



Human Resources Administration
Department of Social Services
Steven Banks, Commissioner

HRA Hosts Event on Age and Disability in Our Culture

On Friday, May 2, HRA's Adult Protective Services program (APS) and the New York City Elder Abuse Center hosted an event for the New York City Elder Justice community. Titled *What do Age and Disability Mean in Our Culture – And How do they Affect You?*, the event focused on combating discrimination based on age and ability, and also featured information on New York City's Multidisciplinary Teams, which bring together City agencies, law enforcement, medical professionals and community groups to combat the complex problem of elder abuse.

The guest speaker at the event was Ashton Applewhite, an author who has written extensively on the subject of ageism at [This Chair Rocks](#) and in other venues. She is a Knight Fellow, a New York Times Fellow, an Age Boom Fellow at the Columbia University School of Journalism, and a fellow at the Yale Law School's Information Society Project

"We experience ageism any time someone assumes that we're "too young" or "too old" for something, instead of finding out what we're actually capable of," said Applewhite. "Ageism drowns out all but the negative messages about life after youth, and relegates older people to second-class status. Because of this, no one even blinks when older people are described as "confused" or "pathetic."

To combat ageism, Applewhite recommended learning as much as possible about old age to dispel negative opinions, associating with people from a wide range of ages, and speaking out when we encounter ageist behaviors or attitudes around us.

The New York City Elder Abuse Center's Multidisciplinary Team is made up of APS, New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, the District Attorney's Office, NYPD and several community groups. It brings together professionals involved in all aspects of preventing and prosecuting elder abuse, and meets regularly to discuss cases and decide the best way to investigate and help alleged victims.

Like other kinds of abuse, elder abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, or economic. It can come from family or caregivers, and is often difficult to detect and prosecute because of the desire to protect family members and the victim's mental condition.