

# Black news outlets shortchanged on ads

**By Katherine Stapp**  
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
NEW YORK (NNPA) — Although largely ignored by advertisers, ethnic radio, television and newspapers in the United States now reach 64 million people, about half of whom prefer these independent voices to corporate-run mass media, according to the first nationwide assessment of foreign-language media.

"This is a truly groundbreaking study," said Karen Lawson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, which commissioned the study with New California Media and the Centre for American Progress.

"It quantifies what we all believed to be true — that ethnic media has a great leadership role, even more than we thought," she said in a conference call with reporters.

The poll surveyed 1,850 Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American, Arab

American and Native American adults, representing 64 million ethnic and racial minorities — about a quarter of the entire U.S. adult population. The interviews were conducted in 10 languages: Arabic, Cantonese, English, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

Sandy Close, executive director of New California Media, noted that advertisers spend about \$145 billion a year courting U.S. consumers, but just 3 percent to 4 percent goes to the ethnic media. "This makes a compelling case that it should be upwards of 24 percent," she said.

Already one in four Californians are foreign-born, and U.S. Census figures show that states like Nevada and Georgia have seen their foreign-born populations grow by more than 100 percent in the past 10 years.

Ethnic media also serves about 40 million people in traditional minority commu-

nities like African-American and Native American.

"This is not just a poll of immigrants but of all people who consider themselves part of these five groups," said Sergio Bendixen, whose firm conducted the poll. "It speaks to the need for government officials and political leaders to take ethnic media into consideration when they have press conferences and give access to the media," he said. "In many instances, they don't take ethnic media seriously."

The poll found that 45 percent of all African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, Native American are "primary consumers" of ethnic media, meaning that 29 million adults, or 13 percent of the entire adult population of the United States, use it as their main news source.

More than half of all Hispanic adults are primary consumers of ethnic media, while two-fifths of African-Americans and Arab American

Americans and Native Americans prefer ethnic media to mainstream.

"There are two important lessons here," Bendixen said. "People tend to utilize the ethnic media to find out about what's going on in their native country, but when it comes to covering U.S. politics and government, there is a low level of information."

"The ethnic media needs to make a more aggressive effort to cover U.S. government policies, elections, etc," he said.

Among Asian-Americans, pollsters questioned subgroups of Indians, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese, while Hispanics were broken down into Central Americans, Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and South Americans.

The study found that the Spanish-language media is especially popular, with 87 percent of all Hispanic adults accessing Spanish-language radio, newspapers and television stations like Univision and Telemundo on a regular basis. Nearly a third of Hispanic adults report that they now prefer Spanish-language newspapers to their English-

language counterparts.

While less than a quarter of Hispanics have access to the Internet, Arab Americans have the highest level of connectivity of any group studied, with three-quarters of all Arab American adults having access to the Internet and a majority of them regularly visiting Arabic websites.

"Ethnic groups are not monolithic, they vary in their media consumption," Lawson said. "This information will help us more effectively target communities most affected by government policies, and to increase coverage of civil rights and racial justice issues."

Among African-Americans, radio stations that focus on Black themes and content are the most popular medium, although the reach of African-American newspapers is also considerable. Even though African-Americans read mainstream daily newspapers more often, the Black press reaches 57 percent of all African-Americans. Almost half of African-American adults have access to the Internet.

Among Asian-Americans, about 80 percent of all Korean, Chinese and Viet-

namese adults read an ethnic newspaper on a regular basis, while more than half of Asian, Indian, Filipino and Japanese adults read an ethnic newspaper a few times a month or more.

Meanwhile, Korean and Chinese television stations are rapidly increasing in popularity, with a quarter of respondents saying they watched Korean and Chinese-language television more often than English-language television. Access to the Internet is very high (67 percent) among all Asian-Americans, and half of them prefer ethnic websites to mainstream websites.

"This poll is a remarkable portrait of the central role ethnic media now plays in the journalism landscape," Close concluded.

"However, we need even more national news, commentary and analysis, which require the ability to cover Sacramento, Calif., or Washington, D.C.," she added. "I'm very aware of the difficulties given the absence of robust advertising, but it's not the blogs [Internet weblogs] that are the cutting edge of journalism, its ethnic media."

## Activists

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to break from the Democratic Party.

"I think that's something that would be too extreme of a position to take right now," says University of Maryland Political Scientist Ron Walters, who was an organizer of the 1972 Gary convention and is helping to strategize for the March gathering.

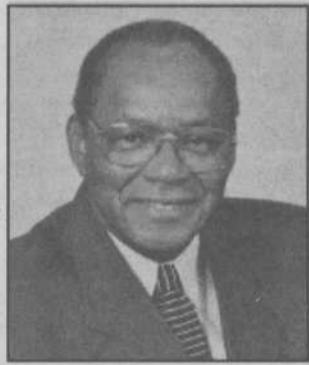
Walters, who said the deal on the judges was clear reason for Black Democrats to start a new movement, says he learned a lesson during the organization of a National Black Independent Political Party in 1980.

"It was probably a mistake to try to challenge Blacks with leaving the Democratic Party and dropping their basic political identification. That's a losing proposition because Blacks have too much invested in that."

The debate over a third party, in part, caused the movement to fall apart in 1980. Many participants then joined the Rainbow Coalition, the base of the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson Sr.

Jackson backs Lucy's call for a new Gary convention.

"The women's struggle for the right to vote was independent. The labor struggles of the 1930s were independent. The 1955 bus boycott against segregation



*"I think without question, the overwhelming majority of the Black voters still favor the Democratic Party and its Democratic policy platform."*

— William Lucy

was independent. We must build an independent political struggle that will define priorities and behavior of both parties," Jackson said in a statement.

Walters said the upcoming convention will focus on developing an effective strategy.

"This one is not expected to be totally a political convention in the nature of the Gary convention," Walters says.

"I would not think it requires Blacks dropping the Democratic Party identification. We don't have a political institution. We need it for strategy making. We need it for mobilization. We need it for fund-raising. What happens is that it becomes a vehicle that can be used for bargaining and these things are done in the interest of the Black community."

Lucy says it hasn't been decided whether someone from either major party will be invited to address the event. He says, "This is not

being billed as a partisan activity."

Although no exact date has not been set, it is expected that the convention will take place next March.

Former Democratic presidential candidate Al Sharpton, who, at 18, was among the youngest to attend the 1972 convention, says the convention is crucial.

"If there ever was a time that we need to come back together and come up with a collective political strategy, now is the time," Sharpton said.

"The problem is that we keep analyzing how bad we're doing, but, we're not saying what we're going to do about it. So, it's like getting a diagnosis from the doctor, but the doctor is not telling you how you're going to treat the ailment. What must come out of this is 'Whereas we have these problems, therefore, we're going to do this at this time, and this [person or group] will be responsible for it,'" he suggested.

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