



## George Tannenbaum - Ageism in Advertising

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*He writes a wonderful blog, "on the future of advertising, the decline of the English Language and other frivolities. 100% jargon free.*

*Here's a lovely piece, from November 2019. Enjoy....*

**I'M TIRED OF BEING  
EXCORIATED FOR  
BEING OLD.**

**AND ALSO FOR  
USING WORDS  
LIKE EXCORIATED.**



**-UNCLE SLAPPY**

About twelve months ago, having lost a half-a-hipster's worth of weight, because I started running again, I began doing the unthinkable.

I began tucking in my shirt.

I just now took a quick circuit around the creative floor. Not only is there no one within 15 years of my age, among the penisly-cursed - there's not a single tucked-in shirt to be found.

Being of a very old "skool," I also don't have four-day's growth of beard. And as far as I know, I am completely without "ink." Even though tats are where it's at, man.

You know what else I've never done?

I've never called anyone "dude." I've never called anyone "bro." (Not even my brother.)

I've never concepted. Ideated. Exploratoried. Decked. And I've certainly never used the noun *party* as a verb.

Once, about ten years ago, while at a different agency, I was working on a large financial institution. Even though I was then, as I am now, resolutely uncool, I was summoned to have a meeting with the CEO of that financial institution.

He didn't like anyone at the agency. But he liked me.

I arrived early, as you do when you have a meeting with a CEO. His Chief of Staff sat me in his private conference room.

Like Goldilocks, I decided to try his giant chair at the head of his mahogany table. There was more leather on that chair than on a herd of Texas Longhorns.

I took a selfie in that chair. It was my first and last selfie.

Unless I get hit by a truck or an electric scooter - and I feel the need to snap a selfie to document the carnage - I'll never take another one.

The world isn't dying to see me in person, much less in situ.

There's not much of a point in this post. But if there is one, it's this.

I'm angry.

Angry at how so many people, myself included, are treated because they're different - and that most horrible kind of different: they're old.

There's nothing wrong - despite the looks you get from certain people around the office - with having white hair and maybe a bit of a paunch.

As Arthur Miller's Willy Loman said, "It comes with the territory."

There's nothing wrong with not sucking on a USB aperture and vaping and not being in a band and not wearing a woollen hat indoors and not uploading a picture

of every morsel you eat at every crappy restaurant while you're wasting your money on not saving for retirement.

There's nothing wrong with not turning over the data of your life to the evil scions of the silicon surveillance economy - those who will sell you for your bytes like medieval grave-robbers.

There's nothing wrong with having a foundation in literature, art, cinema and, even, great advertising that goes back more than six weeks or eight.

If people don't value you because you were born when Eisenhower was president, or Nixon, or even Reagan or the first Bush, well then, I'll say this.

They're bigots.

They're bigots.

And they're small-minded.

And to be crude about it, they're exclusionary mofos who can take their "diversity and inclusion" bludgeon--the one they're always spouting about and they can beat themselves up their tattooed asses with it.

I'm angry about being treated as a ninth-class citizen because I have some rings around my trunk.

As my good friend Bob Hoffman, the Ad Contrarian pointed out not so terribly long ago:

In 2018, Kazuo Ishiguro, 64, won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Lynn Nottage who is 54, won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Heather Ann Thompson, 55, won the Pulitzer for History.

Poetry? Tyehimba Jess, age 53.

At the Oscars, the four acting winners were:

Frances McDormand, 60.

Gary Oldman, 59.

Allison Janney, 58.

And Sam Rockwell, who turned 51 earlier this month.

Guillermo del Toro won Best Director. He's 53.

In the world of TV, The Emmy for Best Drama Series went to The Handmaid's Tale.

Margaret Atwood wrote the novel and is a creative consultant on the show. She's 79.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus was executive producer of Veep. She won best actress.

Veep won best Comedy Series. She's 57.

Best Limited Series, Big Little Lies, was created by David E Kelley. He's 62.  
The Best Supporting Actor? John Lithgow, 73.

Best Supporting Actress was Ann Dowd, 62.

Best Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series? Alec Baldwin, 60.

None of these people could get hired to write a banner ad today. They're too damned old.

Yeah. I'm angry.

Someone wrote me a note not long ago. A friend and an age-peer working at what she describes as "a viciously ageist agency."

"George," she said, "I dream that one day there will be an agency where my partner and our teams will be judged not by the years on our resumes but by the content of our work."

I think that's pretty good. And pretty relevant.

But I have a confession.

No one sent me those words in real life.

I took Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech and did a little rewrite.

You know, this one.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

There I go again.

Old references.