

BUSINESS

Women leading big surge in black buying power

Black America world's 13th richest entity

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The Chicago Defender

Black America's buying power continues to surge, with Blacks outspending White households in electronics, apparel and personal care services.

"The Buying Power of Black America," a report issued by Target Market News Inc., cites the growing economy and increased spending by Black women for the surge in Black family expenditures.

According to Ken Smikle, president of Target Market News, the two percent increase of Black women wage-earners between 1996 and 1997 contributed to increased spending.

"Black women, traditionally, are very instrumental in how a family spends," Smikle said. He said increased spending habits among women gives the rest of the family confidence in

buying more.

Moreover, Black women, Smikle said, "Traditionally spend increases (income) on their children as well as themselves."

In 1997, African-Americans earned \$392 billion, making them the 13th largest power bloc in the world. New York led with \$27 billion. Chicago was second with a total Black earned income at \$15.6 billion.

It was followed by Detroit at \$10 billion, Philadelphia at \$8.9 billion and Los Angeles at \$6.9 billion.

In 1997, Black men earned \$207 billion, compared to Black women at \$183 billion.

According to the study, spending on personal care services, including hair salons and spa care increased from \$2.2 billion in 1996 to \$3.3 billion in 1997. Cosmetic purchases soared by \$400 million and hair care



expenditures increased by \$113 million.

"Basically, every sector of the economy is going to be the beneficiary of Black women improving

financially," Smikle said.

He said that is an excellent opportunity for community-based Black businesses, many of which are service-oriented, to develop

marketing strategies to attract Black women. Purchases of technology and entertainment electronics also increased among Black households.

Acquisition of Internet

services skyrocketed among Blacks, from \$10 million in 1996 to \$60 million in 1997.

Blacks also out-spent Whites per capital in (See Women, Page 17)

Black artists have art restored

NEW YORK (AP) — One painting was covered with soot, the artist's name invisible. Restored, the image of a black butler working as a rare free man before the emancipation of slaves now shines from the canvas.

A mural of blacks who changed history had been rolled up for decades, creased and cracked. The huge 1940 canvas by Charles White, "Progress of the American Negro," now has a new life at the entrance to The Studio Museum in Harlem.

The paintings are part of "To Conserve a Legacy," a 200-work exhibit from six historically black American colleges — art repositories for generations of black Americans who had been excluded from the cultural mainstream.

The show is part of a \$1.3 million project that resulted in the restoration and documentation of 1,400 works belonging to the half dozen schools. As a result, students learned conservation techniques to which few had been exposed.

"I wondered why there were so few minorities in conservation," said Jock Reynolds, director of the Yale University Art Gallery, co-curator of the exhibit.

The exhibit's other main curator, Richard Powell, said the art reflects the modern American experience, "but it's not the story of American art you will get from a museum like the Whitney," the New York City museum specializing in American works.

"These are colleges founded after emancipation, and their concept was that of freedom."

The show documents the price of that freedom.

A section titled "American Expressionism"

shows the naked body of a black man who was lynched, his head twisted to one side, a noose around the broken neck. The 1936 wooden sculpture by Nat Werner hasn't been exhibited very much because the image is so graphic.

Another in-your-face painting, John Biggers' "Old Coffee Drinker" from 1945, depicts a man in tattered clothes with his toes sticking out of huge ragged shoes. He clutches his cup with world-weary stoicism.

Biggers' "wasn't interested in things pretty, but in the guts and grime," Powell said of the canvas that had been rolled up for years in the artist's Texas garage.

Other artists fascinated with the education of a newly freed people — in everything from agriculture to traditional academics — are exhibited in a section called "Training the Head, the Hand, and the Heart."

A series of photographs by Frances Benjamin Johnston, believed to be the first female press photographer, shows students at Hampton College, where blacks and Native Americans were both trying to enter American society.

Another pioneer educational institution for blacks was Tuskegee University in Alabama, established in 1881 by Booker T. Washington. The fine art collection he contributed to the school is part of the exhibition.

Many of the artists tapped into European traditions, while telling a quintessentially American story. "Young African-American artists began looking at their world using European techniques," Powell said.

He pointed to a marble sculpture in

(See Paintings, Page 10)

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Harry C. Alford

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