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

Lewis, Edward, 1940-

Alternative Names: Edward Lewis;

Life Dates: May 15, 1940-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Occupations: Entrepreneur; Magazine Publishing
Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Magazine publisher and entrepreneur Edward Lewis was born on May 15, 1940, in the Bronx, New York. His father was a night shift janitor at City College; his mother a factory worker and beautician. Lewis attended De Witt Clinton High School, where he excelled academically and was a star fullback on the football team. Upon graduating from high school in 1958, he earned a football scholarship to the University of New Mexico. Lewis received his B.A.
degree in political science in 1964 and his M.A. degree in political science and international relations in 1966, both from the University of New Mexico. He later graduated from Harvard University’s Small Business Management Program.

Lewis worked first as an administrative analyst for the City Manager’s Office in Albuquerque, New Mexico from 1964 to 1965, and then as a financial analyst at First National City Bank in New York City from 1965 to 1969. In 1969, he co-founded Essence, a magazine specifically targeted to black women, and went on to serve as CEO and publisher of Essence Communications, Inc. for three decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, Lewis expanded Essence Communications to include a weekly television show, fashion line and mail order catalogue, as well as an annual awards show and Essence music festival. In 1992, Lewis acquired Income Opportunities from Davis Publishing; and, in 1995, he co-founded Latina magazine, a bilingual publication geared toward Hispanic women.


Lewis has sat on the boards of TransAfrica, the Rheeland Foundation, New York City Partnership, the Central Park Conservancy, A&P, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Teachers College of Columbia University, Spelman College, Tuskegee University and the Harlem Village Academy; and served as chairman of Latina Media Ventures. He also served on President Barack Obama’s Board of Advisors for the Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Essence magazine ranked seventh on Advertising
Age’s 2003 “A-List,” which was the first time that an African American targeted publication received the honor. Lewis’s personal awards include the Entrepreneur of the Year Award for Publishing from Ernst & Young; the President’s Award from One Hundred Black Men of America, Inc.; the Frederick Douglass Award from the New York Urban League; the United Negro College Fund’s Lifetime Achievement Award; the American Advertising Federation Diversity Achievement Award; the Henry Johnson Fisher Lifetime Achievement Award; and the Henry Luce Lifetime Achievement Award. He was inducted into the Advertising Hall of Fame in 2014.

Edward Lewis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 7, 2014.

Related Entries

DeWitt Clinton High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

High School Diploma

University of New Mexico [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

University of New Mexico [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A. in Political Science

Georgetown University Law Center [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

P.S. 35 Stephen Decatur School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

P.S. 2 Morrisania School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]
Essence Communications, Inc. [employeeOf]
[from 1969 to ?]

Chair, CEO

Solera Capital [employeeOf]
[from 2010 to ?]

Senior Advisor

TransAfrica [memberOf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Rheeland Foundation [memberOf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

New York City Partnership [memberOf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Central Park Conservancy [memberOf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

A&P [memberOf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Jazz at Lincoln Center [memberOf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Teachers College of Columbia University [memberOf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Spelman College [memberOf]
Board Member

Tuskegee University [MEMBER Of]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Harlem Village Academy [MEMBER Of]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Latina Media Ventures [MEMBER Of]
[from ? to ?]

Chairman

White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities [MEMBER Of]
[from ? to ?]

Advisory Board Member

Magazine Publishers of America [MEMBER Of]
[from 1997 to ?]

Chairman