lives might shift at different times, and how in this way age/ing might shape their different options for practicing activism.¹¹

In response to popular conceptions of aging, then, this volume makes several critical interventions. It interrupts stereotypes of brash, confrontational, activist youth and fragile, passive “little old ladies.” It contests the idea that value in “later life” is necessarily demonstrated through accelerated economic and physical activity and insists instead that, for some people, “success” at every age can be derived from a sense of new and renewed contribution to working for a fairer, more compassionate, and more sustainable world. It also challenges assumptions that aging takes place only in “old age,” moving to critical and contingent understandings of activist aging over the lifecourse.

THIS BOOK: CORE THEMES AND STRUCTURE

Following Davis’s powerful call to action, this book aims to illuminate the intricate, lesser-known ways women and non-binary activists work for social change across

different movements and throughout their lives. It raises the questions of who and what have been most erased in discourses about social change, beginning a process of redressing such erasures. Intricately connected to this, this collection also aims to pluralize, expand, and unsettle what is typically meant by “activism.” It also explicitly offers analyses of age, aging, and intergenerationality, bringing critical attention to how age intersects with multiple interlocking systems of power. In these significant ways, this book contributes to and intervenes in existing scholarship on aging, gender, and social change.

The volume is organized into four parts, each of which extends under-explored concepts within existing scholarship on aging and activism. Each part opens with a poignant piece of poetry or prose, giving space to the many ways of sharing stories, ideas, and knowledges about resistance. Each is then introduced by a guest author who sets out key questions, considerations, and readings within their sub-field. The volume includes eight analytic chapters, many co-authored by academics in collaboration with community activists, students, and other research partners, as well as eight shorter personal reflections in which contributors discuss their lived experiences of activist aging. These personal stories and perspectives, alongside the brilliant poetics, bear on, contribute to, and make more vivid the scholarly themes and discussions throughout.

Part I, “Pluralizing,” sets the volume’s conceptual context, shifting beyond one-dimensional understandings of activism to consider a multiplicity and diversity of activists and activism. In her introductory remarks, Carole Roy discusses how an analysis of aging can open up who is recognized as an activist, bringing more legitimacy and prominence to older women’s work for social change. At the same time, she acknowledges that, while older women’s activism have begun to garner scholarly attention, much of the work in this area privileges the activism of groups that already occupy positions of relative privilege in society. The contributions to Part I collectively depict the plurality of older people’s activism, while also bringing a preliminary discussion of whiteness into activist aging research.

In Part II, “Persisting,” waaseyaa’sin christine sy, Anishinaabekwe academic, writer, and poet, reminds readers of the multiple meanings and practices associated with activist aging, drawing attention to the importance of different forms of knowledge-sharing in these conversations. This section brings an explicitly decolonial gaze, insisting that readers understand that the activism depicted through the book have taken place on unceded lands, where First Peoples have been activating and resisting in the face of ongoing settler colonialism for centuries. In this context, persisting and surviving over generations are as much “activism” as blockading against land destruction, moving in ceremony for the water, or teaching

children to speak their own languages. The conversations, poetry, chapters, and reflections in this section also push readers to think about activist aging as a politics of connection—indeed, as motivated by connections to land, water, place, and across generations. Without shying away from the discomforts, contributors to this section further explore how aging activists from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities might activate together.

In Part III, “Embodying,” Sally Chivers introduces concepts of embodiment and performance as they pertain to activist aging. Taking a critical-disability lens, she asks readers to consider when being “visible”—being prominent as an activist—means being valued and when it does not. She also asks: What can studies of critical disability offer to scholarship on activist aging? What does it mean to intercept not only ageist but also ableist discourses in this field? The contributors to this section refuse devaluation as they contend with what activist aging means to them—from the perspectives of aging bodies and from bodies that are aging into and/or with disabilities. In doing so, they begin to crip, queer, and un/sex studies of aging and social change, offering readers insights into their onstage, offstage, and backstage activisms.

Finally, Part IV, “Remembering,” is introduced by Laura Madokoro, who highlights the political and radical importance of record keeping, archiving, and intergenerational knowledge exchange. These contributions reveal the diverse ways that activists are doing memory work, asking how recording and documenting their own activisms can transform people’s subjectivities as political agents. They also explore the many creative ways in which activists of different ages are working to resist erasure and insert themselves into historical memory through archiving, art, performance, mapping, and intergenerational relationship-building. These contributors refuse a unidirectional version of knowledge transmission and instead frame intergenerational memory work as multi-directional—with younger, middler, and older nurturing each other anew as activists, as archivists, and as co-creators of their movements’ stories.

The volume closes with a series of activist “theirstories”—in their own words, six activists discuss their own journeys. The stories are told by activists of different ages, by those whose activisms took shape on Turtle Island and by those whose roots lie elsewhere. They are recounted by activists whose social change work reflects “quieter” approaches, by those who have adopted “louder” ways of making a difference, and by those who embrace both. Through these stories, a powerful portrait emerges of the range of meanings, experiences, and practices that we attach to our activisms, eloquently weaving together the volume’s core themes and insights.

The book’s structure has emerged from a series of conversations and research events connected to *Aging Activisms*, taking place between 2014 and 2017. The

decision to bring these particular sections together to extend scholarship on aging and activism in these ways reflects dialogue among academics across disciplines and activists across movements. This was the product of listening and sharing, of building core relationships, of taking certain risks. Overall, the volume seeks to unsettle activism; to expand the “what, who, and how” of activist aging research; and to illuminate new questions and perspectives. It works toward a critical approach, seeking to push the limits of what and whose knowledges count, and how this can be meaningfully included within an academic book. While this approach remains aspirational, I hope it will raise critical questions even as it sits with the tensions of an unfinished (perhaps just barely started) project.

The people who are represented throughout the book—some whose resistance work spans decades—are engaged in a variety of activism. They work for gender equality, LGBTQAI2S+ rights, reproductive justice, environmental sustainability, equitable trade agreements, global access to medicines, peace, decolonization, just conditions for refugees, and the eradication of racism, among other causes. These are not the individuals who will go down as “the motors of history,” as Davis would call them. They are not Martin Luther King, or Rosa Parks, or even Angela Davis for that matter. Instead, like Robinson and her students, and Colvin and the other young women on the bus, these social changers are the extraordinary “ordinary” ones who slog, and have slogged, foregoing many nights’ sleep and taking many personal risks in their efforts to create change.

NOTES

1. The project started with an explicit focus on women’s activism (in line with Davis’s call) but, over the course of the project, shifted to include women and people who are non-binary, in order to reflect the fluid and diverse gender identities of many contributors.
2. In the Canadian context, dominant historical narratives even further invisibilize the many and varied contributions of activists from racialized communities, including the lives and contributions of civil rights activists as well as Indigenous, South Asian, Japanese, and Chinese social changers.
3. By heteronormativity, I am referring to the ways in which heterosexuality, with its rigid and binary conceptions of gender, is taken as common sense in Western (colonial) society and normalized through our institutions.
4. By using the language of “settler,” I mean that I am non-Indigenous to this land and that my ancestors migrated to and stayed on this land as *part of a system of settler colonialism*. Regardless of whether my ancestors were part of the earliest settlement/colonization of this land, or even whether they came from the original colonizing nations of Britain or France

(which they did not), I use the language of “settler” to indicate the structural, unearned privilege bestowed on me as a non-Indigenous person within a settler colonial context. To be clear, while both colonialism and settler colonialism are based on the domination of Indigenous peoples by colonizers, *settler colonialism is distinct in its goal of replacing the original population of the colonized territory with a new society of settlers* (some from the colonial metropole, some from elsewhere). Settler colonialism depends on access to land or territory, achieved through the creation of treaties or by conquest/taking possession. The ever-growing field of settler colonial studies (e.g., Veracini 2011; Bateman and Pilkington 2011), then, recognizes that colonialism in these contexts—Canada, the United States, Australia, and so on—must be analyzed as ongoing (not in the past), as these states continue to maintain colonial relationships with Indigenous peoples, and as settlers continue to benefit from and be complicit in their ongoing dispossession. By also drawing on the language of “white settler,” I wish to further acknowledge the interconnections between settler colonialism and white supremacy, and the ongoing power and privilege held in settler colonial contexts by people who immigrated from (or whose ancestors came from) the colonial metropolises/European context broadly—people who have lighter skin tones, myself included. This volume recognizes that colonialism and settler colonialism were and are driven, at least in part, by underpinning logics of racism and white supremacy (together with capitalism and patriarchy). We specify “white settler” throughout because it cannot be assumed that all settlers are white, but skin tone (and racialization) does implicate forms and degrees of privilege and oppression. In other words, people of colour, too, can be settlers in settler colonial contexts (with the associated unearned privileges this grants), but they likely will simultaneously experience racialization and racism (see Walia 2013). These categories are contested, and not all “settlers” have ended up in this land for the same reasons or via the same pathways; nevertheless, I find value in this language for understanding social locations within structural systems of power.

5. To my understanding, based on the knowledges that have been shared with me, and recognizing the complexities of land acknowledgement in settler colonial contexts, Nogojiwanong is Anishinaabemowin for “the place at the foot of the river” or “the place at the end of the rapids.” It is the territory and a gathering place of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg, and was long a gathering place for Haudenosaunee and other First Peoples across the region. Home to Curve Lake, Alderville, Hiawatha, and Scugog First Nations, this land was colonized by European settlers in the 1800s. While treaties have not been respected by the Canadian government, this land “is governed by several treaties that include not only political agreements made with the Crown but also agreements that were made between Indigenous nations prior to European contact” (Migizi (Williams) and Kapyrka 2015, 129). It was treated under Treaty 20, set out between the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg and the British Crown in 1818, and the Williams Treaties, set out by Canada in 1923 (ibid.). See Migizi (Williams) and

- Kapyrka 2015, Blair 2008, sy 2015, and Taylor and Dokis 2015 for more information.
6. See www.agingactivisms.org for more information on this activist-research collective.
 7. Here I would like to acknowledge the work of Anishinaabekwe Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, whose intellectual and creative contributions on resurgence have greatly influenced my own thinking, including *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* and *Lighting the Eighth Fire*. I would point readers as well to the important collection, *The Winter We Danced*, by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective. I also extend particularly deep gratitude to Anishinaabekwe poet and scholar waaseyaa'sin christine sy, whose work is throughout this volume (see pages 22, 74, 186; see also sy 2014; sy 2016), Elder Shirley Ida Williams Pheasant (Chapter 3), the Peterborough and Kawartha Sacred Water Circle and Water Walkers (Nibi Emosaawdamajig), Trent University's First People's House of Learning, the annual Trent University Elders and Traditional Peoples Gathering, and the many brilliant Indigenous thinkers and activists who have participated in Aging Activisms work, including but not limited to: Elder Audrey Kuwaquom Caskanette, Elder Alice Olsen Williams, Tasha Beeds, Jenn Cole, Lynn Gehl, Keara Lightning, Monique Mojica, Liz Stone, and Smokii Sumac.
 8. By cisgender, I mean that my own gender identity (as a woman) matches the one I was assigned at birth ("It's a girl!").
 9. On the topic of the relationships that have come to underpin this book, it is worth noting that there is some variation across the volume in how contributors refer to each other and to the participants in their research (in the case of research-oriented chapters). In the introductions to each part, we follow academic conventions: guest authors refer to the contributions in their sections by referencing authors' first and last names upon initial mention and last names only after that. However, in the remainder of the book, we have left it up to authors to determine how they refer to one another and to the others named in their pieces; in many cases (e.g., Chapters 1 and 2, and the book's conclusion), authors choose to use first and last names for initial reference and only first names thereafter, more in line with contemporary colloquial norms around naming people with whom closer relationships exist. Recognizing the import of relationships, affect, caring, and the intersubjectivity of the knowledge presented throughout, we have chosen not to require a standardized formal tone (using last names only) across the book, but instead to allow contributors to use language in a way that reveals such connections.
 10. It is important to point out that in many of these discussions of societal narratives and existing scholarship, I revert to referencing "women" in large part because there is very limited work to date on trans and non-binary older adults.
 11. Elsewhere, scholars are also calling for a rethinking of the lifecourse from critical race perspectives (e.g., Hulko 2009; Ferrer et al. 2017) and queered perspectives (e.g., Riach, Rumens, and Tyler 2014; Jones 2011)—these are clearly salient analyses in terms of the overall goals of this book.

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