

Dr Floella Benjamin, OBE DL (Hon DLitt) - Chancellor of the University of Exeter, Actress, Writer, Independent Producer, Children's Campaigner.

Floella Benjamin was born in Trinidad in 1949 and came to England as a child in 1960 when her family settled in south London. She left school at 16 with the aim of becoming Britain's first ever black woman bank manager but changed direction and became an actress, presenter, writer, independent producer and an active advocate for the welfare, care and education of children throughout the world. Since 1987 she has run a successful film and television production company.

She has always maintained an ethical and moral stance and as a public figure has always associated herself with companies and organisations who are pioneers in the fields of Equality, Human Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility. Her approach in whatever she does is one with passion, determination, common sense and humanity.

Her credits are extensive and she has sat on many boards both in the public and private sector. As a member of the Royal Mail Stamp Advisory Committee she was instrumental in highlighting the need to reflect contemporary society on stamps and including it as a requirement in their criteria for new designs.

Over the years she has campaigned for cultural diversity within broadcasting and was an original member of the Cultural Diversity Network Group which was responsible for bringing together all television broadcasters to discuss equality issues.

In the early 80's through her association with children and literature she convinced the publishing world to include and reflect our multicultural society accurately in children's' books for all ages, this change is evident in children's books today.

She is a Vice-President of Barnardo's and led a twenty-year campaign to create the role of Minister for Children, which achieved its goal in 2004. She is now leading a nationwide campaign to save UK made children's television programmes.

She was Chairman of the Women of the Year Lunch for five years, Chairman of BAFTA -Television, where she had to deal with a wide range of issues, from fair representation in the media to organising awards ceremonies. She also created the Children's BAFTA Film & Television Awards.

She was a member of the OFCOM Content Board where her responsibilities within OFCOM included, regulation of broadcast standards and fairness, regulation of production quotas, public service broadcasting remits and statutory responsibility laid down in the Communication Act 2003.

As a Millennium Commissioner she fought for diversity among the projects funded by the organisation.

She is President of the Elizabeth 'R' Commonwealth Broadcasting Fund, a Governor of Dulwich College and the NFTS. She is also President of the Ramblers Association where she tries to encourage children and young people from all background to take up walking.

Her broadcasting work has been recognised with a Special Lifetime Achievement BAFTA and an OBE. She has written over 20 books including *Coming to England* which is used as a resource in schools in social and cross curricular areas. The book was adapted into a film by her company for BBC Education and it won an RTS Television Award in 2004. Her latest book is, *My Two Grannies* and is now currently writing the follow up to *Coming to England, The Arms of Britannia*

Although best known for her work as a children's TV presenter of iconic programmes like *Playschool* and *Play Away*, she began her career in the theatre appearing in many hit West End shows, and in television dramas including *Bergerac*, *Gentle Touch* and more recently *The Line of Beauty* and *Sarah Jane's Adventures* as well as in the British 1977 Cannes Film entry *Black Joy* where she was critically acclaimed. She played cameo film roles in *Run Fat Boy Run* and *Rendition*. Her latest hit children's programme is the CBeebies *Mama Mirabelle's Home Movies*, and she is has just finished producing and presenting *Hey Diddle Diddle* a 42 part children's comedy series and *Floella's Story Sack* a 21 part series both for BBC7.

She has created the *Touching Success* initiative which aims to mentor and help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to aspire.

She received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Exeter for having had an influence on British society and was installed as Chancellor of Exeter University in 2006.

In 2008 she was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for Greater London.

In 2008 she created a range of Caribbean ready meals which was launched in Morrisons supermarkets in an attempt to bring Caribbeaness into the public's consciousness.

Floella has run the London Marathon for the last ten consecutive years, raising thousands of pounds for Barnardo's and the Sickle Cell Society. She is married and has two beautiful golden children Aston and Alvina. Her hobbies are travelling, cooking, photography and golf.

For more information go to: www.floellabenjamin.com