

# Agencies

(Continued from Page 6) suggested that African-Americans dial the 800-number listed on their favorite products and ask two questions: How much money did you spend with Black media last year? How much did you give to Black non-profit organizations?

He wants people to forward the replies they receive to his email address:

Ken@TargetMarketNews.com and he will post the findings on his website.

After previously meeting with NNPA publishers, Sen. Kerry asked the Government Accountability Office to investigate the paucity of federal advertising dollars spent with Black media.

One GAO report showed that seven federal agencies spent \$1.62 billion on media

contracts between 2003 and the first half of 2005; another half dozen or so did not report their media-related expenditures. Kerry has requested a report from the GAO seeking to find out how much federal money was spent with Black media.

In 2000, Bill Clinton issued an executive order directing all federal agencies to "take an aggressive role in

ensuring substantial minority-owned entities' participation in federal advertising-related procurements."

"Not once in five years has this administration met the federal contracting targets," Kerry said. "Not once. And not only do they not meet them, they even leave Homeland Security, which is a huge proportion of federal spending, completely out of the measurement. So their statistics are not even honest."

Kerry said, "I can tell you from my experience on the SBA [committee], these folks just don't care about those goals and standards. To the degree that they care, they care about finding a way to make an end run around the executive orders or avoid their responsibilities."

Al Sharpton, president of the National Action Network, set up a Madison Avenue initiative in 1999 after receiving a memo from a top radio insider.

"The memo said in direct language, 'Do not buy Black and Latino radio. We want prospects, not suspects.'"

Looking at the radio industry, Sharpton said that even when African-Ameri-

can radio stations are No. 1 in their markets, they do not receive advertising commensurate with their ratings.

"We found that people with the highest percentage of listeners had the lowest percentage of ad dollars," he said. "That's how our Madison Avenue initiative started."

Black newspaper and broadcast owners, along with Black ad agencies, complain that the advertising industry spends the overwhelming majority of its budget with White-owned outlets, putting aside token amounts for African-American publications and agencies. Even worse, they are hiring major White-owned agencies at an increasing rate to provide racially sensitive ads previously handled by Black agencies.

"The so-called mainstream budgets — general market budgets — are not given to Black agencies, which means you have an official policy of apartheid in the advertising world," Sharpton noted.

"What they have said is that Black people are not general market. In many of these businesses, we are their

general market consumers. In many businesses, we are 20-, 30- and 40 percent of your market, but we're some kind of minority when it comes to how you deal with ad dollars," Sharpton explained.

"The agencies have to fight over 2 to 3 percent of the ad budget, when we're much more of the consumer budget than that. If we're going to be your general market consumer, we ought to have some of those general market contracts," he continued.

Sharpton urged Congress to hold hearings on the unfairness in advertising.

"I just want the CEOs of these companies to put their hand on the Bible and the other in the air and answer the questions, because you can't say, 'I don't remember my budget.' We'll have it for you. We'll refresh your memory.

"They have to answer or they'd be in contempt," Sharpton said. "And I would love to help drag some of them out of there for being in contempt of Congress. That would be an activist's joy; that would be like one of you getting a major contract."

# Dropouts

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close gaps, because too few dropouts take part, said Barbara Ischinger, director of education for the OECD.

"Those with poor initial qualifications remain disadvantaged throughout their life, because they have fewer opportunities to catch up later on," she said.

About one-third of students in the United States don't finish high school on time — or at all. Estimates on that dropout rate vary, though, and state data are often shaky.

The importance of a high school degree on income varies across nations. It depends on the demands for skills, the supply of workers, minimum wage laws and the strength of unions.

The disparity is more pronounced in the United States, Ischinger said, partly because the U.S. labor market is more flexible. Other nations protect people with weak education qualifications through regulations or tax systems that favor the low skilled, she said.

On the other end of the spectrum, however, the United States more richly rewards those who go to college.

An adult with a university degree in the U.S. earns, on average, 72 percent more than someone with a high school degree. That's a much bigger difference than in most countries.

The study compares the United States to 29 other nations that belong to the economic organization, although not every country reported data on every indicator.

In perspective, the U.S. economy remains strong and competitive, the report says. The country has a high proportion of educated adults and greater gender equality than other nations.

But a troubling theme of the last couple years continues: The United States is losing ground internationally because other countries are making faster and bigger gains.

The high school and college graduation rates of recent U.S. students are now below the international average.

For example, among adults age 25 to 34, the U.S. ranks 11th among nations in the share of its population that has finished high school. It used to be first.

The United States remains, by far, the most popular place for international students to study. But there, too, the U.S. is losing its market share of students studying abroad.

When it comes to money, the nation remains a big spender. From elementary school through college, the United States spends an average of \$12,023 per student. That's higher than in all countries in the comparison except for Switzerland.

# Districts

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multitasked, and they can look at many issues. But, they are special because they bring to the table people that have never been brought to the table whether or not they represent a state or a small district."

Some political observers don't believe the Black community will automatically lose because more Blacks seek seats formerly held by Whites.

"We have a commonality of interest in many issues with people who are not African-Americans, and coalition politics is a very important part of our growth and transformation. Now, having said that, it's very important that as people seek to move up and beyond, that we remember that our base of our support [will remain] on those places that have been overwhelmingly African-American," said Marc Morial, president and CEO

of the National Urban League and former mayor of predominately Black New Orleans.

"The essence of our growth in politics is that we transcend just being limited to the majority African-American districts... If we don't go beyond just majority African-American, our political influence will never grow. And I think that our political transformation ought to be that we have African-Americans who can represent all people."

Some have done just that.

"You've got to run as who you are," said U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), who represented overwhelmingly White districts in Virginia's House and Senate.

"I don't think that I compromised any of my principles based on who I was serving. You've got to run as who you are and say what you believe."

Besides, he added, "There

are very few Black issues. There's education; everybody's for education. Crime prevention; everybody's for crime prevention. Even civil rights; everybody can be for civil rights."

Harvard law professor and civil rights and political activist Charles Ogletree predicts such campaigns will only increase.

"We are hoping that in the 21st century, we are going to have a significant number of African-Americans — not one or two — that will be elected when the people who voted for them were majority-minority," Ogletree said.

"We see that with Barack Obama. We hope to see it with Harold Ford. We've seen it with Barbara Lee. It is a rarity. But if we're ever going to have a real democracy, people have to be elected based on their talents and merits, and race should not be a prohibitive factor."

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