

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

PERSON

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.

In 1997, Lewis became the first African American chairman of the Magazine Publishers of America. In October 2000, Lewis engineered a partnership with Time, Inc. and Essence Communications was sold to Time in 2005. He later joined the private equity firm Solera Capital as a senior adviser and published a memoir, *The Man from Essence: Creating a Magazine for Black Women*, in 2014.

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]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**Tuskegee University** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**Harlem Village Academy** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Board Member**

**Latina Media Ventures** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Chairman**

**White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Advisory Board Member**

**Magazine Publishers of America** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1997 to ?]

## **Chairman**