



Violet T. Lewis

(1899-1968)

Violet T. Lewis was a trailblazing educator who created pathways to economic success for women and who stands as an example of service to all. After visiting Detroit from her home in Indianapolis and seeing no opportunities for female black students to study business, Lewis determined to open a second branch of her Lewis College of Business in Detroit; it opened in 1939 with high enrollment from the start. She quickly made Detroit her home and succeeded in her goal of improving the economic status of women by providing training to over 27,000 students in marketable skills for jobs and decent incomes to support themselves and their families. The Lewis College of Business remains Michigan's only historically Black college as designated by the U.S. Department of Education.

In addition to founding and presiding over a college, Lewis established the March of Dimes Extravaganza Committee, which has since raised over \$800,000 for the March of Dimes Foundation; co-founded Gamma Phi Delta, a professional and business women's sorority with over 87 chapters nationwide; and raised two daughters. As an educator and business and community leader, Lewis's accomplishments have created opportunities for women and minorities well beyond the end of her life in 1968. Renaming the portion of the highway closest to where her business school once operated will inspire travelers to follow the legacy of service and entrepreneurship that Violet T. Lewis firmly established.