



The Raging Grannies: Wild Hats, Cheeky Songs, and Witty Actions for a Better World

Carole Roy

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Women's courage is ancient. Women fought against slavery and offered shelter to hunted runaways, demanded economic justice for the starving or working poor, raised their voices when rights were trampled, raised their fists when their children were murdered. Women's collective acts of resistance have played, and continue to play, a vital but often unacknowledged role in humanizing social, political and economic policies. To death, danger, and oppression women have frequently responded in life-affirming ways, their contributions concealed in invisibility and silence for too long, without stories of resistance and opposition. But no more.

This is the tale of the Raging Grannies. Their beginning and growth, the invention of their identity, the educational and daring potential of their activism, the values expressed in their actions and songs, and their impact on issues, stereotypes, media and people.

At a time when environmental destruction and war threatened, when the growing chasm between poor and rich endangered justice, a group of women stood up with courageous irreverence to denounce government lies, corporate greed and short-sightedness. In the process, these women created a new cultural figure that challenged authority, as well as stereotypes of older women.

The Grannies' distinctive approach is surprisingly popular and effective: in 16 years, more than 50 groups of Raging Grannies exist across Canada, in the United States, and as far away as the U.K., Australia and Greece (Greek Grannies call themselves Furies). Their popularity reveals the desire of older women to claim their space on the political scene, a noteworthy achievement given the invisibility elder women face in our society.

The Raging Grannies both records and celebrates this vibrant activism.

Carole Roy is a long-time activist who has worked with Canada World Youth International Educational Exchanges. She holds an MA in women's studies, from York University, and a Ph.D. in adult education, from the University of Toronto.

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