

Next generation

Cecile Richards: 'Women are 'woke' in this country and it's awesome'

Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards and celebrated author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie share their insights from the forefront of the new wave of feminism

BY TIFFANY BAKKER 04.05.17



Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards and acclaimed Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are not feeling overly buoyed by the fact that Ivanka Trump currently holds a senior position in the White

House. “Anyone who works in this White House is responsible for addressing why women are in the crosshairs of every single policy we’ve seen in this administration,” Richards said, on stage with Adichie on Wednesday at the Women in the World Summit in New York City.

Ms Trump’s recent comments regarding her largely-silent stand on women’s issues — that “to conflate lack of public denouncement with silence, I think there are multiple ways to have your voice heard” — did not go down well, either.

“I think,” Adichie said with a sly grin, “it sounds like alternative facts.”

The crowd loved it.

Right now, Richards and Adichie are at the forefront of the new wave of feminism. Richards, of course, is currently embroiled in the midst of a battle to save Planned Parenthood from the threat of defunding under the Trump administration. The fight, she reveals, is “rougher than I thought.”

Adichie, whose 2012 TEDx talk *We Should All Be Feminists* became something of a cultural moment (eventually becoming a book and, more controversially, the slogan for a \$900 Dior T-shirt), has just seen the release of her feminist manifesto, *Dear Ijeawele*, written in response to a friend who asked the writer how she should raise her young daughter as a feminist (Adichie has a young daughter).

Adichie’s advice for her daughter was simple: “I want girls to reject likeability.”

For Richards, there’s been something of a silver lining to women seeing their hard-won rights being eroded. “Women’s rights are under assault,”

she said. “But women are ‘woke’ and engaged in a way I’ve never seen in my lifetime. There’s never been a better time to raise a feminist.”

Here is the unmissable advice of these two firebrands on how to raise our daughters AND sons to be feminists:

Reject likeability

“There’s a terrible dangerous cultural mindset that says to women, you need to be liked,” says Adichie. “It’s nice to be liked, men want to be liked, but it’s the idea that women need it,” says Adichie. “Women who are sexually assaulted, they’re afraid of coming out about it because they’re afraid of not being liked. I want girls to reject likeability.”

Richards said that, in the words of her late mother, Texas Governor Ann Richards: “If you’re not pissing anybody off, you’re doing something wrong.”

Involve men and boys in the fight for feminism

Richards, who has three children, says her son Daniel “is every bit as feminist as his [two] sisters.”

“He was the Vice President of the Reproductive Rights group at his college. I see so many fathers and grandfathers marching for women’s rights, things are changing in the way men think about feminism, I think.”

Reject ‘Feminism Lite’

‘Feminism Lite’ is “the idea of conditional female equality”, says Adichie. “It’s that you’re not equal to a man, a woman’s wellbeing depends on the benevolence of a man. “That’s more dangerous than not being a feminist, I think.”

Change the way we think about masculinity

“We need to deconstruct the way we think about masculinity and femininity,” adds Adichie. “Feminism is for men, too. Masculinity is also a cage that limits men — what if we raised them to think of masculinity as very different? What if we raised them to be ashamed of macho behaviour?”

Teach your kids to stand up and fight

“Women are ‘woke’ in this country and it’s awesome to see,” said Richards. “Women didn’t just march. Women have a sense of self worth and women are more engaged like I have never seen in my lifetime.”

“Feminism cannot be a passive identity,” adds Adichie, “It has to be something we stand up and fight for.”

Additional reporting by Laura Macomber.

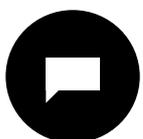
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