

09 March 2020

FORMIDABLE FITZROVIAN WOMEN

Following on from International Women's Day and for the start of Women's History Month, each day this week we will celebrate *Fitzrovia* women who have led the way in the past, working through adversity to pursue their ambition, and highlight the achievements of today's Fitzrovia women who have picked up the baton and lead from the front.

DAY 1: TRAVEL INFLUENCERS

NANCY CUNARD (1896 – 1965) SOCIAL CHANGE ACTIVIST, TRAVELLER, WRITER & HEIRESS

Nancy was a literary muse who was committed to the cause of Black rights. She lived on Fitzroy Street. She was brisk and bold and known for her striking features, charisma and unique 1920s look. She travelled extensively and was also on board the HMT Empire Windrush from Jamaica to the UK in 1948.

Her longest relationship was with Henry Crowder, a Black jazz pianist. Cunard was disinherited and estranged from her family because of this relationship. With Henry, she compiled an anthology of Black Culture in 1934. She devoted many years to tackling racism and fascism.



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RITA SHARMA OBE ENTREPRENEUR, TRAVEL EXPERT 2020



Rita set up Worldwide Journeys (now £120million travel company, Best at Travel) in 1987. Rita is one of Britain's wealthiest women entrepreneurs, after starting from a shoestring budget. She is also a mother of two.

Best at Travel operates from Whitfield Street where they sell luxury holiday packages to numerous worldwide destinations. She lives and works in Fitzrovia with her entrepreneur business partner and husband Rahul Sharma.

INTERVIEW

Tell us about your career journey and any highlights

Receiving my OBE by the Queen in February 2006 and receiving my Honorary Phd from UEL the same year.

Tell us about a working day for you

Generally, I like to be in the office each day when I am in London as I like to be with my teams in the office, we have lots of banter going on re strategy/marketing/progress on KPI's etc. I have an open-door policy so people walk in & out of my office, mostly we can also have a day full of back to back meetings or one or two days I generally catch up on my personal paperwork.

No two days are the same...being in travel is very social so we do have a fair number of lunches/dinners some months.

What's the best advice you've been given?

Aim high...

What advice would you give to women at an earlier stage in their careers?

Persevere on the journey, it's worth it.

What woman/women inspire you?

Maggie Thatcher. I started my business in 1987...

What are you still learning, or planning to learn?

Improve my French (mostly forgotten what I did learn)/ refresh my cooking skills.

What are your hobbies?

Travelling the World to see as many Countries out of the 197 there are.