# Brooke Shields lightens mood as Meghan Markle faces scrutiny over childhood activism claims at SXSW panel



Brooke Shields recently recounted a humorous incident during a panel discussion with Meghan Markle at the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin, Texas, commemorating International Women's Day. On India Hicks' podcast, Shields described how she felt compelled to interrupt Markle's earnest speech, which she felt had become overly serious. The anecdote unfolded when Markle, addressing issues of gender equality, shared her experience of advocating against a sexist Procter & Gamble commercial at the tender age of 11. Shields, aiming to lighten the mood, quipped to the audience, "Well, when I was 11, I was playing a prostitute," referencing her controversial breakout role in the film *Pretty Baby*. This comment sparked laughter and eased the serious atmosphere, according to Shields.

The exchange was part of a broader discussion on women in media and the challenges they face, which included notable figures like Katie Couric and sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen. Markle emphasised the persistence of gender inequality and highlighted a report from her Archewell Foundation that revealed a significant pay gap between working mothers and fathers. As part of the panel, she also shared her experiences of facing online harassment, illustrating the negative impact of social media on women.

Despite the audience's positive reaction to Shields' interjection, Markle reportedly had a mixed reaction. Shields noted, "I hope she doesn't think I'm rude," as they navigated the delicate balance between light-heartedness and serious discourse. While the event aimed to address substantial issues surrounding women's representation and support, it became clear that humour could serve to break the ice in a tense environment.

The incident sparked broader reflections on the pressures women face, both in their public and private lives. Shields reiterated that the conversation could not remain "too precious" for an extended period, echoing a sentiment that resonated with many attending the panel. This notion of maintaining a balance between seriousness and levity is particularly pertinent in discussions surrounding women's rights and representation in media.

Importantly, Markle's story about her activism at such a young age is a tale she frequently recounts, framing it as a pivotal moment in her life that set the trajectory for her advocacy. However, questions about the veracity of her claims have persisted. Notably, when the anecdote appeared in a 2017 *Vanity Fair* cover story, it was later cut after failing to withstand fact-check scrutiny. Critics have suggested that Markle’s recollection may be embellished, as no concrete evidence substantiates that she received a reply from key figures like Hillary Clinton or Procter & Gamble, as she has suggested in past interviews.

In their deeper dives into the topic, both Markle and Shields have pointed out the uneven playing fields women face, not just in terms of pay, but also regarding societal expectations and the narratives surrounding them. The SXSW event underscored the importance of women supporting women, a sentiment echoed in the reactions and rapport shared among the panelists.

As the conversation around women’s rights continues to evolve, public figures like Markle and Shields remain at the forefront, navigating complex social landscapes while endeavouring to draw attention to crucial issues impacting women today.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14772169/Brooke-Shields-meghan-markle-precious-interupting-speech.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.apnews.com/article/1d9dee5e29c24a7e9fed5db97e8fedd9)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1875428/brooke-shields-meghan-markle-sxsw-texas-speech), [[4]](https://people.com/meghan-markle-teams-up-katie-couric-brooke-shields-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-prince-harry-support-8605723), [[6]](https://www.elle.com/culture/celebrities/a60142483/meghan-markle-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-2024/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/meghan-markle-international-womens-day-speech-brooke-shields-b2509369.html), [[5]](https://19thnews.org/2024/03/sxsw-events-2024/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14772169/Brooke-Shields-meghan-markle-precious-interupting-speech.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.elle.com/culture/celebrities/a60142483/meghan-markle-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-2024/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://people.com/meghan-markle-teams-up-katie-couric-brooke-shields-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-prince-harry-support-8605723), [[2]](https://www.apnews.com/article/1d9dee5e29c24a7e9fed5db97e8fedd9), [[3]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1875428/brooke-shields-meghan-markle-sxsw-texas-speech)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14772169/Brooke-Shields-meghan-markle-precious-interupting-speech.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.elle.com/culture/celebrities/a60142483/meghan-markle-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-2024/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-14772169/Brooke-Shields-meghan-markle-precious-interupting-speech.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.apnews.com/article/1d9dee5e29c24a7e9fed5db97e8fedd9> - During a panel discussion at the SXSW festival in Austin, Texas, on International Women's Day, Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, joined Brooke Shields, Katie Couric, and sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen to discuss issues affecting women and mothers in media. Meghan highlighted a report by the Archewell Foundation revealing that working mothers earn significantly less than working fathers. The panelists emphasized the need for improved support for women and mothers and addressed the influence of policymakers who often shape perceptions based on media portrayals. The negative impact of social media on women and girls was also discussed, with Meghan sharing her own experiences of online harassment. Additionally, Couric and Shields touched on age discrimination in Hollywood, emphasizing the need for greater recognition of women's contributions and experiences as they age. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/1d9dee5e29c24a7e9fed5db97e8fedd9?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1875428/brooke-shields-meghan-markle-sxsw-texas-speech> - At the SXSW event in Austin, Texas, Meghan Markle shared a story about challenging a sexist TV ad for dishwashing liquid at the age of 11. In response, Brooke Shields remarked, "When I was 11, I was playing a prostitute. I wish I had known you when I was 11." This exchange occurred during the panel discussion titled "Breaking Barriers, Shaping Narratives: How Women Lead On and Off the Screen," which also featured Katie Couric and sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen. ([express.co.uk](https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1875428/brooke-shields-meghan-markle-sxsw-texas-speech?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://people.com/meghan-markle-teams-up-katie-couric-brooke-shields-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-prince-harry-support-8605723> - Meghan Markle participated in a panel titled "Breaking Barriers, Shaping Narratives: How Women Lead On and Off the Screen" at the SXSW Conference in Austin, Texas, on International Women's Day. Alongside Katie Couric, Brooke Shields, and sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen, Meghan discussed the impact of women's representation across media, entertainment, and social media. Prince Harry attended the event to support his wife. ([people.com](https://people.com/meghan-markle-teams-up-katie-couric-brooke-shields-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-prince-harry-support-8605723?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://19thnews.org/2024/03/sxsw-events-2024/> - The 19th hosted a live recording of their podcast, The Amendment, featuring journalist Errin Haines and guest Imara Jones, discussing gender, politics, and power. Additionally, they moderated a panel at SXSW titled "Breaking Barriers, Shaping Narratives: How Women Lead On and Off the Screen," featuring Meghan, Duchess of Sussex; Katie Couric; Brooke Shields; and Nancy Wang Yuen. The panel focused on the impact of women's representation across media, entertainment, and social media. ([19thnews.org](https://19thnews.org/2024/03/sxsw-events-2024/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.elle.com/culture/celebrities/a60142483/meghan-markle-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-2024/> - Meghan Markle celebrated International Women's Day by speaking at the SXSW Conference in Austin, Texas. During the panel, she discussed the negative effects of social media on women and shared her experience of advocating for Procter & Gamble to change a dishwashing soap commercial that was directed solely towards women when she was 11. Alongside Meghan, the panel featured Katie Couric, Brooke Shields, and sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen. ([elle.com](https://www.elle.com/culture/celebrities/a60142483/meghan-markle-sxsw-panel-international-womens-day-2024/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/meghan-markle-international-womens-day-speech-brooke-shields-b2509369.html> - Meghan Markle condemned the "toxicity" of social media during a keynote panel at the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Texas on International Women's Day. Speaking alongside Katie Couric, Brooke Shields, and sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen, Meghan highlighted the detrimental effects social media can have on women and shared her own experiences of online harassment. She also discussed the issue of women being treated differently from men as they age. ([independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/meghan-markle-international-womens-day-speech-brooke-shields-b2509369.html?utm_source=openai))