

# Offerings hope to extend the 'Oprah effect'

Loyal African-American viewers 'not as cynical,' more receptive to ad messages

By HILLARY CHURA

ADVERTISERS LOOKING to reach a specific group of viewers through syndicated fare needn't stop at syndie daytime's traditional strength with women. Syndication also is a particularly good channel for reaching African-Americans.

Among talk shows listed on the Web site of the Syndicated Network Television Association, three out of 10 have black hosts—the most prominent, of course, being King World Productions' "The Oprah Winfrey Show," the No. 3-rated program in syndication for the current season through Jan. 30.

Among six court-themed shows listed on the Web site, half have African-Americans sitting on the bench, including Paramount Domestic Television's "Judge Joe Brown," which Nielsen Media Research places in a three-way tie for 15th in syndication ratings this season. Meanwhile, the 2000 census showed that blacks make up 12.3% of the U.S. population.

The percentage in syndication is less striking when all other first-run and off-network shows are folded into the mix. About 7%—or 12 of 163 syndicated shows in the U.S.—feature blacks as hosts or in other prominent starring roles, SNTA figures indicate.

Among new offerings getting attention during this season of NATPE and SNTA conferences are talk shows starring supermodel Tyra Banks, from Time Warner's Telepictures Productions, and Howard Stern sidekick Robin Quivers, from Sony Pictures Television.

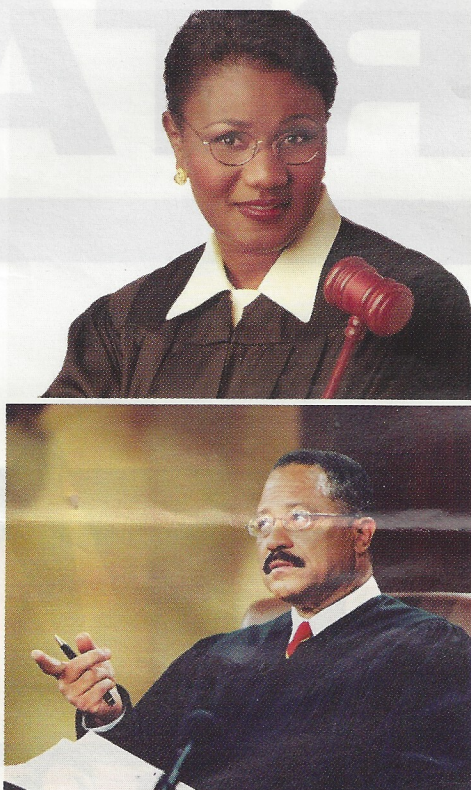
## 8.7% OF U.S. BUYING POWER

Meanwhile, African-American spending power is expected to reach \$964.6 billion by 2009, up from the current \$723.1 billion in 2004, according to the University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth. These numbers predict blacks will supply 8.7% of the country's buying power by the end of the decade—up from 8.4% last year—while the influence of whites will continue to drop to 81% by '09.

"What is compelling about the African-American consumer market is the fast-paced growth. This is an opportunity to tap into fast-paced growth in our own back yard. You don't have to go overseas," says Jeff Humphreys, director of the Selig Center. "There are niches in the U.S. consumer market that exhibit very rapid growth ... They have tremendous buying power, and it's not necessarily recognized."

"Blacks are drawn very strongly to shows that are black in nature, and they are very strong viewers," says Ed Papazian, president of

## TOP 10 SYNDICATED SHOWS AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICANS



Judge Mablean Ephriam and Judge Joe Brown are afternoon staples.

PROGRAM	HOUSEHOLD RATING
Wheel of Fortune	10.5
The Oprah Winfrey Show	10.2
Divorce Court	10.1
Judge Judy	10.0
Judge Mathis	9.7
World Wrestling Entertainment	9.6
Judge Joe Brown	9.6
Mauri	9.1
ESPN NFL Regular Season	8.8
Girlfriends	8.6

Notes: For period of Aug. 30, 2004-Jan. 30, 2005. See charts on Page S-4 for syndicators of six of these shows. Twentieth Television syndicates "Divorce Court"; Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution, "Judge Mathis"; WWE, "World Wrestling Entertainment"; and Paramount Domestic Television, "Girlfriends."

Source: Nielsen Media Research

publisher Media Dynamics. "The average black consumer who buys your product category is two times as likely to be receptive to advertising as white consumers ... They are not as cynical or jaded."

Research by Horizon Media, New York, indicated African-American households watched an average of 10 hours of TV per day

in 2000, compared with 7.5 hours of all TV households.

"It stands to reason that if you put on shows with a predominant African-American cast, you get African-American viewers," says Brad Agate, senior VP-director of research at Horizon Media.

Bob Thompson, professor of pop culture at Syracuse University, attributes the strong showing on syndicated talk shows to the "Oprah effect," as Ms. Winfrey has spun off books, movies, a magazine, clothing and accessories. She now ranks as one of the richest women in show business and among the most powerful black executives in the country.

At SNTA, President Mitch Burg says: "Syndicated shows have diversity. We have diversity beyond ethnic diversity—young and old, male and female. We have programming for practically every group of people."

Mr. Burg says 50 shows out of 163 attract a greater percentage of black viewers than their percentage of the overall population. SNTA represents all major distributors except Sony.

## HISPANIC ATTENTION

Hispanics will receive the next wave of attention from syndicators, Mr. Burg says, as is evidenced by the off-net arrival of "The George Lopez Show" via Walt Disney Co.'s Buena Vista Television, as well as new first-run show "Judge Alex." The court program from News Corp.'s Twentieth Television is presided over by Miami-Dade jurist Alex Ferrer.

Though Mr. Burg says more than 70% of syndicated shows are first-run, "Soul Train" creator Don Cornelius and others maintain syndication is weighted down with off-net situation comedies from the six broadcast networks that employ little black talent.

"The problem seems to be that networks do not feature a whole hoard of black stars, and once these shows go into syndication, the problem is to some extent exacerbated," says Mr. Cornelius, whose Don Cornelius Productions has built an entire portfolio of "Soul Train"-titled programs for syndication.

Though integrating the executive ranks at networks and syndicators would lead to better ethnic representation, this niche market may not be so niche on the airwaves.

"African-American characters have been hugely successful," Mr. Thompson says. "It's hardly like 'Oh, African-American—that's risky.' It's not a fringe pop culture type of thing. It's not as though this stuff hasn't proved to be successful" with classics ranging from "Good Times" to "The Cosby Show."

Blacks have a solid place in first-run syndication and that may grow, but it could also taper off, says Dick Askin, president-CEO of Tribune Co.'s Tribune Entertainment, long-time syndicator of "Soul Train." Casting trends tend to be cyclical, he says, and the number of shows with African-American leads may decrease as syndicators choose to run mainstream off-net comedies for an additional sixth night rather than just five evenings a week.

"It may be more difficult to foresee a growth of minority-oriented programming ... Often a sixth run of a sitcom is going to get a higher rating and be more lucrative than most first-run shows," Mr. Askin says. "For a new show starting out, trying to vie for a time period, and comparing that with a sixth run of a sitcom is a pretty easy decision [for executives deciding on airtime]. Chances for success are certainly on the side of the off-net sitcom."