



Dolly A.V. Christian



Virgis Colbert



Darwin Davis



Charles E. Lewis



George R. Lewis



A. Barry Rand

Black corporate pioneers honored at BPRC gala

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In commemoration of Black History Month, the Business Policy Review Council (BPRC), representing African-American executives of Fortune 500 companies, honored six "pioneers" at its annual Corporate Pioneers Gala Tribute Feb. 4 at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C.

According to Benjamin S. Ruffin, BPRC chair, "African Americans who help break down color barriers and were early and current pioneers in corporate America have most often remained as unsung heroes and heroines. We want to give them public recognition and the special honor due them. This is the main goal and purpose of our Corporate Pioneers Gala Tribute." Honored this year by BPRC were Dolly V. Christian, who managed one of the premier external programs for the IBM Corporation; Virgis Colbert, senior vice president of Worldwide Operations for Miller Brewing Company and the highest-ranking African American of the company; Darwin Davis, the senior vice president for external affairs of the Equitable Financial Company; Charles E. Lewis, who directed and initiated support to countless community-action programs on behalf of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company; George R. Lewis, vice president and treasurer of Philip Morris Companies Inc. and a member of the Board of Trustees of Hampton University; and A. Barry Rand, executive vice president of worldwide operations for Xerox Corporation, who is responsible for the management of all customer-related operations and \$17 billion in revenue.

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Hilton Smith, BPRC chair-elect, stated that a portion of the proceeds of the Gala Tribute will go to the National Council of Negro Women and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Chairman of the BPRC Gala Planning Committee is LeBaron Tavior. Senior vice president of Sony Music Entertainment and committee co-chairs include: Toni Fay, Time-Warner; Leroy Holmes, Jr., Duracell Inc.; Robert Billingslea, Walt Disney Company; Eugene McCullers, The Coca-Cola Company; Mark V. Monteverdi, AT&T; Hilton O. Smith, Turner Construction Company; and Adrienne Foster Williams, Reebok Ltd.

A recent retiree of IBM, Christian coordinated IBM's executive loan program in which IBM executives were loaned to colleges, universities, community organizations and non-profits. The program enabled IBM employees to use their business expertise to enhance the effectiveness of the programs they were assigned. Colbert, rising through the corporate ranks of Miller Brewing Company, was appointed to the position Senior Vice President, Worldwide Operations by the company chair-

man in August 1995. Reporting to Colbert in his position are the American Specialty and Assurance, Purchasing, and Corporate Operations Planning and Improvement. In addition, he is on the Board of Directors of the Boy Scouts of America and is a board member for Columbia Health Systems Inc. He is also a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Davis' story at Equitable is record-breaking by any measurement. In 1967, his first year with the Equitable, he made the Million Dollar Round Table, and he made it again in 1968. In 1969, Davis became a district manager and in 1970, he was in the top ten of the Equitable's 960 managers, winning the National Builder Trophy. In July 1971, he was appointed Agency manager in Detroit, Mich. During the period from 1971 to 1974, he was elected a full vice president and head of the External Relations Department. He currently serves as senior vice president for the Equitable and is listed as one of America's 25 most important and powerful black executives.

For more than 30 years Charles Lewis assisted R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in promoting its products. Lauded from coast to coast for his service on behalf of African-American organizations, he is especially proud of his nearly 20-year participation in the National Urban League's Black Executive Exchange Program.

George Lewis was elected vice president and treasurer of Philip Morris Companies Inc. in July 1984.

Philip Morris Companies Inc. has five principal operating companies: Philip Morris U.S.A., Philip Morris International Inc.,

Kraft Foods Inc., Miller Brewing Company and Philip Morris Company, and Philip Morris Capital Corporation. Lewis previously served as vice president of finance for the Seven-Up Company. Before joining the Seven-Up Company, Lewis was vice president of financial and planning, and treasurer of Philip Morris Industrial, a position he has held since January 1975.

Rand is recognized as one of America's most outstanding executives. Since joining Xerox in 1968 as a trainee, he has risen to the challenges of increasing responsibility within the corporation. He currently serves as executive vice president of worldwide operations and is responsible for \$17 billion in revenue.

Rand has been a corporate vice president and president of Xerox's U.S. Marketing Group. During his tenure as president, the \$6 billion, 35,000-employee operation won several national awards including "Best Sales Force" and "Best Training Organization in Corporate America." "This is a stellar group of honorees," said Smith. "Each has withstood numerous obstacles and has made a difference in the lives of their communities and in the mentoring of a younger generation. They also ensured that their community was the beneficiary of corporate philanthropy. The National Council of Negro Women, founded by the legendary Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune and always in the forefront of the fight to ensure that African-American women have a seat at the table, received a financial contribution from BPRC at the Gala. Dr. Dorothy Height accepted on behalf of the NCNW.

The other beneficiary of BPRC's Corporate Gala Tribute was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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