

## UCEM in conversation with... Brown Girls Empowering

**Andrew Belt:** Welcome to the sixth episode of our 'UCEM in conversation with...' podcast where I'm joined by Nisha Chavda and Priya Raithatha - the creators of Brown Girls Empowering. Hi Nisha and Priya!

**Nisha Chavda:** Hi.

**Priya Raithatha:** Hi Andrew.

**AB:** How are you both?

**NC:** Good, thank you.

**PR:** Well, thank you.

**AB:** So, to kick off, Brown Girls Empowering. What is it?

**PR:** So, it's essentially an Instagram page that gives tips with regards to navigating careers in the property and construction industry.

**AB:** Okay. And why did you start it? And I also wanted to know how do you know each other as well?

**NC:** So, we know each other from being on the RICS Matrics committee for Leicestershire and Rutland. We took on various roles on the committee and we stayed in touch. We became really good friends.

And then, earlier this year, Priya was setting up a webinar for students at Henley Business School and asked me to speak. After that, we got talking and we were like: 'I have this idea and what do you think?' We both had the same idea.

Basically, what we wanted to do was share some advice for people finishing university and starting their careers, and letting other people know some things that we wish we'd known. Me and Priya had this conversation so many times, but when I was at university, I remember feeling so lost and not knowing who to turn to for information and advice on things like exams, assignments, the admin side of things, and what to do when I finished. How do you go about looking for a job? I didn't really feel connected to my industry.

**PR:** I felt the same throughout school as well, in that this industry isn't highly recognised and information on it isn't available so people can't really make an informed decision whilst they're at school and university about the options available to them.

So, that's pretty much what we wanted to make available and share information and knowledge.

**AB:** You're on Instagram, like you say, which is where I became aware of Brown Girls Empowering after you tagged us in a post. I was impressed with the graphics on the page. It all looks really good and is full of lots of useful information about either job-seeking or the skills which you need to make your stamp in the built environment. So, it's the Instagram page you have right now, but do you have plans to use other mediums other than Instagram or are you just content with using Instagram? And why did you choose Instagram?

**PR:** So, at the moment, we're pretty happy with Instagram itself as we've just recently set it up so we're just mainly focusing on putting out advice and content which seems to be

manageable for both of us because we lead hectic lives and we do have to manage full-time jobs.

**NC:** Yeah, I think we also have the standpoint that if genuine conversation grows from our posts, we'd be happy to look at a podcast or something bigger than that, something that's a little bit longer than Instagram posts where we can share more stories from our experiences and advice, and maybe even bring other people, our industry contacts, in as well and give different perspectives because we're obviously only giving aspects of our own standpoint.

So yeah, I think that's something that we may look into moving forward, but only if it's necessary, we wouldn't want to do it for the sake of doing it.

**AB:** Yeah, that definitely sounds sensible. And, of course, I think podcasts are great mediums! So, it's good you're getting your experience of them in now!

In terms of deciding to choose Instagram, was that based on the audience you were trying to attract?

**NC:** Yeah, it was based on the way people consume information now. People tend to use Twitter and Instagram but Twitter wouldn't work [for Brown Girls Empowering] because of the word count. With our target audience probably mainly university leavers, Instagram made sense as the choice of medium to use.

People can scroll through our graphics and consume bullet points fairly quickly. In this way, Instagram suited us, and we expand more on the points comments so people have the option to read more about the post.

**PR:** Yeah, I think people use Instagram in different ways. The majority of people do have Instagram and they will be checking it at some point throughout the day, and it's not just about social content - following friends, celebrities, etc. - there are a lot of other accounts on there, like ours, with important things to say and people do follow them. It's a good way of reaching out to the wider community that we probably wouldn't reach in other mediums.

**AB:** As you've alluded to there, the perception is that Instagram is for celebrity content but it's more than that and it's great to see the content you are producing.

What do you hope to achieve with Brown Girls Empowering? **7:04**

**NC:** I think, following on from what we spoke about before, it's just to make sure that people don't feel the same way we did.

I felt a bit lost at university, Priya felt the same at school and we just want to provide something that would have actually helped us back when we were going through it.

We try to go a little bit beyond motivational quotes and general statements, which can be helpful in themselves, but when we were at those stages in our life, we would have liked advice on navigating very specific things that occur when you start working.

So, some of our posts are around how to have difficult conversations. We go into actual examples of how to navigate these conversations, what kind of wording to use, and how to set up your mind before you go into the conversation and to have an end goal and how to create that focus rather than just saying something like: 'be open'.

We say why you should be open and what that helps you achieve. You learn a lot of this stuff through doing, but if we can provide some genuine tips to make someone feel more confident in even just heading into that situation, then that's really the main goal.

We want it to be a platform for genuine and practical tips, rather than generic statements.

**PR:** Nisha and I have both found going through school and university and even just generally in our careers at the moment that there is still a stigma in this industry associated with females and, by doing this, we want to show that it shouldn't be there and it is open for all.

You shouldn't be deterred from the industry because of your gender. Some people genuinely, because they don't know, feel scared of entering into the industry but, by us doing this, hopefully we can change some minds and reach out to people and introduce them to this sector that they wouldn't usually be introduced to.

**AB:** Who in particular is the initiative for? And, second question, is why did you decide to focus on South Asian women as well?

**NC:** Our focus is on students in the final years of university who are trying to figure out their next steps after life at university.

Where do they look for jobs? How do they look for jobs? Who should they be speaking to? And, with the South Asian thing, the reason why I wanted to target university students and ethnically diverse people in their first year in work was because when I was at university, I didn't know who to go to or who to talk to.

I didn't know how powerful networking was. You were never taught about how to build relationships in a professional sense in industry or the fact that construction and property is quite heavily reliant on relationships.

That's why we wanted to focus on those students because if we can equip them or let them know ahead of time that these are the kinds of things you should be doing, if you can try and touch base with this person in this kind of position and this firm if you're looking to do that kind of job, that will get you in. Or that will give you some more information to help you make a more informed decision or there are alternative groups if you're feeling a bit worried about entering the world of work.

There are alternative routes to get you where you want but potentially in a way that suits you a little better. There are so many things that you can do in construction that you just aren't aware of because, like Priya said, you don't get taught about these things in school or at least you don't learn anything you didn't already know about construction in terms of engineering, architecture and building. That's pretty much it.

I'm simplifying but there's also apprenticeships, internships, and so many other things you can do. And, I think it [Brown Girls Empowering] is just really for people like that, to give them a bit more of an insight.

**PR:** I went on to university to study but didn't actually study in the industry initially, but this industry was never spoken about at all throughout my school life. Even at university, it's not something that's common. It's something that I've had to figure out for myself mainly, and try and reach out to other people that I think might be able to assist me.

It's just really giving back and helping others so they don't have to do the same that we've had to do. Our content is not just going to be heavily focused on property and construction - that is our main focus - but there are a lot of things that are transferable between different industries.

It's for anyone that feels that they can use our content to help them, but with a main focus of, on property and construction.

**AB:** And you've hit upon two key points there. I think there's the one which is the built environment and the professionals within the built environment don't tend to ever really be discussed in great detail at schools.

And secondly, you talk about being in your final year at university and I think it's a very common experience that if you've gone to university, you don't really know what you're going to do next. A lot of people tend to take courses which, are ones they would enjoy doing for an amount of time, but they're not always vocational.

Understanding those next moves can be a bit of a maze and quite a disconcerting time for a lot of people. So it's great you're providing advice for people who may be at this point in their life with good practical advice for job-seekers.

Moving forward, what content do you have in the pipeline?

**PR:** We've got quite a few topics lined up. We are focusing on property and construction, but there are some topics which I think are really important and which will also apply to any other sector.

One we're working on at the moment is imposter syndrome. We think this is very important at the moment because it's not commonly known to people, although the majority of people do go through it at some stage or are always going through it.

There are also quite a lot of HR-related queries which I found I had to figure it out for myself, and Nisha the same. There will be more focus on property and construction in some of our posts, but a lot of the advice is general.

**NC:** The advice is specific to certain situations and what you should be doing or lining up to tackle those situations. It does apply to lots of different general industries.

However, one thing we do want to highlight as well through our account is the different routes as well. So, not only how to handle stuff, but then what are the different routes to even get there. It's National Apprenticeship Week as well which promotes working and learning which is something Priya and I did.

Whether it's part-time studies or doing an online degree, we want to discuss this, because it highlights the options that people have. If we had known about these options earlier, maybe we would have got into what we are doing now a lot earlier.

I know I would have. So, it's just about helping people know about what's actually out there because, unless you start digging or someone else happens to tell you about it, you wouldn't really know. Imagine the numbers of people out there who would like to do certain things, but don't due to not being exposed to this knowledge.

We are also keen to respond to what people want as well. We won't just dictate. If people want us to highlight ways of getting into construction management or contracts management, or whatever it is, we can go into that.

The benefit here is that we pull in our industry peers. So, if there's someone that wants to find out more about real estate management, one of Priya's colleagues has done a degree in that as well so we can bring on other people to provide different perspectives, not just our own.

Going back to the Asian thing or South Asian thing, the reason why we wanted to call it Brown Girls Empowering is because there's a lack of people who look like us in the industry. We didn't realise that we were coming at education from a completely different standpoint.

Our family backgrounds are different. The things we were taught about what education should be, or shouldn't be, was completely different to our peers. You don't realise sometimes some of the other pressures that you have that are unique to being South Asian. That's not to say other cultures don't [have these pressures], but we can't speak for those because we don't have firsthand experience of it.

So, we want to angle some of our other future posts towards managing family expectations. Priya mentioned earlier that our industry isn't spoken about at school, but it isn't spoken about in our households either.

You're spoken to a lot about medicine or accountancy or things like that, but you don't really get told about construction or what if you want to be a site manager, what if you want to be a project manager or a programme manager or even a real estate manager or property developer, that kind of thing doesn't get spoken about.

So, that's what we want to go forwards with.

**AB:** So, Nisha, you graduated from our MSc Construction Management programme last year and, Priya, you graduated from the University of Reading, with an MSc in Real Estate with Investment Finance. So just wanted to ask a few questions about yourself.

So, we've got two different ways of gaining an MSc there with Nisha studying online with us and Priya, it would have been experiencing blended learning through Reading's Henley Business School.

So Nisha first, how did you find studying with us?

**NC:** I found it very convenient. Communication from UCEM was great. I found every time I rung in, there was always a friendly voice at the end of the line to help with any queries. I fitted it in around my work because I was working full-time as well. So, I had a generally quite positive experience. Highly recommend it!

**AB:** We always like to hear that! And Priya, how did you find your studies at Henley Business School?

**PR:** It was great. It was very flexible. The reason why I chose it was because I did get a little bit of contact time per module and the remainder was via a distance learning. I felt like I had the best of both worlds in that sense.

**AB:** How would you compare your two learning experiences?

**PR:** Mine pretty much ended up being quite self-taught, which was actually quite a learning curve for me. It made me an independent learner, I guess, which is good experience for completing the APC that I'm doing at the moment that requires independent work.

I think Nisha had a slightly different experience.

**NC:** Mine was completely online. So, all our modules and webinars and assignments and everything was delivered online.

**AB:** What would you recommend to those newly joining the sector about their study options?

**NC:** That there's plenty of them. They have to look at what suits them in terms of how they work because I think I may have benefited from a blended style also, however, studying completely online suited my timetable better, but I think as Priya mentioned, it helped me become more self-motivated.

I think that was the biggest change for me, as I'm sure it is for most people, so find out what your learning style is and don't be restricted to thinking you just have to do a full-time degree to move forward or a postgrad or an undergrad. If you can find a job that you want to do, you can always do your degree online, and there's lots of support out there to do that from employers. You can also self-fund it, but you can manage it around working. You don't have to put your whole life on hold and go study if you don't want to.

**PR:** I think they just need to realise that there's lots of options out there and you just have to go and find what's best for you as of that time or works well in your circumstances because there are many options out there.

We just found what worked for us but that's just two options. There are other things out there as well.

**NC:** I think I'd definitely look into part-time learning and what I would do is approach any potential employer when negotiating offers for employment to see if part-time learning can be supported within the role and what they have, because if you ask, you'll be surprised at what they can accommodate and you'll get something that suits you and gets your foot in the door for at the place of work.

**AB:** Looking at what you're up to now, Nisha, you're a project manager for Pick Everard, having previously worked in architectural roles, following the completion of your undergraduate architecture degree. So, tell me about your current role. What do you enjoy about it?

**NC:** In project management, I love the variety. I think I found when I was initially doing some architectural roles, I can get quite frustrated doing repetitive tasks so the move into project management suite me really well because no day's the same.

Anything can get thrown at you at any time of the day and you have to just deal with it. And if you're working in a team, it can be quite fun because you then all just have to buckle down and say: 'well, how are we going to deal with this?' It's not just on site stuff, it's legal stuff sometimes which involves a lot of contract administration and things like that. So, it's quite fun.

I enjoy it also in the way I see myself growing in confidence too. I'm happy that I'm able to say that now, because I've not always been so confident or recognise my own achievements or progress.

Everything seems to be about achievements but I think more for me, it's about progress. I think project management lends itself quite well to being able to apply knowledge so you can actually see when you're like: 'oh, I'm getting better at this'.

**AB:** What are your career ambitions in future?

**NC:** I think this is also going to sound a bit cliché, but I'd like to develop my own properties and I'd like to get back into the creative side of things that I really do miss.

I do have a great love and respect for architecture. The only reason why I moved away from it is because I found drawing on the computer all day made me very anxious, because it was just clicking all day which doesn't suit me. I can't sit in one spot like that but I do miss the creative element.

So, I'd like to get back into that maybe through interior design or something like that in the future.

**AB:** And Priya, you're a manager at Priya Properties. So, is this your own company?

**PR:** No, it was set up by my father 35 years ago. It would be a dream if I had something set up to this extent by now!

**AB:** And, what does your role involve? How do you find working at Priya Properties?

**PR:** Well, it's a family-led company, so it's very different to maybe a lot of other people's jobs. My role is very diverse. One day you could be doing managerial tasks and some operational tasks, and another day it might be doing the basics which need to be done with viewing properties.

It's really varied but at the moment we're all working from home so things have changed a lot. My brother runs the back end of the business and I run the front end which involves ensuring that the employees are well equipped and managing the employees.

**AB:** Your undergraduate degree was in physics. So, why did you decide to specialise in real estate?

**PR:** With my father running the company, I've always been exposed to real estate since when I was a child. I had a part-time job there throughout school and university, but it was only really after I graduated that I was really drawn into the industry and I found something that I really enjoyed and I just wanted to go into it further. That's when I decided to make a career in real estate.

**AB:** What is it you enjoy about working in the built environment?

**PR:** We find that a lot of the skill sets are transferable between the two (real estate and construction) and we've done a post on our Instagram page. You don't have to have a specific skillset to come into this industry.

**NC:** Yeah, the post Priya was just talking about she led on and it came about through a discussion where she found that people generally go through three careers in their lifetime and I think that supports our own experiences of this industry.

I went from architecture to project management and there's just so many routes to get to where you want, but not everyone always knows about them.

**AB:** And, as you've said before, there's great variety plenty of different options within the built environment.

On that, Nisha, you work in construction and Priya, in real estate. So do you feel the skill sets are transferable between the two and would you consider switching to the other industry?

**NC:** Yeah, I think that follows on from your previous question quite well in that I think that's one of the things we enjoy about it.

That's one of the things I enjoy about it, the fact that I know through what I've learned in terms of managing people, personalities, being able to network, learning how to network, being confident in how to speak to people, managing clients, managing expectations, and managing the technical team, things like that is what I really enjoy about it because I know I can return to the creative side of the industry and I can do that pretty seamlessly because of the things I've learned.

So, I think that's the kind of thing that I really enjoy about this industry is that the stuff you learn is not just specific to how to build a building - it's completely transferable. I think the same applies between construction and real estate. What do you think, Priya?

**PR:** We don't get involved in construction in the same way as Nisha does in her role but, to an extent, we have construction as well.

There's so much that you can transfer between the two. It's mainly just management and there are key skills which apply well to both industries.

**NC:** The main one is people management. I think learning how to deal with people, how to influence people and how to dissolve a situation [are important]. In property, you're dealing with two sets of people at opposite ends trying to do transactions with each other and they might have different goals and one may be treating the sale very defensively, for example.

You've got to manage both parties and make sure the sale happens without something falling apart. That is a big part of client management.

With construction management, you've got the build team on one side and the client on the other side, and you're trying to make everyone work collaboratively, even though they might have different goals.

That is extremely transferable. Communication skills are really important too.

**AB:** As you say, people management is a very big part of construction management, project management, all those kinds of pathways within the sector. Do you feel it's an inclusive environment for new employees?

**NC:** By new employees, do you mean juniors?

**AB:** Anyone entering into the built environment for the first time.

**NC:** I think it can be. I think it depends on the people you work with as it is probably for every sector. What I found personally within construction is that if you are willing to learn, you're hardworking and you ask a lot questions, because you genuinely want to learn, people will help you and they will go out of their way to make sure you understand and see you do well. I think it is welcoming but you've got to come in with a good attitude.

**PR:** Yeah. I think Nisha has covered that quite well. We employ a lot of people that have no experience in this sector at all and, actually, we find that that's a good thing because they want to learn and want to be there.

I think it is pretty inclusive for everyone that is entering into the industry.

**NC:** That's why we choose certain topics in our posts because we can help equip graduates, or even someone switching industries into construction, with some things that they can arm themselves with that will help them progress. We want to make sure they're prepared and to build up that good attitude when entering the industry.

**AB:** And earlier you touched upon how the built environment is not really a popular option for South Asian women. Why do you think that is?

**PR:** Yes, you're right. We don't think it is popular at the moment. I think it's seen as a very male-dominated area and a cold type of sector.

I think that's why women are not so drawn to it, especially South Asian women. You can compare that to some other industries as well that are quite heavily male-dominated. The



finance industry is gaining more equality but the property and construction sectors seem to be lagging behind at the moment.

**NC:** Yeah, I totally agree. My Master's dissertation was based on the uptake of skilled labour or the lack thereof. I interviewed school students and asked: have you had any experience with the built environment or skilled labour? Has anyone in your family? Most of them said no. Even the ones that said yes, when I asked about their perception of construction, it was always negative.

They thought it was for people who couldn't do other professional jobs. There seems to be this image of construction that Priya referred to as male-dominated and cold. What I found from my research was most students' experience of construction was from walking past construction sites because they don't talk about it at school.

I went to an all-girls school, where we definitely weren't talking about skilled labour or construction management paths. There should be no reason why they aren't discussed.

It's a lot to do with the image of construction, the way construction portrays itself, but then now you do have considerate contractors so they're trying to make their sites more presentable. They're stopping staff smoking outside, hanging around in groups, and things like that go a long way to help change people's perception of having construction going on in their town.

Especially with the South Asian community, a lot of the generation before us went into office-based jobs so that's all they know. So, they're always going to perpetuate those kinds of roles to our generation and below because that's all they know.

I think going into construction as a South Asian person, or even into skilled labour or anything like that is quite leftfield. It's just not been done before. Or it's associated with family businesses. So if you do have a construction-based job, it's because you've got a family business or the whole family's absorbed in it so the kids will help out.

**PR:** I think Nisha is correct. I don't think I would have had the exposure that I do now without my family. Construction was never mentioned at all at school or university, and the only time I've been exposed to it is through any construction work we've had to do.

Without my family connection, I don't even think I'd have felt comfortable going into it because it's just not the done thing. That's what we want to change. It shouldn't be like that.

**AB:** You've hit upon a truism that when it comes to careers, you go with what you know, and obviously if we're not getting that message out there about what careers you can have within construction and property industries then it's not likely that you're going to go into them. This leads nicely into the next question: what more do you think can be done to inspire non-traditional talent into the sector?

**PR:** Like you say, the key is to share knowledge, but I think it's also being able to go into schools and show girls and boys that this is an inclusive sector and is an option for them should they wish to pursue it. It's telling them about the industry and teaching them something that they didn't know. Education is vital.

**NC:** I think for me, from the results of my dissertation that was exactly what came out of it - it's just a lack of knowledge.

That's the only way you're going to change perceptions. People base their perceptions on something that they see, that they don't actually know. So, if you walk past a construction site and there's a gang of six or seven men standing outside, burly men, wearing clunky PPE

– which, of course, is appropriate - but it to a child or a school student, it looks like massive boots and quite intimidating, it's not what you associate in your mind or what you've seen on TV with being professional.

Now, that could be six or seven engineers standing outside and they're all very, very educated, or skilled laborers who are specialists in their field, or welders but people don't understand the kind of work and skill that goes into those kinds of professions.

Swinging back to the South Asian thing, I think the reason why I wanted to angle it for people like us is all going back to our home backgrounds, because our families, and a lot of [South Asian] families haven't really ever been involved with construction.

So, when we entered university or the industry, we were amongst a lot of peers who had dads who were architects. Most of the people on my course were there because they had a parent who's an architect or an uncle, or had lots of strong links into construction.

That's why they knew about architecture. And I was going into it completely cold. No one I knew had ever done architecture before. So, I was just there completely fresh, no other information whereas these guys had grown up knowing about the industry so they had that kind of advantage, which is not an unfair advantage – it would be the same if I were to become a doctor, as I have loads of people in my family from that profession. And this is why I think it's important just to highlight the fact that this industry exists. It's got all these routes, it's got all of these perks and this is kind of something you can get into.

I think it's really important that we educate them because it's such a big sector in our economy as well so it's important. It's kind of crazy that they don't talk about it in school beforehand, or gear lessons towards it or something like that.

**AB:** That's a great point. I think construction is one of the top 10 sectors in the UK and real estate too so it's kind of a dichotomy that at school level, it doesn't really get talked about.

It tends to be, you know, more: do you want to be a teacher? Do you want to be a doctor? Education is a very big part of that and hopefully the more initiatives like your own can promote the sector, widen that, that knowledge and then hopefully entice more people to make a great career from it.

Thank you for your time today. Just before you go something we usually do to end our podcast is run through five quickfire questions. So, with your jobs and the work you're doing with Brown Girls, Empowering, you lead very busy lives. So what advice would you give to others about time management?

**NC:** This is really odd but I heard a chat show host once say that the reason why he's able to work on loads of different projects is because he knows in a day he has X amount of time scheduled for each one. And so whenever he's doing any one thing he knows he's got that one hour or so to work on that thing so at that time, he only focuses on that - he focuses on it 100%. He doesn't worry about the next thing. He doesn't worry about the thing he was doing before. He just does that one thing and then moves on to the next one.

And that's the only way he's able to fit in and focus on those different things at once. And I just think that's how it helps me to try not to flit between too many different things at once but, instead, carve out the time and then just focus.

**PR:** Funnily enough, that's actually something I've started doing since working from home.

I think time management is really important and it's something that you should develop quite early on because it's the only way that you can juggle tasks and manage a work-life balance as well, which is essential.

**AB:** Yep. Plan and then stick to the plan. That is good advice. So, we're recording this during our third lockdown in this country so can you tell me what TV programme or podcast you've been enjoying during this lockdown?

**PR:** So, I've been quite addicted to Netflix, anything that you can binge-watch and I've actually just finished watching Bridgerton which was very intriguing!

**NC:** I think for me, I've been addicted to podcasts, because I used to listen to them on my commute. I love Table Manners with Jessie Ware. Another really funny one I would recommend, even though I don't have children, is Rob Beckett and Josh Widdicombe's Lockdown Parenting Hell which is pretty good.

I recently started on Out to Lunch with Jay Rayner who's a food critic, and that's really interesting.

**AB:** More generally, what else has got you through lockdown?

**PR:** I think just generally having a really good support network where I am, whether that's family, friends, or even work colleagues, because it has been challenging for everybody. These are new times, but I think everyone has been supporting each other which may not have been so visible in the past.

But also, coming up with Brown Girls Empowering. That's given us something to look forward to and is something good to have come from this lockdown situation because I don't think we would have the time to put towards it if we weren't in lockdown.

**NC:** I totally agree. I think creating the Instagram page has been great because I think everyone at the moment has a lot of pent-up energy with stuff they were going to do and things they still want to do.

So, being able to channel some of that energy in something Priya and I have been wanting to do for a long time has helped quite a lot. It feels that we're achieving something we've been wanting to do for a while.

**AB:** Yeah. That's great. You mentioned earlier that you met at an RICS group in Leicester, and I saw from your LinkedIn profiles that you both spent time living in Leicester. I think, Priya, you're living there now?

**PR:** Yes, I am based in Leicester and Nisha's in London.

**NC:** I spent a year and a half there with work.

**AB:** Okay. So, different perspectives – for Priya, it's the place where you live and then Nisha, you spent a bit of time with your company there.

So, what would you say is the best thing about Leicester?

**PR:** I would say its diversity. It is traditionally English but also has this sort of cosmopolitan buzz of a city life. So, it's got a great balance and gets the best of every aspect of life that you might want.

**NC:** Yeah, I think coming from London, I found it a bit of a culture shock. I remember, and my colleagues are going to make fun of me about this, but I remember Googling: does Leicester have Uber?

But, once I was there, what really got me was the warmth of everyone. It freaked me out when I first got there, because I was just like: why does everyone say good morning and good evening?

It's actually such a nice way to be. It's so lovely to be that polite to people. It's not overly friendly, it's just something we don't have in London. So, I remember when I first came back and I was on the [London] Underground. As I was getting off, going to a ticket barrier, there was a train guard and I said 'good morning' to him and he just ignored me and carried on looking straight and I thought: 'God, he's so rude'. And then I realised a few seconds later, I've just spoken to this guy, why have I just said good morning? We don't do that!

And I think he thought I was really strange. So for me, one of the biggest things I noticed when I was there was how nice everyone is.

**AB:** Yeah, it's quite funny because that's the common sort of cliché, isn't it though? That in London, you go on the tube, no one ever speaks and then you go further north in the country and people say that it's friendlier. I suppose clichés have to come from somewhere.

So the next question I have is, what inspires you? Whether that's a book, a person, a quote.

**PR:** I don't have anything specific. I get inspired on a daily basis through reading articles, posts, social media, and you just see people that inspire you in different ways. I would, however, say that one person that has inspired me is my father. Without him, I wouldn't have been able to see what hard work and determination brings.

He always encouraged me to achieve any goals and ambitions that I've had and has shown that it doesn't matter whether you're a man or woman, you can do whatever you want to do in life and I think that's been an inspiration and key in my life so far.

**NC:** I think for me, it's whenever I see people who are achieving anything that I struggle with and want to emulate in the future. Like Priya, watching my parents work so hard makes me feel like pushing myself as well, because I just think if they can work the way they do, why can't I? They've always encouraged me to do whatever I want, whether it was moving to Leicester to get my foot in the door or pursuing a Master's after my undergrad degree and things like that. They've never stopped me doing anything I want to.

**AB:** Always nice to give you your parents a shout out as well so make sure they listen! Thank you once again. If you would like to follow Nisha's and Priya's journey, follow @browngirlsempowering on Instagram for tips about working in the built environment and more in general as you've heard today.

And if you'd like to follow in Nisha's footsteps in studying with us, visit [ucem.ac.uk/study-with-ucem/](http://ucem.ac.uk/study-with-ucem/) to take a look at our programmes. Thanks for listening.