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25 FOR 25 SERIES

CLEO WADE

25 for 25 is an original content series by Gucci and CHIME FOR CHANGE to mark the historic milestone of Beijing +25 in March, as well as Women's History Month. The series will highlight activists, CHIME Advisory Board members, partners and supporters who represent the progress made on gender equality over the past 25 years, and the emerging next generation continuing this critical work.



As an author and community builder, CHIME Advisory Board member **Cleo Wade** continues to be an inspiring voice in today's fight for gender equality, speaking to a greater future for all women and girls, people of color and the LGBTQ community. Discover Cleo's reflections on the triumphs, challenges and hopes for a gender-equal future and how others can encourage positive action below.

What are your hopes and expectations for gender equality in the next 25 years?

Coretta Scott King said, "Freedom is never really won, you earn it and win it in every generation." My hopes in the next 25 years are that we remain focused on pushing for gender equality. I hope that we continue to dig deep to dismantle the structures and systems that oppress all people. There is no "there" when it comes to equality. The work is a torch that must continuously be passed on and on.

What does gender equality mean to you?

Gender equality is when our bodies are free. It is when all people have access to their human rights. It is when we, as a people, are free from hierarchy and have equal opportunity to thrive and be.

What keeps you energized and committed as a leader for gender equality?

I travel around for my work almost all year round and have the privilege of hearing so many different stories from women all around the world. Stories of strength and perseverance, stories of love and determination, stories of local activism and the great things they've accomplished. Hearing all of the different ways women are standing up and speaking out keeps me so incredibly motivated to get up and do my part.

What advice would you give younger generations on how to advocate / work for gender equality as they get older?

I would encourage them to get to know the people around them, regardless of their age or background. We need each other in order to accomplish big things. The good fight is a lifelong fight and is much easier to endure when you have your friends in it with you.

Who do you look to as an example / role model in the fight for gender equality?

The women who understand the importance of intersectionality. People like Audre Lourde who reminded us that “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” There is no gender equality without race equality, economic equality, sexual orientation equality, etc.

