

Clementine Ford Forum

A sell-out crowd enjoyed the smart, brave, considered, witty, and (as she describes herself) unfuckablewith, Clementine!

By Nicola Brebner

Auckland Women's Centre and The Women's Bookshop were delighted to host prominent Australian feminist and writer Clementine Ford who hit the shores of Aotearoa in November to promote her latest book "Boys will be Boys" at an event in central Auckland.



Clementine Ford and AWC Chairperson, Mira Taitz

A sell-out crowd of more than 300 turned up to hear and be inspired by Clementine Ford whose first book "Fight like a Girl" was a bestseller last year.

Despite the presence outside of a small group of Men's Rights Activists or "sad man babies" as Clementine describes them, the evening did not disappoint.



Georgina and her daughters

Growing good boys is about acknowledging the reality of the world we live in, says Clementine. That world and that reality, where the behaviour of men and boys, whether it be engaging in violence against women, telling harmful rape jokes, gas-lighting women or interrupting them, is the result of a widespread culture which enables and excuses bad behaviour in men and boys on a daily basis,

summed up aptly in the decades-old phrase "Boys will be Boys".



Carole Beu interviewing Clementine Ford

Throughout her book, Clementine addresses and dismantles harmful attitudes: from defining what a boy is and how little is expected of fathers in the domestic sphere, to toxic societal attitudes towards sex and rape and how men are enabled to commit violence through these prevailing beliefs. She also discusses the role the family court plays in upholding the patriarchy and the damaging effects of movies which reinforce the idea of men as leaders and women as largely irrelevant.



Rachel House was there!

AND Clementine recognised her 😊

Interviewed on stage by Women's Bookshop owner Carole Beu, Clementine demolished the status quo one sentence at a time, armed with an awesome sense of humour for when the subject matter gets dark, which is the majority of the time. Whether it's calling out the perpetual gas-lighting women experience which "teaches women not to have faith in their own experiences" or addressing the real-life harm that rape jokes create, including the

way they validate and minimise this crime, Clementine is compellingly articulate and does not miss a beat.



Forum participant and her baby

Ultimately, if we can raise good boys, Clementine argues, we can be a part of changing the attitudes and the culture we live in. She addresses the powerful effects of language and the unconscious language we use around our children. She urges parents to be aware of the words they use, the clothes they dress their children in and the activities they encourage them to do.

Having constant conversations about consent, respect and humanity is key to raising good boys, says Clementine. “Teach your sons to ask for consent. Teach them that their experience of the world is not everyone else’s experience.”



Forum participants

Refreshingly, rather than putting the onus on how women can raise good boys, Clementine swiftly points out the work that men can do. “Men need to find the courage to speak up...if a woman is speaking up they will be harmed much more significantly than men will. Men need to challenge themselves to be proactive and to take that conversation to other men.”

While Clementine continues to be a champion at opening our eyes to both the overt and hidden

sexism in our society and validating our experiences so succinctly, she is also optimistic that attitudes can change and, in time, will. “Mostly we’re very malleable as a society. Very few of us are leaders, most of us are followers. We want to be given a model of how we should live that we can follow.” Political will, combined with a shift in social behaviour, can bring about change.



Rebekah Guy and Karla Smith

Clementine gives the example of the smoking bans that were introduced in restaurants and bars in the 1990s and how, despite some initial backlash, now people have fully adjusted their behaviour and beliefs to the point where we are shocked if we see someone smoking inside a restaurant.

She urged everyone to challenge others also. “The more people get together and seek to change their immediate communities, the more it will filter out and create change.”

Watch the live stream of the forum online [here](#).