



Cycling

## Cycling Celebrity

The thinker behind the 'creative class' on classic bikes and kit

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Richard Florida on classic bikes and kit

Growing up in a U.S. suburb – North Arlington, N.J. – Richard Florida felt freedom every time he climbed on his bike. When he wasn't learning Alvin Lee and Eric Clapton solos on his Gibson ES-345, a teenage Florida felt the need for speed. When he was younger, his first two-wheeler was a gold 5-speed Schwinn Sting-ray Fastback. His brother had a

matching model in blue. The siblings rode everywhere together.

Roughly 50 years later, Florida's childhood pursuits define him. Deep within his soul, these two passions still bring him the most joy. "You love your hobbies," says the renowned urban studies pundit, professor and author. "I love thinking and writing, but in many ways, I have a special fondness for guitars and bik-



ing. Those hobbies hold a special place in my heart that is different from my vocation.”

At the age of 12, Florida added a few more gears to his two-wheel hobby. He can't recall how he afforded it, but he

saved up and bought a 10-speed Paris Sport. In his college years, like many, Florida added extra pounds that he

never shed. By his late 30s, he weighed 235 lb. He was living and teaching at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College in Pittsburgh when he decided to get active and make a life-style change. "I asked myself, what do I like to do? The answer was obvious. I like to cycle," he says. Florida bought a rigid Cannondale mountain bike and reconnected with his childhood passion.

These days, Florida lives in Toronto's tony Rosedale neighbourhood and teaches at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. While he has come a long way from his working-class upbringing in the New Jersey suburbs, cycling is still his favourite form of exercise. He enjoys rides away from the

city's main streets as he finds them too risky. "The last time I rode my Raleigh was three years ago," he recalls. "I hit a streetcar track and bruised my elbow and shoulder."

Florida loves to ride the ravine trails along the Don River. On weekends, he often meets fellow cyclists and heads to the Leslie Street Spit, riding a commuter he transformed into a gravel bike by adding wider tires. He loves the feeling of the road, and going fast, along with the cycling community. "It keeps me young," he says. "But what I really love about cycling are the people. Some of my closest friends in my adult life I've met through, or bonded with, over our shared love of riding."

"This will sound dumb, but I'm also attracted to the aesthetic of cycling," he adds. "There is something about riding on a road or on gravel with a Thermos of hot coffee on a cold day. Vintage bikes are so beautiful and I love vintage cycling clothing like merino wool jerseys."

When the weather is not conducive to cycling outdoors, even with a wool jersey, Florida enjoys Power Zone rides on his Peloton. Thanks to this gift from his wife, he has made some new friends and discovered a whole new community of bike enthusiasts. "I don't think I'll ever stop cycling as long as I'm able," Florida concludes. "I look at these graphs that say your performance decays with age, but in

cycling it often doesn't. I cycle with guys in their 70s who are monsters on the bike."

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