

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

PERSON

Lewis, Byron E., Sr., 1931-

Alternative Names: Byron Lewis;

Life Dates: December 25, 1931-

Place of Birth: Newark, New Jersey, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Occupations: Business Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Advertising CEO Byron E. Lewis Sr., was born on December 25, 1931 in Newark, New Jersey to Thomas Eugene and Myrtle Allen Lewis. Growing up in Queens, New York, Lewis graduated from Shimer Junior High School and John Adams High School. In 1953, he received his B.A. degree in journalism from Long Island University.

Upon graduation, Lewis served in the United States Army, and then held a variety of jobs, including social work, before launching his advertising career. In 1961, he was hired as an advertising sales representative for Citizen Call and Urbanite Magazine. Lewis also worked for Amalgamated Publications, and later became vice president, director of advertising at Tuesday magazine from 1963 until 1968. In 1969, Lewis established UniWorld Group, Inc., the nation's oldest multicultural advertising agency. Following UniWorld's initial success, he expanded the agency and created UniWorld Entertainment in 1977, UniWorld Hispanic (Unimundo) in 1980, and UniWorld Healthcare in 2002. UniWorld's clients have included AT&T, Avon Products, Burger King, Colgate Palmolive, Eastman Kodak, Ford Motor Co., Mars Candy, Stax Record Shaft film series, and the United States Marine Corps. Lewis also worked on the Black Political Summit in 1972, Kenneth Gibson's mayoral campaign in 1971, and Reverend Jesse Jackson's first presidential campaign in 1984. He created and produced a number of national media productions, including Sounds of the City, a Black radio serial; America's Black Forum; and This Far By Faith, a PBS film. Lewis also founded the American Black Film Festival, formerly known as the Acapulco Black Film Festival. In 2012, he retired and became UniWorld's Chairman Emeritus.

Lewis has received numerous awards and honors. He received Black Enterprise's AG Gaston Lifetime Achievement Award, and was named one of Long Island University's Alumni of Distinction. Lewis has been inducted into the American Advertising

Federation's Advertising Hall of Fame, Omega Psi Phi's Hall of Fame, and the AdColor Hall of Fame. He has also received an honorary doctorate degree from Adelphi University. Lewis has served on the boards of the Apollo Theater Foundation, the Jackie Robinson Educational Foundation, the NYC Mission Society, the Phoenix House Foundation, and Long Island University.

Lewis is married to Sylvia Wong Lewis. He has one son: Byron Eugene Lewis, Jr.

Byron Lewis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 23, 2013.

Related Entries

Shimer Junior High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

John Adams High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

High School Diploma

Long Island University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Citizen Call [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1961 to 1963]

advertising sales representative

Urbanite Magazine [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1961 to 1963]

Co-Founder

Amalgamated Publishers [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1963 to 1964]

Assistant Advertising Manager

Tuesday Magazine [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1964 to 1968]

Vice President and Advertising Director

UniWorld Group, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1969 to 2012]

Founder and CEO

American Institute for Public Service [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Phoenix House Foundation [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

New York City Sports Commission [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

National Urban League (NUL) [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Apollo Theater Foundation [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Jackie Robinson Foundation [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

New York City Mission Society [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Long Island University [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member