

ment to ignore them as a potential market," says Thad Malesh, an auto industry analyst with consulting firm J.D. Power and Associates.

"You're seeing more and more advertising that generally is targeting groups, whether it's by race or by income," Malesh says.

Selling to African Americans is more complicated than merely replacing white models and actors in general market ads with black ones, according to Valerie Graves, a former advertising executive.

"Generally speaking, African Americans are motivated more by certain types of advertising than the general market," says Graves, an African American who until recently worked for UniWorld, a black advertising agency in Manhattan. She says black consumers are more likely to patronize businesses that are seen as "good corporate citizens," a perception Nissan sought to cultivate with its NAACP contribution, according to Graves.

Another commonly used strategy is to air ads depicting blacks in a positive light, a move that would just seem to be common sense. "To an African-American consumer, that image has resonance because there are so many negative images of African Americans that we see in the news and other forms of popular culture," Graves says.

It's hard to believe that as recently as 1989 a number of Japanese and German carmakers steadfastly refused to buy air time on black radio stations, says black radio executive Tony Washington. That situation has been rectified dramatically. "Finally people are realizing that the black consumer is a valuable customer," observes Washington, who manages three radio stations in Washington, D.C.

Radio isn't the only medium where automakers have seen the light, so to speak. On television and in black publications scores of African Americans are now seen cheerfully extolling the virtues of Buicks, Cadillacs, Fords and Toyotas, to name a few makes.

And when balladeer Barry White recently crooned his way away across the United States during a cross-country tour, he did so with Jeep sponsorship. In fact Jeep's parent company, Chrysler, is frequently cited as the automaker most adept at going after African-American business with special promotions, black ad agencies and black media.

Chrysler's ads for the black market are created by an African-American ad agency, Don Coleman & Associates, which is given considerable latitude in formulating the creative message.

"An example would be the Dodge Caravan spot we recently



*Chevrolet features blacks in a variety of situations that appeal to them on the small screen.*

did," says Christine MacKenzie, Chrysler's corporate advertising manager. "The campaign for the general market literally had no people involved. It was a case of, 'Here is the product and here are the product's features.'

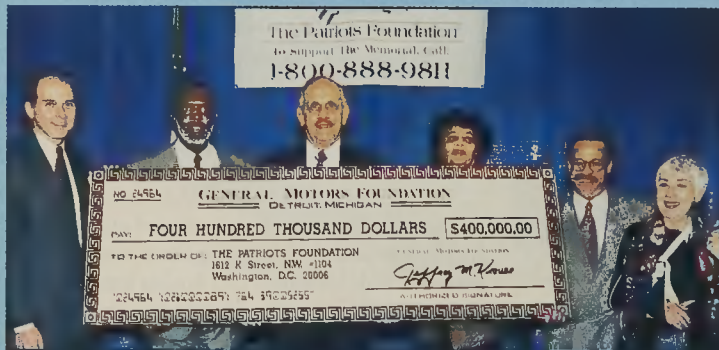
"Don Coleman advised us to stay away from that approach.

They said we needed to show how it is very attuned to the family and how it is versatile and can be utilized from a family and human point of view. Show some warmth and lifestyle."

The end result of Chrysler's efforts? The Jeep brand's share of the black market has increased from 10 percent in 1992 to 14 percent.

Automakers may have rediscovered African Americans when it comes to luring them into showrooms, but blacks are still all but invisible in executive suites and when it comes to owning dealerships.

"We've got a ways to go," Nissan executive Florence acknowledges. "But I feel pretty confident that we have the right kind of focus and the right kind of perspective on this. As you deal with a more highly segmented marketplace, you need to make sure you have the kind of diversity to take advantage of that."



*Demonstrating its focus on the black community, General Motors presents a check to the Black Patriots Foundation.*