

Celebrating Women's History Month

Female designers have been a driving force for modernity, inclusion, and eccentricity, forcing fashion to evolve with the ever-changing demands of pop culture. In recognition of Women's History Month, Cowan, Liebowitz & Latman invites you to learn about two globally recognized fashion icons, Diane von Furstenberg and Rihanna, in honor of their inspiring entrepreneurial spirit in the world of fashion.

Diane von Furstenberg



Diane von Furstenberg was born in Brussels to Jewish parents. During World War II, her mother was captured and imprisoned in Auschwitz, and her father fled his native Romania for Switzerland to evade the Nazis. Von Furstenberg recognized her mother as a major influence in her life, especially for instilling in her that "fear is not an option." She attended boarding schools and studied economics at the University of Geneva, where she met her first husband, Prince Egon von Furstenberg. In 1969, Diane married Prince von Furstenberg and although she had no financial need to work post-nuptial, she desired to establish a name for herself, independent of her husband's.

In 1972, she created her iconic wrap dress which quickly became popular. After the von Furstenbergs separated in 1973, Diane von Furstenberg moved to New York, which proved beneficial for her fashion career, allowing her to build further connections in the fashion world. By 1975, she produced thousands of wrap dresses every week, which soon became a symbol of female liberation. The following year, she was chosen to be on the cover of Newsweek, which praised her as an icon of the female liberation movement. This solidified her position in the fashion world and the New York party scene.

In the late 70s and 80s, however, Diane von Furstenberg's career went through a number of ups and downs, during which time she lost control of her clothing brand to Puritan Fashions and sold her cosmetics line. After moving to Paris in 1984, von Furstenberg launched a number of different businesses, including a publishing house, a new cosmetics line and a Parisian relaunch of her wrap dress. In 1992, she sold out an entire Silk Assets collection on QVC in two hours for 1.2 million dollars, which filled her with the confidence to relaunch the Diane von Furstenberg wrap dress and clothing brand.

Since then, Diane von Furstenberg has remained an influential designer, with many celebrities and public figures donning her iconic wrap dress, including Michelle Obama, Catherine, Princess of Wales; Jennifer Lopez; Whitney Houston; and Madonna. In 2010, she solidified her influence on future fashionistas by becoming a founder and President of the Fashion Law Institute headquartered at Fordham Law School.

Rihanna



Robyn Rihanna Fenty, NH (National Hero) was born and raised in Barbados to Bajan and Guyanese parents. At 15, she was discovered by American producer Evan Rogers, who connected her with Def Jam Recordings. In 2005, Rihanna closed on a six-album deal with Def

Jam Records, and as a result, she permanently relocated from Barbados to the United States to pursue her musical career. She released her debut single, *Pon de Replay*, under her new stage name, Rihanna. The song charted well worldwide, reaching second place on US Billboard's Hot 100 chart in July 2005. Since then, Rihanna has released eight studio albums with a series of top-charting songs, but after the release of her last album *Anti*, she went into a musical hiatus.

During her hiatus, Rihanna has branched out into fashion and beauty, using her last name *Fenty* to distinguish her fashion and beauty enterprises from her musical career. In 2017, Rihanna partnered with LVMH's Kendo Brands to release *Fenty Beauty*. According to [Fenty Beauty's website](#), Fenty Beauty's makeup line was launched "so that people everywhere would be included," and the company has been praised for its diverse range of skin tones for cosmetic products, influencing competitors to extend their shade ranges.

The following year, Rihanna launched her lingerie brand, *Savage X Fenty*, which has sought to create inclusive designs and feature a diverse range of models. Since its launch, *Savage X Fenty* has hosted a star-studded annual fashion show featuring musical performances from a broad range of artists of different genres. The brand continues to be praised for its inclusion of plus-sized models in its promotions. In addition to *Savage X Fenty*, Rihanna partnered again with LVMH to launch *Fenty* in 2019, the first line launched by LVMH since the 80s. The fashion house was short-lived, however, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nevertheless, Rihanna has continued to develop her globally recognized *Fenty Beauty* and *Savage X Fenty* brands, which became leaders in diversity and inclusion in the fashion world. Despite her international acclaim in music, fashion, and beauty, Rihanna also engaged in numerous philanthropic initiatives, specifically catered to her birth country, Barbados. As a result, on the first day of Barbados' newly formed republic, Rihanna was declared a National Hero of Barbados.

As we continue to celebrate Women's History Month, Cowan, Liebowitz & Latman encourages you to recognize [diversity and inclusion](#) every month.