

WNBA President on Her Life, the League and the Olympics

Laurel J. Richie has more than three decades of experience in consumer marketing, corporate branding, public relations, and corporate management, with a long track record of developing award-winning campaigns that transform brands and drive business results. As President of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), she oversees all of the league's day-to-day business and league operations.

Prior to joining the WNBA in 2011, Richie was Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer for Girl Scouts of the USA, where she was responsible for the Girl Scouts' brand, communications, publishing, marketing, and web-based initiatives. She also spent time at the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather, where she worked on a series of campaigns for prominent clients, including American Express, Pepperidge Farm, Pond's, Huggies, and Kotex. She sat on Ogilvy New York's Operating Board and was a founding member of the agency's Employee Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion.

Richie's pro-bono clients have included the Museum for African Art, the Hospital for Special Surgery, and the New York City Commission on Human Rights. In addition, she has mentored young women and girls as part of Big Brothers Big Sisters, the 4A's Multicultural Advertising Intern Program, Xavier University's Youth Motivation Task Force, and the Advertising Educational Foundation.



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

A recipient of the YMCA's Black Achiever's Award and one of Ebony Magazine's Outstanding Women in Marketing and Communications, Richie was named one of the 25 Influential Black Women in Business in 2011 by The Network Journal. A graduate of Dartmouth College with a bachelor's degree in

In that moment, I made a private promise to myself that I would do everything in my power to bring more diversity to these rooms where leaders gathered and decisions were made. As my career unfolded and I worked on a wide range of clients and gained experience across lots of different industries, the businesses I enjoyed the most were those that focused on women. This passion really came to the forefront when I made the move from advertising to the Girl Scouts and then, very clearly, when I made the decision to join the WNBA. As the longest-run-

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policy studies, Richie lives in New York City.

Kam Williams: Hi, Laurel, thanks for the time.

Laurel J. Richie: Thanks, Kam.

KW: What interested you in going from the Girl Scouts to the WNBA?

LJR: Early on in my career, when I was working at an advertising agency, I went to a very senior-level meeting and I distinctly remember the inside of the boardroom: every single seat was occupied by a man.

ning women's professional sports league in the country, the WNBA is a great product comprising 132 of the best female athletes in the world. And when you look beyond the players to owners, coaches, trainers, accountants, and chief operating officers — it's a wonderful example of what women can achieve in sports and in business.

KW: How do you hope to generate greater interest in the league and its superstars like Maya Moore and Candace Parker?

LJR: The summer of 2012 is turning out to be very special. We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of Title IX and the Olympics are taking place in London, and we have seen increased interest in and exposure of our players. The WNBA is very proud of the fact that all 12 members of the U.S. Women's Senior National Team are WNBA players. For them to represent our country on an international stage is terrific. Millions around the world will see them and have the opportunity to get to know them not only as great athletes, but as interesting and inspiring women.

KW: Why is there seemingly a stigma on women's athletics which is reflected in a lag in the WNBA's ratings in comparison to the NBA's?

LJR: We are a young league — now in our 16th season — and we have seen our attendance and viewership increase for each of the past five years. Our growth is a direct result of the fact that our game is exciting and highly competitive, and our in-arena experience is a ton of fun. Once people come to a game, they are hooked. In many ways, I think the WNBA is changing the way America views women and is having a positive impact on the way America views professional athletes. We're showing the world what women can be as athletes and what athletes can be as citizens.

KW: To what do you credit you're not only climbing the corporate ladder but breaking the glass ceiling and reaching the pinnacle of success in the business world, a rarity for



Laurel Richie

African-American females?

LJR: My parents. As far back as I can remember, their commitment to making a positive impact on the communities in which they lived and worked was equal only to their commitment to helping my sisters, brother, and me achieve our dreams.

KW: Tell me a little about what mentoring young black girls means to you?

LJR: Throughout my career, I have benefitted from the experience and counsel of a wide range of people who took a very personal interest in me. As a result, I am always happy to share lessons learned from my journey with others. I am particularly passionate about mentoring young black girls. While we are a very diverse group, there is a special bond that connects

us to each other. When I work with them, I see them in me and I believe they see me in them. By coming together, we are able to show the world the power and the promise of black girls.

KW: Will part of your mission involve also encouraging your WNBA players to see themselves as role models and to devote more of their free time to mentoring?

LJR: I don't have to encourage our players to be positive role models, as that is something that has always been important to them and something that they very willingly embrace. Whether it's through the WNBA Cares program or through their own initiatives, WNBA players give as much off the court as they

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SEATTLE 2012

THE SKANNER.com

If you have an event you want to share with the community, email it two weeks in advance to *The Skanner* at info@theskanner.com

Friday August 3

IKEBANA FLOWER ARRANGING. Join us to learn about and practice Ikebana, the Japanese cut flower arrangement. Please bring the following, one floral frog (a small metal form to hold flowers) and a low container. 1 - 3 p.m. Evergreen Hospital Medical Center, 12040 NE 128th. Kirkland. FREE

Saturday August 4

POTLATCH STATE PARK PLAYS HOST TO SHELLFEST 2012. SHELLFEST will run from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will feature fun for the whole family, including low-tide walks, maritime music and much more. Lunch will be available for free with a donation. Potlatch State Park, 21020 N. U.S. Highway 101 in Shelton.

Sunday August 5

UMOJA FEST AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL. Seattle has hosted the annual African American community festival and parade as a celebration of the City's ethnic diversity. Noon Judkins Park, 2150 S. Norman St.

Friday - Saturday August 10 -11

SOULCHECK. You are invited to a free all-night family-friendly multicultural worship experience. Come out and enjoy a great night with family and friends and leave forever changed. 7 p.m. Aug. 10 and ends Saturday Aug. 11 at 7 a.m. Meydenbauer Center, 11100 NE 6th St. Bellevue, WA

Friday - Sunday August 10 -12

A TASTE OF EDMONDS 2012. Stop by to check out over 40 food booths, over 70 arts & crafts booths and much more. Plus 3 stages of fabulous entertainment including the kids stage. Friday admission is free until 3 p.m. then \$3 for the other times. Friday - Sunday starting at 10 a.m. all three days.