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CYNTHIA ERIVO TALKS ABOUT RESPONDING TO HATE WITH EMPATHY AT PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

Nearly 9,000 Show Up for Day of Inspiration, Connection, and Skill-Building for a Fast-Changing World

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PHILADELPHIA, PA – September 26, 2025 – Nearly 9,000 people gathered in Philadelphia yesterday for the 22nd annual Pennsylvania Conference for Women, part of the largest network of women’s conferences in the nation.

CFW is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing and empowering leading employers, teams, and individuals to reach their full potential at work and in life.

Speakers addressed the importance of empathy, optimism, and self-acceptance, as well as leadership, career advancement, and well-being in a rapidly changing world.

Asked how she protects herself from haters, **Cynthia Erivo**, the Emmy, Grammy, and Tony award-winning performer who starred in *Wicked*, said, “Anyone who is opposed to me being myself is probably opposed to being themselves.”

“The only thing I can offer that person is empathy and hope that one day they will have enough bravery and courage to turn the mirror around,” she continued. “I always think, ‘Who hurt you? Someone did.’”

Adding that sometimes when she hears someone speaking harshly in public, she stops and asks, “Are you OK? What happened? Do you need help?” That, she explained, usually disarms them because they expect other people to match their energy.

“We mirror other people’s behavior, but we can change it, too,” Erivo said.

Hoda Kotb, award-winning journalist, author of the 2025 book *Jump and Find Joy*, and former co-anchor of *Today* and *Today with Hoda & Jenna*, spoke about the importance of optimism, perseverance, and choosing where to focus.

Acknowledging that optimism can be challenging in uncertain times, Kotb said, “I am constantly looking for people who are optimistic, people who are lifting other people up. I’m on the hunt for people living a life I want to emulate.”

Mel Robbins, creator and host of the award-winning *Mel Robbins Podcast* and #1 *New York Times* best-seller *The Let Them Theory*, encouraged the crowd not to count on motivation but action.

“You have to learn how to take action when you don’t feel like it,” she said. “It sounds like the dumbest thing, but it’s true,” she said. “Your entire future is waiting for you to create it if you can get out of your own way.”

Jesse Israel, a social entrepreneur, meditation leader, and former record label executive known for founding the mass movement The Big Quiet, and **Tomi Adeyemi**, #1 *New York Times* best-selling author and named one of *TIME Magazine’s* 100 Most Influential People, also keynoted the event.

The Conference also featured more than a dozen of the nation’s leading experts in professional and personal development. Sessions addressed topics ranging from AI to finding purpose in uncertain times, providing attendees with actionable tools to apply in their workplaces and communities.

Among the speakers were **Brigid Schulte** (*Overwhelmed*), **Danielle Bayard Jackson** (*Fighting for Our Friendships*), and **Dr. Liane Davey** (*You First*).

Serving thousands of companies, CFW helps strengthen retention, build organizational capacity, and foster workplace cultures where everyone can contribute fully by gaining the skills, insights, and connections needed to grow and lead at every career stage.

Upcoming CFW events include the Texas Conference for Women on Wednesday, October 9, 2025, the Massachusetts Conference for Women on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, and the virtual National Conference for Women on Wednesday, March 4, 2026.

Learn more [here](#).

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