

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Roy Lewis

PERSON

Lewis, Roy, 1937-

Alternative Names: Roy Lewis;

Life Dates: July 24, 1937-

Place of Birth: Natchez, Mississippi, USA

Residence: Hyattsville, MD

Work: Hyattsville, MD

Occupations: Photojournalist

Biographical Note

Renowned photographer and activist Roy Lewis was born on July 24, 1937 in Natchez, Mississippi. He grew up on a plantation where his father worked as a sharecropper harvesting cotton. His mother died when he was five years old and he was raised by his maternal grandparents. Lewis earned his high school diploma in 1956 from Sadie V. Thompson High School where he was a member of the football team and choir.

Upon graduation, he joined relatives in Chicago and landed a job in the subscription department at Johnson Publishing. In 1960, he was drafted in the United States Army and spent time at bases in Kansas, San Antonio and Houston, Texas. While a soldier, he began to develop his talent as a photographer after purchasing his first camera for just twenty-five dollars. His career as a photographer began in 1964 when Jet Magazine published his photograph of musician Thelonius Monk. In 1968, Lewis left Johnson Publishing and joined the staff at Northeastern University, filming student activities. In 1970, Lewis videotaped an exclusive interview with the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, which was featured in the film A Nation of Common Sense. In 1974, Lewis, now working as a full time freelance photographer, traveled to Zaire to film the Ali-Foreman fight. This historic video would later be featured in the Hollywood film When We Were Kings, a remake of the legendary championship fight. In 1975, Lewis began work on River Road on the Mississippi, a pictorial book focusing on the African American people, life and cultural along the Mississippi River.

In 1995, Lewis published The Million Man March, a book highlighting the events of that historic day. Lewis also contributed work to the widely acclaimed 1995 photo book

project, Songs of My People.

Lewis has received numerous awards for his photojournalism including, the Maurice Sorrell Lifetime Achievement Award.

Related Entries

Sadie V. Thomas High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Prince Street Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

St. Francis Catholic School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Brumfield High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Johnson Publishing Company [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1956 to 1968]

Northeastern Illinois University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to 1969]

University of Notre Dame [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1969 to 1970]

Howard University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to 1971]