

I have passed the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture many times and never understood the depths of its significance until I read "Why Should White Guys Have All the Fun?" Reginald Lewis's life is a story of purpose, planning, perseverance, and philanthropy. He was an entrepreneur with a vision that he pursued relentlessly.

Purpose: He had a sense of purpose early in life. His family knew he was meant for greatness and reinforced this to Lewis early on. This gave him confidence that led to his bold approach to everything. His high self-esteem and exposure to things outside the typical Baltimore neighborhood where he lived propelled his success. For example, his grandfather taking him to the private club where he worked and Lewis himself working at private clubs exposed him to other types of people and their social norms. It allowed him to learn to navigate different situations and adapt to fit the setting. His family taught him self-sufficiency and made sure that he understood his worth in life.

Lewis could have settled for a comfortable everyday life, but he had a vision and goals as a young man. I can't imagine what the world would have lost if Lewis had accepted the job at the private club after finishing high school and not gone to college or taken the partnership with the photography company while in college. He had bigger plans for his life. He continued to push the limits.

Planning: Planning is vital in the pursuit of your goals. Lewis worked long hours to understand complex business negotiations and knew his success hinged on hard work. He learned from the business deals he worked on as a young lawyer and networked heavily.

Learning to navigate different situations with a confident demeanor was an essential skill for Lewis. He interacted with people of all backgrounds and could handle himself in the barbershop or the board room. He shared his dreams and tried to get others to think big. For example, I remember when he went out of his way to find a Black newscaster for his college roommate to meet because his roommate did not think a Black person could get that job.

Perseverance: He was a fierce competitor. He could have settled many times in his life but did not. When he wanted to go to the summer internship at Harvard, he went for it even though he did not have the best grades. When he tried to go to Harvard law school, he excelled in the summer intern classes and built relationships that would be future allies.

When he lost major deals like Park Sausage and Almet, he did not cower and quit. Instead, he critiqued his role and that of others. He would challenge and ask for what he wanted. If he did not like the answer, he pushed harder.

Reginald Lewis wanted to be considered a great businessman, not a great African American businessman. He understood that slights and racism played a role in life and in the business world. However, these obstacles made him more persistent.

Philanthropy: Many did not know of his philanthropic efforts. Lewis would give money and invest time in speaking to students. In addition, he supported the arts, academic institutions, and organizations that fought injustice.

Understanding your strengths and weaknesses is essential in life to grow. Understanding your worth and not letting others devalue you is critical. As I pursue a career in the tech field with few minorities and women, I will have to be confident. Women and African Americans generally make less in the workplace, so understanding and demanding my worth is essential to me.

I love his story because I have dreams of being an entrepreneur. Also, like Lewis, I have fierce family support. His life inspires me to not give up on my dreams, learn from my failures and try different approaches to obtain my goals in life.

He loved tennis, and his life is a game plan that applies to us all. To put his life in terms of his love of tennis. "Game, set, match."