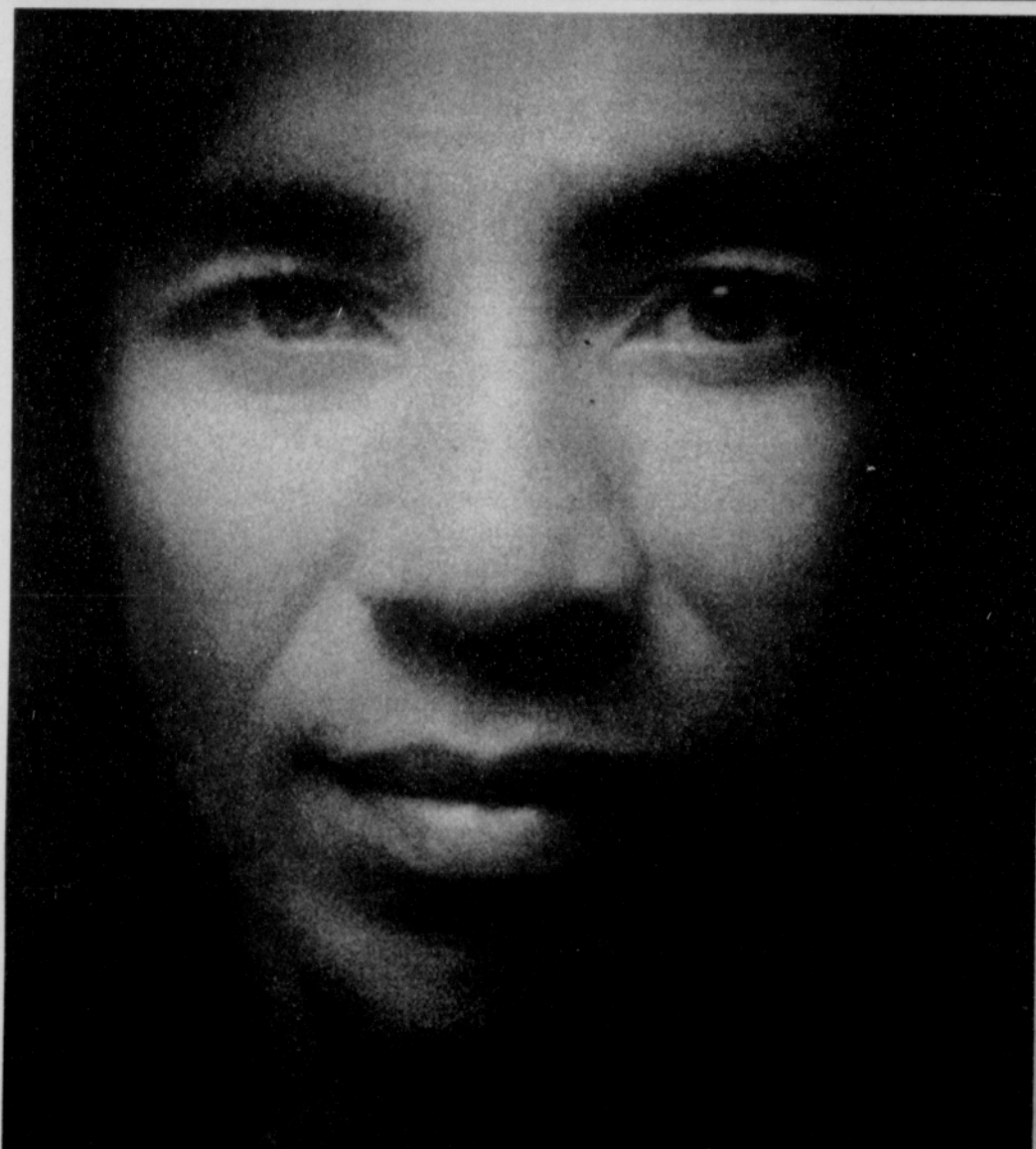


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## Vender Finds Ethnic Niche

Frustrated at trying to find what she thought were simple ethnic items, one enterprising entrepreneur has stumbled upon a niche in the \$60 billion catalog industry.

Yuwanda Black, founder of EthnicHomeDecor.com and EthnicVendors.com, published the first Ethnic Vendors Holiday Catalog this November.

Black feels strong that in order to capture this emerging base with surging spending power, more companies must first market directly to ethnic consumers - and that means introducing products and services that appeal to their culture.

Her catalog features an array of products — from hand painted wall hangings imported from Uganda to a barbecue grilling rack.

Asked if the catalog targets African Americans exclusively, Yuwanda

states, "I am asked that question a lot — and the answer is no. To explain, we seek products and services that appeal to an ethnic audience, but the product itself doesn't have to be ethnic."

"One day, I hope to be able to find mudcloth pillows as easily as I encounter floral designs. So, that happens," she said.



Yuwanda Black

## Beautiful Year for Usher

(AP)—Usher dominated the Billboard Awards last week from the moment he opened the show by dropping from the ceiling until the evening's final tally, when he counted up 11 awards to lead all contenders.

Usher's awards included artist of the year, R&B/hip-hop album of the year for "Confessions" and Hot 100 single of the year for "Yeah!" featuring Lil Jon and Ludacris.

"2004 was beautiful for me," Ushersaid. "2005—there's more in store."

The 26-year-old singer opened the show with a blast, dropping in on a cord to perform "Bad Girl" while a bevy of beautiful women clad in white parkas, briefs and snow boots gyrated around him.



Usher dominates the 2004 Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas. (AP photo)

R&B crooner Alicia Keys picked up seven awards during the award's show, which was held at the MGM Grand hotel-casino. Kanye West, who has a leading 10 Grammy nominations, picked up four Billboard awards, including rap artist of the year. 50 Cent won a new award, cell phone ringtone of the year, for "In Da Club."