

# Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE

Actress, broadcaster and advocate for children's welfare and education

- Available For:
- Keynote Speaking
  - Motivational Speaking
  - Hosting & Presenting



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## About

Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE is an award-winning producer, actress, author, parliamentarian, TV presenter and advocate for the welfare and education of children. However, she's best known as a presenter of the iconic BBC children's TV programmes Play School and Play Away, during the 1970s and 80s.

Born in Trinidad, Floella arrived in a cold, unwelcoming England in 1960 as a 10 year old child, and as an adult she has been outspoken about the racism she experienced as an immigrant. She left school at 16 to work in a bank, with the aim of becoming Britain's first ever black woman bank manager, and studied for A-levels at night school, but changed direction and became an actress and presenter.

After a spell as a stage actress, in 1976 she began presenting children's TV programmes, which led to fronting the pre-school children's programme Play School for 12 years. Each programme followed a theme and included songs, stories and activities with the presenters, along with a short film introduced through either the square, round or arched window. This then led to her presenting sister programme Play Away, aimed at slightly older children, which ran until 1984.

In more recent times, she appeared in a 2006 episode of The Line of Beauty. In 2007-09, and again in 2011, she guest-starred in a Doctor Who spin-off The Sarah Jane Adventures as Professor Rivers. She narrated three 'making-of' documentaries on the Doctor Who DVD box-set The Black Guardian Trilogy. In 2007, she played a small role in the comedy film Run Fatboy Run. She has now been in show business for five decades appearing on stage, film, radio and television.

Floella Benjamin has authored over 30 books, and in 2016 the autobiographical Coming to England, which gives an account of her challenging early experiences in Britain, was chosen as a 'Guardian Children's Book of the Year'. It's now used as a resource for schools in social and cross-curricular areas. The book was adapted into an award-winning film for BBC Education.

Her broadcasting work has been recognised with many awards, including an OBE for services to broadcasting in the 2001 New Year Honours, when at that time Floella was chairwoman of BAFTA. She also received a BAFTA Special Lifetime Achievement Award in 2004 and the J.M Barrie Lifetime Award in 2012 for her lasting cultural legacy. In 2013 she was made a Fellow of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and appointed President of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists.

In the 2010 Dissolution Honours List, Floella Benjamin was appointed a Liberal Democrat Life Peer when she was elevated to the House of Lords as Baroness Benjamin of Beckenham. She was Chancellor of the University of Exeter for 10 years until 2016, where she'd become known for hugging graduates instead of traditionally shaking their hands during the graduation ceremony, and imploring them to 'change the world'.

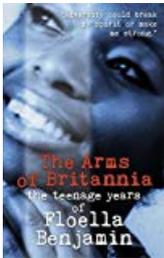
Floella is a sought-after keynote and motivational speaker on children's, diversity and media issues and was successful in lobbying the government to introduce legislation through OFCOM, the broadcast regulator, to force

much greater investment in UK-made children's TV programmes. Her mission is to make the world a better place for children.

In 2018 she was granted Honorary Freedom of the City of London and the Prime Minister appointed her Chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee to create a lasting memorial to celebrate the contribution to Britain made by the Windrush Generation.

## Books and DVD's

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### TAGS FOR BARONESS FLOELLA BENJAMIN OBE

- Television Presenter
- Overcoming Adversity
- Inspirational
- Politics
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Human Rights
- Documentary & Film Maker
- Immigration
- Youth Enterprise
- Wellbeing
- Education
- Childrens Presenter
- BAME

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