

## BUSINESS

# Black homeownership still trailing in South

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) - More than 30 years after struggling to win the right to vote and other basic freedoms, blacks in the South still trail far behind their white neighbors in realizing the dream of owning a home, new Census figures show.

Figures from the 16 states considered part of the South region by the U.S. Census show the homeownership rate among whites rose 2.7 percent since 1990, while the black homeownership rate rose by only 1.2 percent.

Overall, the homeownership rate among whites in the South is 74.9 percent; among blacks it is 51.2 percent.

"It clearly looks like that

in the South, African-Americans did not benefit from the boom of the 1990s in the area of homeownership," said Frank Howell, a sociology professor at Mississippi State University.

Over the past 20 years, the homeownership rate among blacks in the South has dropped almost 1 percent, while the white homeownership rate rose by 3 percent, Census figures show.

Not all Southern states had the same experience. Blacks actually increased their rate of homeownership at a faster pace than whites over the past 10 years in four states - Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina and Tennessee.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported last month that the national homeownership rate stood at 67.7 percent in the second quarter of this year, tying a record high set last year.

Race comparisons between the 2000 census and the counts in 1990 and before are not exact because in the latest census citizens were allowed for the first time to declare that they consider themselves of more than one race.

Howell said during the 1970s in Mississippi, for instance, as in many other Southern states, the homeownership rate among blacks shot up from 49 per-

cent to 59 percent, apparently a result of discriminatory barriers being removed.

"But not much has changed since then. I think most African-Americans would like to own a home, but don't have the cash," Howell said.

Martin Luther King III, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said the problem is partly the fault of banks making it harder for blacks to get loans or for anyone to get loans to buy homes in poorer, less-desirable neighborhoods.

"What this says is that African-Americans have not been able to access capital," King said.

Annie Corley, a black single mother of four, finally moved into a modest three-bedroom house of her own last year built with the help of Habitat for Humanity.

"Where I was staying was a bad place. I was so excited to get into this home," Corley said. "My kids love it. They have their own rooms."

Alabama state Sen. Charles Steele, a black Democrat from Tuscaloosa, said that homeownership in the South comes slower for blacks is a scar that dates back to slavery.

"The American dream did not include black folks. We are not part of the American dream," said Steele, president of the Alabama chapter of the

SCLC. "We've got to get folks knowing that we now are part of the American dream."

Baylor University sociologist Charles Tolbert said many blacks appear to be stuck behind the final hurdles of segregation in that "if someone doesn't fit the mode of homeownership, then they don't get the loan."

But Dan Bailey, the executive vice president of the Alabama Bankers Association, said the problem is not discrimination but economics.

"In Alabama we still see a segment of the population that's not keeping pace in education and training," he said.

## Business Exchange

By William Reed,  
Publisher of Who's Who in  
Black Corporate America.



## What ever happened to Yahweh Ben Yahweh?

Special to Sentinel-Voice

He's B-A-C-K... Well, Almost

Two renowned black religious leaders were recently released from "doing time." African-Americans recognize Rev. Al Sharpton as one, but only a few will realize that the other - Yahweh Ben Yahweh - was a force of even greater impact and accomplishment in Black America's empowerment.

Eleven years ago, Yahweh Ben Yahweh was tried and convicted of a racketeering conspiracy that he ran his church, the Nation of Yahweh, as a criminal enterprise. Federal prosecutors said Yahweh was involved in plotting 14 murders, two attempted murders and a firebombing. But they couldn't prove it in court. So they settled for a conspiracy conviction.

Once, a high-profile force in Miami, the Nation of Yahweh owned numerous white buildings and white vehicles until the murders were connected to the group and teachings of its founder. The government says it was these teachings that landed Yahweh Ben Yahweh (which means God, Son of God, in Hebrew) in prison for "conspiring to commit murder as part of a racketeering enterprise."

Before their leader's 1992 conviction, the Yahwehs were definitely enterprising. They owned a huge temple on Northwest 27th Avenue, a four-story apartment building, hotels on Biscayne Boulevard and the ocean, and numerous restaurants, supermarkets, retail stores and houses across the nation.

Always dressed head to toe in white; they also owned a hotel and restaurant in Atlanta, as well as hundreds of white cars, vans, buses and 18-wheeler trucks.

Yahweh Ben Yahweh leaves federal prison an almost-free man, having served 10 years of what many consider a bogus 18-year sentence.

Born Hulon Mitchell, Jr. in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, Yahweh is 65 years old. Yahweh was a protégé of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad at the same time as Louis (See Yahweh, Page 19)

## Broadband next wave of knowledge transfer

By Professor Sidney Morse  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Perhaps you have heard about the new engine of electronic delivery called broadband, poised to change our lives in virtually every way. Predicted a few years ago to explode, as a centerpiece of the media hype connected to the technology boom, businesses and consumers alike mostly took a "wait and see" approach and the rush for rich bandwidth, which is what broadband delivers, has been rather poor and sparse until now.

However, with the industry anticipated to spend some \$400 billion over the next three to four years developing and installing this new-age capability, and if it is paralleled by an overall economic recovery, a turn a bit unclear at the moment, signs are indicating that broadband will indeed become the "next wave of information and knowledge transfer."

Broadband use, according to a new study by Arbitron Inc. and Coleman, both experienced media research firms, is installed among nearly two-thirds of Internet users, or more than 80 mil-

lion folks.

According to the UCLA Internet Report released last fall, at projected rates of growth, there are about 130 million Internet users, almost seven times what it was, just three years ago.

The Arbitron report also indicates a rather stark difference between broadband users at work, registering two-thirds, compared to just one third at home and very little overlap of those that use it in both places.

There's also quite a bit of difference when comparing at-work use to home.

Businesses are largely using it to import and transfer data and information that can feed strategic decision-making systems that go right to bottom-line performance.

The home market is focused on capturing rich media entertainment on computers and television sets.

The term multi-tasking has also emerged as a result of this new capability in which computer users are able to listen to stored-file music or radio while performing other tasks.

Much attention has been given to what is commonly referred to as "the last mile"

issue, installation of this high-speed tool, namely, which companies between telephone service providers, cable television firms and others will be able to provide service to homes.

And while that sector is considered a very lucrative market, businesses are thought to offer the most opportunity for the higher-end services broadband can deliver, such as "streaming media" and "streaming audio," content rich mediums carrying a wide array of information and knowledge transfer options.

The contenders-the cable television industry, with nearly 65 percent of the nation having service; direct broadcast satellite, (DBS) with some 15 million subscribers; and other wireless platforms such as cellular phones and personal digital assistants-are all positioning for the wave that will no doubt be huge.

Further, anticipation of this enriched capability has aroused development toward a myriad of convergence paths in which computers will be enabled for television viewing and vice-versa, all while conversing with some-

one in a far-off distant land through video and voice recognition.

The change will be intense, to say the least. It is estimated that at least 100 million people will have a need for high-speed data connection between now and 2005.

With "next generation" cellular already being tested in a variety of venues and the current installed base of broadband approaching those numbers even now, it is not difficult to see these estimates as conservative.

Clearly, the installation of broadband will deliver new forms of communication and knowledge transfer previously only filling the crevices of our imagination.

Now, electronic reality will have a voice, a face and much, much more.

And while the overall percent of urban homes with computers has risen to 51.5 percent, just under a quarter of African-Americans and Latinos have access to the Internet.

The installation of broadband, a next generation level of participation, could easily pass "Urban America" by if (See Broadband, Page 17)

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