

# Cecile Richards

In her new book, the powerhouse behind Planned Parenthood Federation of America talks about her lifetime of making trouble

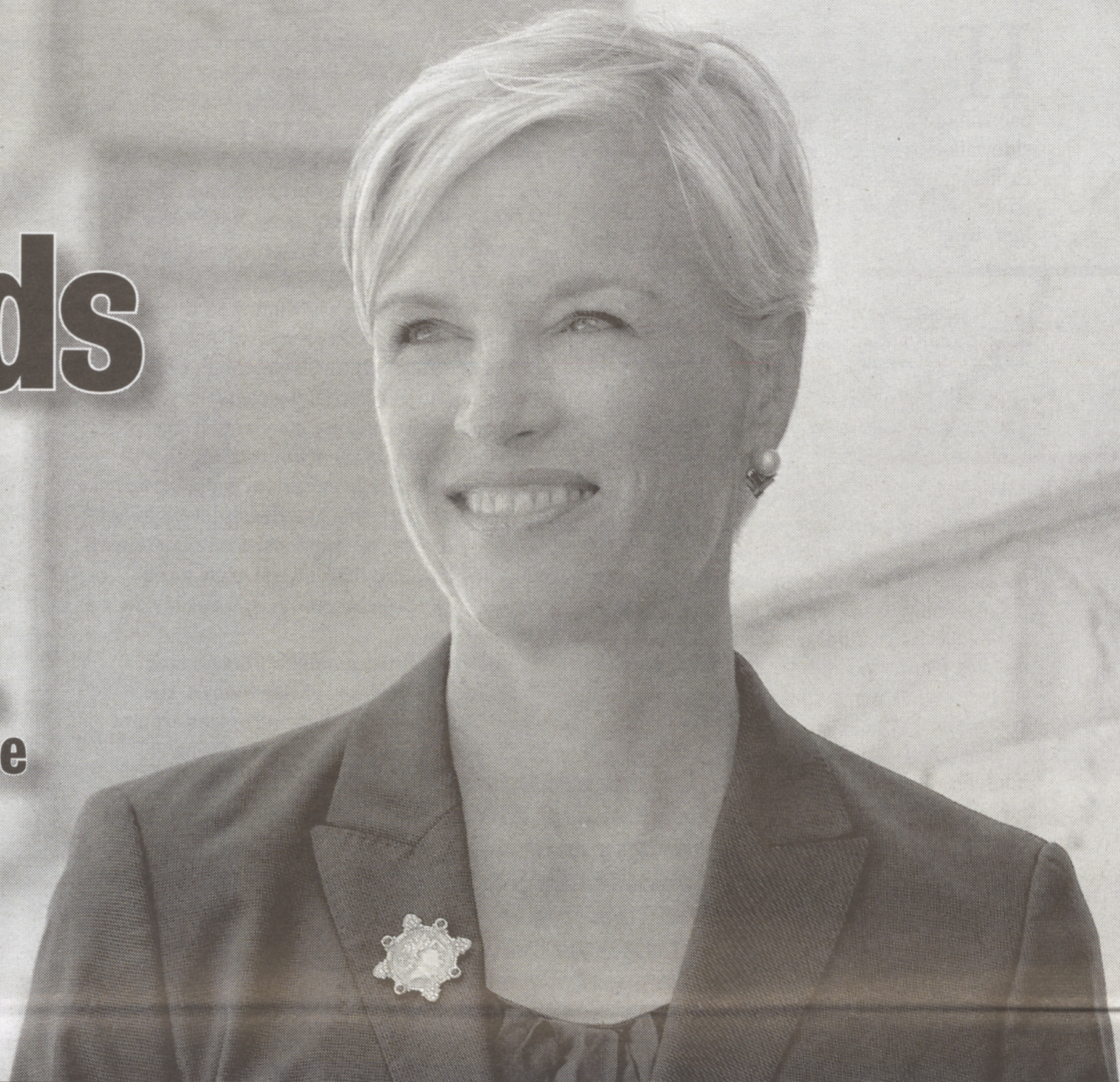


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**What:** Powell's Books presents Cecile Richards, in conversation with Bitch Media's Andi Zeisler.  
**When:** 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 10  
**Where:** Revolution Hall, 1300 SE Stark St., Portland  
**Cost:** \$37 (reserved seating)

**BY JOANNE ZUHL**  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

It started relatively small: A black felt armband worn to her Texas grade school as part of a nationwide protest of the Vietnam War. Cecile Richards was only 13 at the time, and it was her first big leap into the resistance. For her act of rebellion, she was summoned by the principal, who promptly phoned her mom. As Richards recalls, her mother wasn't home at the time, which made it probably one of the luckiest days of the principal's life.

That's because Richards' mom was the legendary Ann Richards, an original Texas firebrand and political activist who went on to become governor. From that dynamic and politically charged upbringing, Richards would establish herself as a formidable organizer in her own right. She campaigned alongside nursing home workers, janitors and hotel staff to secure just wages and benefits. She later formed the Texas Freedom Network and rallied a community against the religious right when it tried to take over the local school district by ousting board members, directing curricula and composing reading lists. In 2002, she became deputy chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), and later went on to found America Votes, a progressive organizing network that advocates for voters rights.

In her new memoir, "Make Trouble," Richards writes about the influence of her mother, Pelosi and the countless workers she's marched alongside who helped shape her own activism. For the past 12 years, Richards has been the president of Planned

Parenthood Federation of America, championing its work providing health care to low-income individuals, and standing up to constant assaults on reproductive rights. The federation is composed of 80 local affiliates operating approximately 800 health centers nationwide.

This January, she announced she would be stepping down from that position.

The title of Richards' book, "Make Trouble," is as much a reflection on her life as a directive to her readers. The book is filled with lessons on how to organize – not textbook tutorials, but personal tips learned from someone who has spent decades being a troublemaker, questioning authority and not waiting for someone else to *do something*.

On April 10, Powell's Books is presenting a conversation with Richards and Bitch Media co-founder Andi Zeisler at Revolution Hall in Portland.

Prior to her visit, Street Roots interviewed Richards about her new book, her experiences on the front lines, and the times we find ourselves in.

**Joanne Zuhl:** *You speak a lot in "Make Trouble" of your experiences at various Planned Parenthood outlets. How often did you visit clinics across the country, and how did those visits shape the work you did?*

**Cecile Richards:** That has been, hands down, one of the best parts of the last 12 years at Planned Parenthood. From the moment I took the job, life on the road became my new normal. In fact, I recently visited my 50th state: North Dakota! Meeting the staff, volunteers and patients who are the

heart of this organization has not only shaped my work; it has changed my life. There were so many incredible moments. Seeing the IUD-shaped bike racks outside Planned Parenthood in Portland was a fun one.

I also heard countless stories that really brought home why we do the work we do. I'll never forget talking to a doctor in Ohio who told me, holding back tears, how hard it was to be forced by the state to repeat false information intended to shame and scare her patients out of ending a pregnancy. That was one of the common themes: The doctors, nurses, clinicians and staff who work at Planned Parenthood are deeply committed to their patients, whether they're in Alaska or New York City or anywhere in between.

**J.Z.:** *What impact has Donald Trump's presidency had on women's reproductive rights, here and abroad?*

**C.R.:** From the day this administration took office, they have been working to make it harder for women to access health care, in the U.S. and around the world. On his very first day, President Trump reinstated and expanded the Global Gag Rule, so that it not only slashes funding for global family planning, but jeopardizes health programs addressing HIV and Zika. This administration has also cut off U.S. funding for the United Nations Population Fund – an organization whose sole mission is to support maternal and child health around the world.

Here in the U.S., they have tried to kick millions of women off their health insurance, block women from coming to Planned

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