



# Great Audacious Paulette

Every woman loves a makeover, new clothes, makeup, hair style... stop! That's the norm because in the case of Paulette West, it was more about playgrounds, youth centres and schools.

An ardent networker, the ex-Barclays manager has a reputation of shaking things up and turning what looks like the impossible into a positive working project. "If I see something that needs to be done, I have no problems getting involved with it if I think it will be good for the community and I can help."

Born in Georgetown, Guyana, Paulette came to the UK as a toddler. Her dad was a bus driver and her mother a housewife. They taught her and her two siblings the value of hard work and the importance of having a strong work ethic. Paulette applied that principle to her career. She says, "I liked a challenge and every time I achieved something, I was always looking at the next step."

A humanitarian at heart, Paulette started out as a sixteen-year-old typist working for Barclays Bank in 1977. She went on to become a high-performing organisation manager, responsible for the successful turnaround of thirty-three branches of Barclays Bank across



She raised over £250k for various different charities, was awarded 'The Chairman's Award for Most Outstanding Individual Fundraiser for 2004' and, last year, was recognised by the Palace for services to the community. The Official Guide to IWM meets Paulette West MBE.

the UK, which consisted of approximately 100 managers and 1,400 staff. Not bad for a woman who was so quiet and shy at school that she considered herself, "the girl who sat at the back of the class and who nobody took notice of."

However, aside from her demanding corporate role, Paulette volunteered to become a community champion with Barclays and was responsible for creating reading support programmes that were implemented in various schools in Hackney. She and her team of volunteers attended the school weekly to help children who were struggling with their reading. She also created a breakfast club and refurbished their staff canteen.

On top of that, she organised outings for children and adults with HIV to places like Thorpe Park and completed a playground makeover for children with special needs in Islington and a youth centre makeover in Hackney, turning two disused rooms into a library and a music room.

Happily divorced with a love of travelling, the mother of two is easy to approach, enthusiastic, sincere, passionate and spiritual - an

inspirational and strong woman whose aim is to drive positive social change within the community and make a difference to individuals and organisations.

“One day, I would be out on a peace march in the rain on a Saturday morning, the next I would be talking at the House of Commons about projects I had initiated or was involved in,” she laughs. “I loved belonging to a group of people or movement that had a cause that was close to my heart.”

In 2006, Paulette, who won another award - ‘Most Outstanding Contribution to the BME Community’ - set up her own company, G.A.P (‘Growing Aspiring People’) Network of which Tim Campbell, Levi Roots, Sherry Dixon and Jessica Huie are patrons. “I firmly believe that you get back what you put out,” maintains Paulette. “It’s the law of cause and effect - in other words, when you plant positive seeds you get a

positive harvest.”

Paulette sits on various boards including being Chair for The Counselling Services at the African Caribbean Leadership Council, with a team of ten counsellors and psychotherapists. She is also an ambassador for Building United Communities.

In 2008, Paulette, who left Barclays in the same year to begin her own consultancy, was recognised in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List 2008, receiving an MBE for services to Banking and Business for Black Minority Ethnic People. She says she had to have a cup of tea and read the letter four times and still did not believe it. “I was absolutely shocked. I

thought it was a joke so I didn’t tell anyone. I sent the form back and forgot about it until some friends of mine started texting and phoning me to offer their congratulations.”

She adds, “Receiving the MBE from HRH The Prince of Wales was a proud moment for my children and the MBE means credibility to me as a person and my businesses. I have never looked for any reward as I love what I do, but somehow people seem to take the time to recognise me for what I do.”

And so they should.

**Paulette’s motto in life is:  
Find your passion  
Have a positive outlook  
Treat others the way you  
would like to be treated  
Be yourself  
Work hard and have fun!  
www.wetheunited.com /  
www.gapnetwork.co.uk**

*By Barbara Campbell*