

# ACTIVISM AND AGEISM

## JENNIFER ABOD ON THE OLD WOMEN'S PROJECT

By Jackie Joice

**J**ennifer Abod is an activist, feminist and director who currently resides in Long Beach, Calif. Her creative work in media and music contributed to second-wave feminism and continues to be relevant. Abod's resume includes a Ph.D. in intercultural media education, co-founding and singing in the New Haven, Conn., Women's Liberation Rock Band in the early '70s and, more recently, a moving and educational documentary called *The Edge of Each Other's Battles: The Vision of Audre Lorde*.

I had the opportunity to view *The Edge of Each Other's Battles* in Long Beach last February at the *Equal Writes Bookstore*. Talking to Abod at the event, I learned about her latest documentary in progress, *Look Us in the Eye: The Old Women's Project*. This documentary takes a look at The Old Women's Project (OWP) in San Diego, Calif., a collective of women who seek to raise awareness about how old women are directly impacted by social-justice issues and ageism.

An OWP article titled "Why Is Ageism an Old Women's Issue?" points to issues of economic inequality, sexism around the aging process and defining old women only by their family roles as reasons women should concern themselves with ageism. Of the economic disparity between older women and men, OWP writes, "The median income in the U.S. for men over 65 is \$29,171. The median income for women over 65 is \$15,615. Globally, 70 percent of the world's poor are women, and old women are the poorest of the poor."



OWP founders and their giant puppet, POWER (Pissed Old Woman Engaged in Revolution). Photo by Ann M. Garwood.

Examples of OWP campaigns include raising awareness around low-cost housing and its importance to women of all ages and ethnicities, workers' rights (e.g., Justice for Janitors, living-wage campaigns) and opposition to Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed cuts to disability services. OWP actions have also included a shopping-bag march against the war in Iraq with the declaration that "women don't buy this war" and "Bush brides" street theater critiquing President Bush's Healthy Family Initiative.

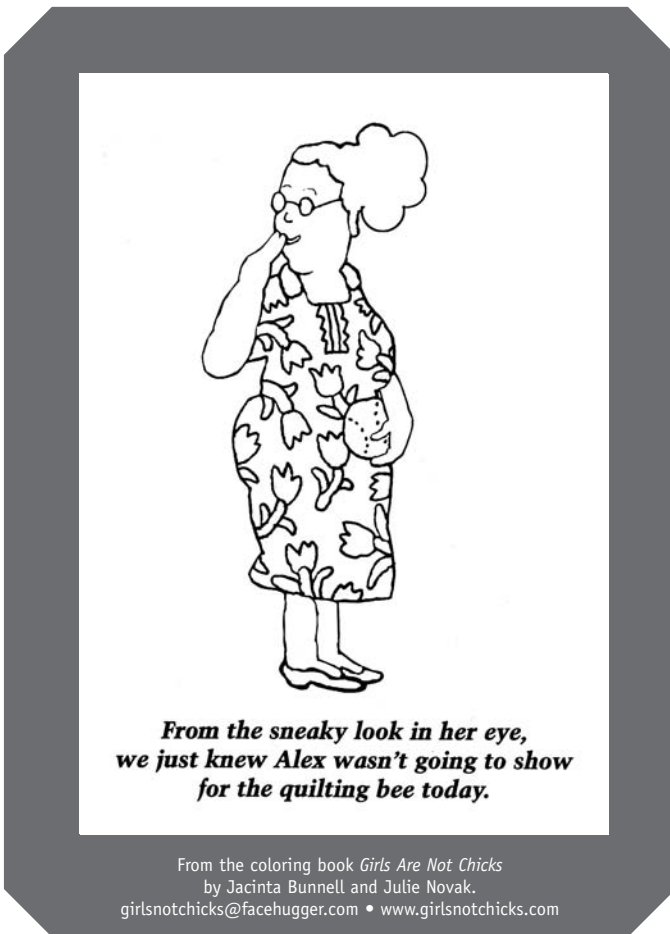
Connecting her creative projects with issues that she cares about is important to Abod: "As a filmmaker, I am interested in steeping myself in issues that I want to know more about for personal and political reasons. Learning about The Old Women's Project is helping me to counter the impact and effects of a misogynistic culture in my own life, and I hope through this video I will help to make their ideas and activism more well-known."

Learning more about the OWP has made Abod more aware of ageism. Looking at popular culture, she notes the prevalence of "anti-aging this and anti-aging that." Abod is also more conscious of the way people treat her, a woman in her 50s: "Some of the inappropriate comments I am beginning to hear I am identifying as part of ageism in this culture. Why is someone calling me a young lady? When I was young enough to be one, I wasn't [called that]." She continues, "The Old Women's Project has helped me to see that ageism doesn't let old women be the age that we are — we are always being compared to young women, and young women are terrified of being old women."

Jackie has her own column, "Mis Hermanas," in the Phoenix, Az.-based magazine *Caliente Flavaz*. She also writes fiction and performs spoken word. Drop her a line: [jackiejoice@yahoo.com](mailto:jackiejoice@yahoo.com).

If you would like to contact Jennifer or contribute to her projects (donations are needed), please visit her website: [www.jenniferabod.com](http://www.jenniferabod.com).

For more information on The Old Women's Project, check out [www.oldwomensproject.org](http://www.oldwomensproject.org).



**From the sneaky look in her eye,  
we just knew Alex wasn't going to show  
for the quilting bee today.**

From the coloring book *Girls Are Not Chicks*  
by Jacinta Bunnell and Julie Novak.  
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