



Earl Gilbert Graves

Chancellor, the Bible tells us that unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. God has given Earl Graves much - good parents, good genes and a good wife; the skills to be a leader of men; professional success; a great family and the admiration of millions. And he gives much in return, at every level, every day.

Earl Gilbert Graves was born in Barbados' 29th constituency - Brooklyn, New York - on the 9th of January, 1935. All of his grandparents were Barbadians, emigrating at the turn of the century, and as Earl says, if you emigrated to the USA from the Caribbean you had to go by way of his neighbourhood. His parents, Earl Sr. and Winifred, nee Sealy, taught him the ABC of Bajan immigrants - Achievement, Best Behaviour, Christianity, Discipline, Education, Family, Good grades and Hard work - but also, perhaps the defining difference from many other West Indians, entrepreneurship as a way of life. With his three younger siblings he was church-ed three times on sundays, and when he wasn't doing homework he was doing house work.

From his mother he learnt to fight racial prejudice. Between them, they abolished segregation in the swimming pool at the Brooklyn YMCA. From his father he learnt the skills of salesmanship. At seven he was into his first business - selling Christmas cards, door to door, but with strict orders not to cross the street. As a teenager he worked in the Brooklyn Public Library as a "gopher", for 57 cents an hour. And he kept the wolf from the door at Morgan State University by teaching swimming, mowing lawns, waiting tables, working in security and selling flowers. He graduated with a degree in economics, but most of his courses were not on the curriculum! In fact, when he received an honorary degree from his alma mater, his favourite professor said: "Earl, you got an honorary degree from us 30 years ago....."

After graduation he entered the army, ending his career as Captain, as a member of the

Special Forces Group, the Green Berets. Around that time he made the smartest possible plan for his life. On a blind date he met his wife, Barbara, was blinded by her beauty and her brains, and the rest, as they say, is history. He left the service and took a job selling real estate in Brooklyn. Success came easily, but he wanted to do more. He joined the Democratic presidential campaign of 1964, and was asked to coordinate a visit by Robert Kennedy to Brooklyn. His next three years working for Kennedy gave him a hands-on degree in leadership, power and social responsibility.

When Kennedy was assassinated, Earl took up a Ford Foundation grant to study entrepreneurship and economic development in the land of his roots - this land - Barbados. Here, two years after our independence, he saw that bright black Bajans were choosing political power over economic power and were still ceding economic power to foreigners. He returned to New York and started a consulting business for black economic development. After two years of researching the feasibility of his dream, he launched the magazine *Black Enterprise*, in August 1970. With his wife at his side, he never looked back.

Today he is Chairman and CEO of Earl G. Graves, Ltd. and Publisher of *Black Enterprise* and its young stable-mates, *Black Enterprise for Teens* and *KidpreneursNews*. *Black Enterprise* has a circulation of 400,000 and nearly 4 million readers.

He has served as Chairman, owner and CEO of Pepsi-Cola of Washington, D.C., the largest minority-controlled Pepsi-Cola franchise in the USA. He serves as a Director of American Airlines, Daimler-Chrysler Corporation, and other influential companies, and as a volunteer on many boards including TransAfrica Forum, the American Museum of Natural History, Howard University and others too numerous to mention. He was formerly National Commissioner of Scouting, serves on the Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America, and has received scouting's highest awards for volunteer service.

He has been honoured with scores of national awards. In 1972 he was named one of the ten most outstanding minority businessmen in the country by the President of the USA, and received the National Award of Excellence. In 1974 he was named one of Time Magazine's 200 future leaders. He has received the Dow Jones and Company Award for Entrepreneurial Excellence, induction into the National Sales Hall of Fame, the Marietta Tree Award for Public Service from the Citizens Committee for New York City, one of the Top 100 Business Luminaries of the Century, and many, many more. But perhaps the most precious of all was the 84th NAACP Springarn Medal, the highest achievement award for African Americans, joining the ranks of George Washington Carver, Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King and other great Americans of the century. He was recently elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has received honorary degrees from 44 universities, culminating, I dare to say, in his award here today. Also close to home and to his roots, in 1999 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Caribbean Tourism Organization.

In 1997 Earl distilled his 30 years of business acumen and teaching in a book "*How to succeed in business without being white*". It made the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal Business Best Sellers lists. It offers a life-time of business wisdom, in the context of his own inspired life. As a role model in business and community service he has no peer.

Earl Graves lives the Golden Rule - at home, at church, in the office, in the community. His love for God, his family and everyone he meets is the inspiration of a life which has received much and given much; in monetary terms, a gift of a million dollars to his alma mater, to

advance business education, resulting in the naming of the Earl G. Graves School of Business and Management. But also in time and commitment - to Habitat, to the Boy Scouts, to the Arthur Ashe Foundation, and as role model to millions.

Earl and Barbara treasure their West Indian heritage and have dedicated a giant stained glass window and meditation chapel at their childhood church, St. Philip's in Brooklyn, to their parents and all parents of the African diaspora. In the beautiful words of Barbara Graves: "With dignity and pride, they paved the emotional road on which many of us travelled with confidence and success. These people of the sun were often different in culture and sometimes in language, but they were common in their dedication to hard work, education, life affirming coping skills, spiritual strength and abiding faith, that their children would succeed in living the American dream".

The source of much of his strength is the harmony of his marriage and family life. Earl Graves has shown that one man, with the love and partnership of a wonderful woman, can change the world around him. And so Chancellor, for his unique contribution to the advancement of mankind, as publisher, business guru, advocate of education and crusader for civil rights, equal rights and human rights, devoted Christian family man and role model for all, we recognise Earl Gilbert Graves, and I invite you, by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of the University of the West Indies, to confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *Honoris causa*.

21st October 2000