

Woman in the Media:

Rhoda Wilson



One thing that Rhoda Wilson will never forget was her father telling her that women would change the world and, therefore, her career was more important than a man's career. She used this idea to motivate herself throughout her career.

Born in Lagos, Nigeria, to a family steeped in tradition and achievement, Rhoda says her father was a strict man whose focus for his daughter was education, success and religious obedience. "He expected high results from me and wanted nothing less than exceptional goals in all areas of my life," says Rhoda.

Her mother had died from cancer when Rhoda was just 13 years old. Aged 17, she was sent to England to attend Hurtwood House, one of the top boarding schools in the country. Towards the end of her time at college, Rhoda wanted to attend an Ivy League university in the USA, so she took the SATs and passed. However, her father's focus had changed - having re-married, she remained in the UK to complete her university studies.

She worked for a number of firms

and was at the top of her career commodities in a highly esteemed organisation when her position became redundant. "My confidence took a hit but I had a great circle of friends, and kept busy by organising summer balls for charities such as Marie Curie Cancer Care - in memory of my mother - whilst I looked for another job," says Rhoda, who eventually found a new role. Unfortunately, eleven months into this job, her position was again made redundant.

"I knew that I had to change direction in my life," she recalls. "I decided to embark on one of my pastimes - as a music promoter."

She hosted the first concert at Shepherd's Bush Empire and it was a huge success, but often she found herself working alone in order to keep costs down, doing everything from technical support to contracts and PR.

Whilst ultimately uncertain of which road to take in life or how to get there, Rhoda knew deep down that she wanted to make a difference and *this* is what kept her going. "One day, whilst at a meeting with a businessman regarding the sponsorship of a new concert, this man gave me invaluable advice. It was for me to see myself as a brand and he indicated that I could make more of a difference on the small screen."

Whilst motivated to explore the idea, Rhoda had not taken into account the huge costs that were attached to broadcasting a show on a non-mainstream channel.

"Initially I was positive. However, by the end of my first year in developing my programme plan, I realised that finding sponsorship was almost impossible, particularly in the Afro-Caribbean community," says Rhoda.

She invested what she could in the show and borrowed money from a friend to make and produce *The Rhoda Wilson Show*, which was broadcast on 4th December 2005 on OBE TV. She could not afford a director or producer, so she learnt everything from pre-development to production and post-production. She was joyous and thought that that would

be the start of something great, because she had something to show advertisers and sponsors to believe in the show.

However, by December 2006, things were not looking great. "There were no sponsors, no advertisers but I continued to make progress mentally and kept my show on OBE TV going as often as I could. In the meantime, I was putting pen to paper and writing and calling any TV stations, and separately e-mailing companies for sponsorship."

Her confidence took another dip when there remained no work, sponsors or advertisers. One day in 2007 - with the help of a former boss - Rhoda found work and used the money she earned to invest in her show again.

The Rhoda Wilson Show is now on air on Sky Channel 184 (BEN TV) with an audience of around 1,300,000, and Rhoda was recently contacted by an American Channel that is looking to acquire the contents of *The Rhoda Wilson Show*.

"I am currently working on a number of documentaries and short films for festivals around the world, and my women's charity, ACWAL, is also doing well," asserts Rhoda. "I want my company to produce amazing, life-changing productions, touching people profoundly either by watching the show or working with me."

With so much to look forward to in the future, Rhoda Wilson is set to achieve great things.

Rhoda can be contacted via publicrelations@rhodawilson.com.

Something fantastic happened to BEN Television in July 2008 - Rhoda Wilson appeared on their screens. Labelled the 'British Oprah Winfrey' by viewers, Rhoda is flattered but having invested in herself from day one, she wants to create her own unique brand. *The Official Guide to IWM* spoke to her.

By Belinda Raye