

Forum

World's Richest Black Man Has Traits That Money Could Not Buy

Did you know that the richest Black man in America—and probably in the world—died January 16 in New York City?

His name is Reginald F. Lewis and his personal fortune is estimated by conservative Fortune Magazine at \$400 million. He was only 50 years old and he died of a cerebral hemorrhage related to brain cancer. Professionals in finance expected him eventually to join the exclusive billion-dollar club because of his expertise in managing people and money, acquiring large companies and directing them to greater profit and value. He graduated from law school only 25 years ago and began investing with \$1 million he saved as a Wall Street lawyer.

Lewis lived in New York but also had a luxury home in Paris, France, from which he directed affairs of Beatrice Companies, a predominantly European food concern he acquired by leverage in 1988. He learned French and sometimes conducted business in that language.

He gave millions of dollars to educational and charitable institutions, including the Harvard Law College which received \$3 million, its largest gifts ever from an individual. Other recipients of his millions include Virginia State University from which he graduated before going to Harvard, Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, the scholarship fund of his Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and various churches and shelters for the homeless.

Lewis was born in Baltimore, Md., in 1942. His father was a Post Office worker and his mother a public school teacher. He did home chores and carried newspapers when growing up and preparing for college. Leaving the Harvard Law School in 1968, he worked at a law firm on Wall Street before establishing his own venture capital law firm of Lewis and Clarkson only 20 years ago.

Reports indicate that Lewis' life presents an excellent model for today's troubled Black youth because of several factors: 1. He developed good work habits at home, learning dependability, diplomacy, and frugality, while growing up under the tutelage of sturdy, hard-

working parents as role models. 2. He made good grades in elementary and secondary school, developing good study habits and good interpersonal relationships. 3. Although he had

MINORITY REPORT

By JAMES E. ALSBROOK, Ph.D.



an athletic build along with leadership skills and was successful in sports competition, he chose not to try to professionalize these assets for "quick big bucks" but to concentrate on a "white collar" career that would last for a lifetime. 4. His academic work and personal behavior were such that he was admitted to probably the best-law school in the nation. 5. While at Harvard he continued to broaden his horizons and interpersonal, persuasive skills, later using them in something like an "Ivy League network" of "in" operators who "know the ropes" facilitate admired transactions and share concepts and confidences because of school ties or common interests and experiences. 6. Also while at Harvard, he learned business law exceptionally well, broadening his horizons and thinking in terms of national and international operations not limited by racial or ethnic considerations. He was strictly a mainstream lawyer and finance man. 7. After he had succeeded and was worth almost a half-billion dollars, he did not abandon his people or his roots. He did not run grinning and bowing after rich and powerful and political white folk as do some Black, petty politicians. Instead, he counted Jesse Jackson and his Black Kappa Alpha Psi members among his friends. With all of his money, he did not pull a Clarence Pendleton or a Clarence Thomas on Black people. Instead, he became a Board member of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and a member of several Boards that research and advise Black Mayor Dinkins of New York City.

If parents, teachers or leaders want to see a good role model for Black youth, they should stop right now and take a good look at Reginald Lewis.

He is among the very best.

Farewell To Reginald F. Lewis My Fellow Freedom Fighter

It is indeed difficult to say "Farewell my brother" to a fellow freedom fighter. Most appropriately the major national news coverage concerning the untimely death of Reginald F. Lewis of January 19, 1993 has focused exclusively on his unprecedented achievements and accomplishments in the area of business and international entrepreneurship. Reginald F. Lewis was the Chairman and

schools, colleges, research institutions, and to local organizations that were doing significant grassroots empowerment work, all of which helped hundreds of thousands of needy persons.

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By BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR.



Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the TLC Beatrice International, a worldwide food conglomerate with annual sales in 1991 of more than a billion dollars.

Reginald Francis Lewis was born in Baltimore, Maryland on December 7, 1942. From very humble beginnings in Baltimore he rose through family encouragement, hard work, academic preparation, and a committed and disciplined life to the very top of the international business world.

We first met Mr. Lewis 22 years ago. He used his Harvard legal training not only for practicing corporate law, but he also applied his unique ability to formulate effective strategies to help in the Civil Rights Movement. Attorney Lewis was one of the counsels for the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ as we battled the infamous political prisoner case down in the state of North Carolina known as the "Wilmington, N.C. Ten." After nearly a decade of litigation and appeals, we won the case in the Federal Appellate Court.

Reginald F. Lewis was my lawyer and I became his minister and yet over the years we became as close as brothers. He exhibited with his life a principle that he was fond of saying, "Do not beg for freedom. Do not beg for justice. But demand freedom and justice with kind of economic strength that will ensure the proper redress."

In addition to being a multi-millionaire, Mr. Lewis was one of the strongest and most sharing philanthropist in this nation and throughout the world. Through Reginald F. Lewis Foundation, Inc., he gave millions to

As well as being concerned about the socioeconomic state of the African American community, Reginald F. Lewis was also committed to helping other people of color communities, in particular Latino American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Native American.

Very often people who have reached the top of the economic ladder become arrogant and socially irresponsible. This brother was different. As he became wealthy, he never forgot about his family, community or his social responsibility. According to the official obituary, after graduating from Harvard, My Lewis interned at the Baltimore law firm of Piper & Marbury and a "partner there recognized his potential and urged Reginald to 'Go for it big in New York. It was a move that later put him on the fast track to greatness.'"

In 1972, Lewis established his own law firm of Lewis and Clarkson on Wall Street. In 1983, he created his own investment firm, TLC, then just months later he purchased McCall Pattern Company. In 1987, Lewis purchased Beatrice International making him the wealthiest African American in the world.

Yes, Lewis remained committed to the freedom struggle at the same time he was achieving outstanding success in the business arena. A lesson for young people: "Work hard, study hard, keep your principles as you live your life and much success will come." The reality of racism in this society could not hold this brother down and our world has been a better place because he lived.

Long live the memory of Reginald Francis Lewis.

Doonesbury

BY G.B. TRUDEAU

Panel 1 (2-1): B.D., I'VE REACHED A DECISION. I WANT TO GO LEGIT!

Panel 2 (2-2): I'M TIRED OF BEING IN THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY, TIRED OF PULLING 18-HOUR SHIFTS, TIRED OF NOT BEING ABLE TO PILE UP MY OWN CREDIT CARD DEBT!

Panel 3 (2-3): I'VE DECIDED TO GO STRAIGHT! TO GET A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, TO BECOME A PROUD STAND-UP, TAX-PAYING MEMBER OF THE WORK FORCE!

Panel 4 (2-4): CONGRATULATIONS YOU'RE FIRED! HEY, CHON, MAN, IT'S LONELY OFF-BOOK. I CAN'T SPEAK SPANISH.

Panel 5 (2-5): BOOPSIE? I'M TIRED OF BEING THIS FAMILY'S DIRTY LITTLE SECRET! I WANT TO BE ON THE BOOKS!

Panel 6 (2-6): FROM NOW ON, I DEMAND THAT YOU START PAYING MY CITY, STATE, FEDERAL AND SOCIAL SECURITY TAXES!

Panel 7 (2-7): ZONKER, THAT'S JUST SILLY.

Panel 8 (2-8): SILLY? WHY IS IT SILLY, IF I MAY ASK?

Panel 9 (2-9): ZONKER, WE DON'T PAY YOU ANYTHING!

Panel 10 (2-10): THAT'S ANOTHER THING!

Panel 11 (2-11): I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR PARENTS, SAM—THEY DON'T SEEM TO GET IT!

Panel 12 (2-12): TWO LONG MONTHS OF LOYAL SERVICE TO THIS FAMILY, AND WHAT DO I HAVE TO SHOW FOR IT? NOTHING! NO SAVINGS, NO PENSION, NO HEALTH PLAN...

Panel 13 (2-13): IT'S AS IF I DON'T EVEN EXIST! AND ALL BECAUSE YOUR MOM AND DAD WANT TO AVOID PAYING TAXES ON A SALARY!

Panel 14 (2-14): WHY DON'T YOU STEAL THE SILVERWARE? SAME KINDA DEAL. I'D PAY TAXES ON IT.

Panel 15 (2-15): IT'S JUST AN OUTRAGE, SAM—I'VE BEEN A PROFESSIONAL NANNY FOR FOUR YEARS NOW, AND I'M STILL OFF-BOOK! I'VE NEVER BEEN PUT INTO THE SYSTEM!

Panel 16 (2-16): WITHOUT A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, YOU HAVE NO PAST AND YOU HAVE NO FUTURE! I'LL TELL YOU, THIS ALIEN BUSINESS HAS REALLY RAISED MY CONSCIOUSNESS!

Panel 17 (2-17): ARE YOU AN ALIEN, ZONKER?

Panel 18 (2-18): NO, NO, I'M AN EARTHING! BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT!

Panel 19 (2-19): LOOK, BOOPSIE, I KNOW YOU CAN'T SWING A REAL SALARY, SO JUST PAY TAX ON MY ROOM AND BOARD. WHAT I WANT IS A PENSION! THE TRUTH IS, I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT TOMORROW!

Panel 20 (2-20): BARRG!

Panel 21 (2-21): I DUNNO, Z, I... HOLD ON...

Panel 22 (2-22): HELLO?

Panel 23 (2-23): HELLO, MS. BOOPSTEIN? THIS IS "VARIETY." WE'RE DOING A BIG STORY ON MOVIE PEOPLE WHO AVOID PAYING TAXES FOR THEIR DOMESTIC HELP!

Panel 24 (2-24): DEAL. GOOD OL' UNCLE DUKE.

Panel 25 (2-25): HEY... HARRIS! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL DAY? BOOPSIE AND I WANTED TO GO OUT!

Panel 26 (2-26): SORRY, B.D.—I WAS OUT LOOKING AT THE GOLDEN CLOUDS RETIREMENT COMMUNITY!

Panel 27 (2-27): SAY WHAT?

Panel 28 (2-28): IT'S AN AWESOME SET-UP! GOLF, TENNIS, BEACH, POOL—THE WORKS! CHECK OUT THIS BROCHURE...

Panel 29 (2-29): LITTLE EARLY TO BE SHOPPING FOR HOMES, HEN? IT? YOUR PENSION DOESN'T KICK IN UNTIL YOU'RE 65.

Panel 30 (2-30): 65? WAIT A MINUTE! I CAN'T RETIRE UNTIL I'M 65?

Panel 31 (2-31): THAT'S RIGHT. WHEN'D YOU HAVE IN MIND?

Panel 32 (2-32): NEXT SATURDAY. NO WONDER THERE WERE SO MANY OLD PEOPLE...



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