

# Bank loans a worry for minority women business owners

## Special to Sentinel-Voice

More than one-quarter of Black female entrepreneurs and 20 percent of Asian female business owners were turned down for a bank loan when they started their businesses, according to a national study released today.

The first such study of female business owners of all races reveals that access to capital remains a thorny issue for the nation's one million minority female entrepreneurs.

"Here is a population that has tremendous economic potential for our country," said Sharon Hadary, executive director of The National Foundation for Women Business Owners, which conducted the study. "If they don't get the capital they need, our country is going to suffer."

While female-owned businesses, which number eight million, are being created at twice the rate of all businesses, those owned by minority women are being created at triple the rate.

Yet 18 percent of Hispanic female entrepreneurs, 27 percent of Blacks, and 20 percent of Asians were turned down for a bank loan when they started their business, the study said. That compares with 19 percent of White female business owners.

Half or fewer of minority female entrepreneurs currently have bank credit, compared with 60 percent of White female business owners, the telephone survey of 770 minority women revealed. Former banker Carmen Ramos had been the boss of her own successful business for six years when she applied for a \$50,000 business loan last year. Two banks turned her down.

"I don't want to shout discrimination," said Ramos, whose Washington, D.C. consulting business had \$250,000 in sales last year. "But I'm a woman and a Hispanic. It's much more difficult to get capital."

Of course, some businesswomen choose not

to try to obtain bank credit, opting instead to finance their businesses on their own.

Deborah Proctor started a food service business eight years ago in Florham Park, N.J. that now has revenues of \$10 million. But she started Acorn Services with \$4,000 in savings and has kept it running by funneling profits back into the company.

Three years ago, she got a line of credit from a bank, but to date hasn't drawn funds from it. In general, female business owners rely on personal credit cards to finance their businesses more often than men, according to a separate study.

Nearly 35 percent of female entrepreneurs finance their businesses using credit cards, compared with 20 percent of all male entrepreneurs, according to Dun & Bradstreet research released to The Associated Press. The data did not explore whether women or men used their credit cards by choice or because they

lacked access to other capital.

But however they finance their businesses, most minority women worry about capital, the National Foundation of Women Business Owners said. Two-thirds of minority female entrepreneurs—and nearly three-quarters of Black women—find access to capital an issue of concern.

"The money is out there, but getting it is hard," said Sylvia Woods, owner of a \$3 million Southern cooking and restaurant business based in New York City.

Even after 25 years in business, she had trouble getting bank loans in the early 1990s when she was trying to expand her business.

Ramos has been able to get small bank loans to purchase equipment and fill other needs, but she is still looking for a major line of credit.

"Based on my projections, I could triple my business, but I need the additional capital," she said. "The challenge is fierce."

## New foundation gives poor access to free legal services

### By Deborah Kohlen Sentinel-Voice

A special committee of the Eighth Judicial District Court has formed a new nonprofit foundation to help provide legal services to low-income residents.

A change in the state Supreme Court's Rule 191, which codifies lawyers' professional responsibilities, prompted the effort. The revised rule sets a goal for

Nevada attorneys: that they each provide 20 hours of free ("pro bono") legal assistance to the poor every year. The latin term, pro bono, means "for the good."

Though the Court revised its rule to encourage more pro bono work, the 20-hours per year goal is voluntary. To encourage attorneys to comply, the court set up a foundation to oversee the distribution of legal resources.

According to Family Court Judge Cynthia Dianne Steel, chairman of the foundation's board of trustees, the county's low-income residents are desperate for more free attorney representation.

Unfortunately, Steel said, "the legal profession has become so specialized that a high percentage of attorneys practice in areas of law that don't normally affect poor people," like tax law.

Attorneys who can't donate time have another option: donating money, \$500 a year to agencies providing free legal services to the poor.

The foundation collects the money from the attorneys, funneling it equally to designated organizations. In Southern Nevada, the Clark County Pro Bono Project, Clark County Legal Services, the Senior Citizens Law Project and Nevada Legal Services use

the funds.

Rule 191 also calls for the establishment of a committee in each of the state's judicial districts to help implement the state foundation's policies at the local level.

Las Vegas attorney Lynn Shoen, chairwoman of the Eighth Judicial District Court's pro bono committee and president of the Clark County Pro Bono Project, said that

most of the project's clients need assistance in family law.

"Last year," she said, "the Project had more than 12,000 requests for assistance, including several hundred from domestic violence victims." Only 10 percent of Clark County attorneys practice family law. Shoen hopes to attract more lawyers to volunteer, but said that the financial donations are just as good.

## Roach

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50% and A's are rare. "You need a lot of background to make it through them; women and minorities tend to be inadequately prepared," the instructor said. Since then, he has completed three semesters of engineering physics, the full calculus sequence, and the

majors' chemistry sequence.

Roach has consistently been the top student in these courses, Collins continued. "He leaves class with answers and comes back with questions. He has immense curiosity, and for us [instructors] in science, that makes the difference." A student like Roach, said

Collins, is the reason "why you teach."

Roach began taking science classes because they were required background for a degree in engineering, but ended up committed to scientific inquiry for the sake of intellectual delight. As to whether he will ultimately pursue the engineering degree or choose a new major in a science discipline, Roach is "leaving it open" for now. His favorite subject, he said, is the physics of electromagnetism.

"His mind is always engaged and always thinking about what he is learning and what it means," his instructors wrote in their report, continuing, "His open and friendly demeanor and command of the subject often cause other students to turn to him for help, and he eagerly

spends some of his precious time helping them.... Tyrone is surprisingly well-rounded for one so busy. He struggles to find time to maintain other interests and to find time for friends and family."

Roach takes this praise in stride. "I want to do the best I can, and I really want to understand the material," he said simply. Roach said he loves his instructors and maintains contact with them after their courses have ended. The admiration and affection are mutual. "He has had to sacrifice many things most young men value highly in the short range to accomplish long-range goals," they wrote.

This student is destined for success. Kudos.

## Youth training applications due

### Special to Sentinel-Voice

Trial by Peers is an internationally acclaimed program that trains students ages 12 to 17 to act as lawyers, bailiffs, court clerks and jury members in actual trials involving misdemeanor charges against juvenile defendants.

Cases to be tried by Peers are referred from Family and Youth Services and the Clark County School Police. Just as in regular court proceedings, the defendant may plead guilty or not guilty, and the peer court decides the verdict, assigning penalties that are carried out.

The program has been lauded in the press and on television for its effectiveness. Juvenile defendants are said to take more seriously the censure of their peers than that of adults. On the other end, students trained for involvement in the program learn about the law and about justice, compassion, consequences and assertiveness.

An eight-week training session administered by the county Bar Association is the admission ticket to this unique experience. This year's summer training classes will begin on June 9 and will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 - 8:15, ending on August 6. Admission to the program is, "first come - first served", and the deadline for applying is Thursday, June 4.

For information or applications, call 387-6011.

## Kappa

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citizens in our community," said Michael Garrett, the program's advisor. "Several of our young men have continued their education and have graduated from one of America's historic Black colleges."

At this year's Beautillion, fifteen young men will be honored and will "accept the challenge of adulthood," Garrett said.

Kappa Alpha Psi alumni who run the nationwide Guide Right program serve as mentors and role models to young men who may initially be wavering about their goals and lifestyles. Through meetings, planning, activities and education, these mentors guide the next generation to focus and step ahead in a positive, forward-looking direction.

Potential recruits, who hear about the program from its members, attend an interest meeting, followed by an interview in which they must present a ten-year plan for their lives. Entrance into the program is not automatic; recruits must demonstrate a readiness to accept and internalize a set of high standards for their appearance, demeanor, attitudes and achievements. "We run a tight ship here; you can make yourself or break yourself," Garrett says.

Personal grooming, wardrobe choices, manner of speech and academics are among the criteria for selection and inclusion in the program. Also, space is limited. The program is run by Garrett and director Larry Weekly, and can only accommodate a small group. "Our emphasis is on quality rather than quantity [of recruits]," said Garrett. Currently 150 young men are on the waiting list.

One of the reasons for the group's limited capacity is its annual long-distance field trips. Members are taken on educational trips to Washington, D.C., historic Black colleges

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