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Global Synergy Edition

This month I participated in a global online convening of the [Grandmother Collective](#), an organization dedicated to empowering older women to create social change. The Collective was founded by Lynsey Farrell and Jennifer Hanks-Allaire, two anthropologists who met while serving on the board of [The Grandmother Project](#), a Senegalese-American organization dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. Lynsey and Jen saw that grandmothers had hugely beneficial impacts in Senegal, from greater education for girls to lower rates of female genital mutilation and child marriage. Lynsey and Jen were inspired to connect groups of older women all over the world who are working for social change, and The Grandmother Collective was born. The Collective envisions grandmother-powered leadership for more resilient communities, starting with supporting older women to recognize our potential to create change.

At the conference on May 22 and 23, Lynsey shared new initiatives at the Collective, including research on the impact of grandmothers, pilot programs to build leadership, and advocacy for the inclusion of older women in policymaking. We learned about systemic change that is already happening all over the world under the leadership of grandmothers and grandmothers. For example, Siphwe Hiophe shared efforts to fund HIV care and aging health equity in Swaziland. Kathryn Hall-Trujillo described her work in the Cuban health care system, an under-recognized success she described as "the best place in the world for a black baby to be born." Rachel Savage talked about her work on loneliness and older women at the [Women's Age Lab](#) in Toronto, an academic center that was founded to improve the lives of older women by using science to transform care and drive policy change.

[Indai Sajor](#) gave a powerful presentation on her work with the Tokyo Women's Tribunal to bring justice to the grandmothers from eleven countries who were sex slaves during World War II. These crimes were not raised during the international war crimes tribunal after the war. Because the women felt shame and kept silent, it was fifty years later than Indai and others were able to collect the stories of the so-called "comfort women" and file a case against the Japanese government. In addition to the success of the lawsuit, due to the efforts of the Tokyo Women's Tribunal sexual slavery is now codified into law as a war crime.

Throughout the conference there was recognition that the source of older women's power is the transformation that takes place for [Women of Age](#). We know we do not have time to waste. We have stopped worrying about what people think of us. We are post-childrearing, many of us post-career, and are ready to create and to make change happen. These traits combine with the complexities of different cultures,

different classes, different languages, to generate rich crosscurrents in older women's experiences. And Women of Age welcome the synergy that happens when women work together.

One of the goals of The Grandmother Collective is to amplify the voices of older women. Their work is in sync with my efforts to launch CroneHub, a clearinghouse for older women's culture. CroneHub will be a searchable platform sharing links to media that portrays the vivid lives of older women, including fiction and nonfiction books, movies and television, podcasts and magazines. CroneHub will also feature organizations that promote the creative power of older women. In a meeting with Jennifer Hanks-Allaire, we discussed ways to share information and work together to amplify older women's voices.

The Grandmother Collective is thriving and growing. Plans are afoot for a much larger gathering this winter or in the spring of 2025, with multiple tracks. I look forward to participating in the Creativity sessions and to learning more about what this vibrant organization can bring to our vivid lives. To learn more and to sign up for their [newsletter](#), please visit their [website](#).



Please keep the pen moving (or the keys clicking) and keep thinking about getting your words in front of readers.

All the best,

Stella,

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Correction to Last Month's Newsletter:

Mimi Herman, author of *The Kudzu Queen*, requested we note that she began writing her novel in 1994, and that she does not use Square to sell her novel at

bookstores.

Please Share this Newsletter!



From the blog this month



None Dare Call it Normal

Stella Fosse

Two years ago I signed up to perform what I thought was a public service for older persons. [Since then](#) I've been asked how my thinking is deteriorating every way to Sunday, with nary a question about the good stuff. Nothing about how my

perspective on lived history contributes to understanding the present. Nothing about how many times I've made Queen Bee in the *New York Times* spelling game (Hint: every day).

Nothing, tellingly, about how my next book is coming along. It's all timed tests to remember flashing pictures and *"tell me, which of these dangerous, expensive and marginally effective anti-dementia drugs are you taking?"* They ask about each drug right in the clinical trial questionnaire. Imagine all ten thousand older participants in this study, having their [internalized ageism](#) triggered by the focus on the negative and then being offered dodgy solutions. Which begs the question: Is this really a clinical study, or is it a pharmaceutical ad with a veneer of medical authority?

We know that brains change with age. We know that some tasks, like remembering names, are harder while [other functions](#), like synthesizing across subjects, get easier. After sixty we refocus from the trees to the forest. So, are these changes "brain disease?" Who gets to decide what is a disease, anyway? And who gets to decide which changes should be medicated?

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DNA and Democracy

Anne Riley

I have just published my new book: [DINA: Nature's Case For Democracy](#). In it, I describe how democracy preceded humans by about two billion years. Of course, we don't call it democracy in nature. We call the beings that practice democracy by their common names like bees and tigers and trees and every other living thing on earth.

Humans adopted the idea of democracy fairly quickly, but they do not share the same quality controls that nature created to assure that entities survive and thrive. This book is a call to action for people (women in particular) to start changing our world to mirror nature's successful version of democracy.

The protagonist of this book is Sara Wallace, a fifty-something woman who has experienced life in a world where women have to bear the burden of balancing work and family in a way that doesn't accommodate the equal importance of both.

Sara represents the wisdom that women have, but have rarely had the opportunity to use to shape the world.

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