

# Washington Business

## Local Enterprise

### Spotlighting 'Business Owners'

*One Woman Takes to the Airwaves to Dispel Myths About Blacks*

**William F. Powers**

Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington media entrepreneur Gloria Borland does not strike you as an angry person. Not as she buzzes around her tiny office on M Street NW, popping videocassettes in and out of the recorder, rhapsodizing about her ambitious plan to lead a worldwide cable network.

But angry she was when she started her television show, "The Business Owners," currently running on more than 100 PBS stations nationwide plus numerous cable networks. The show just started its third season of 13 broadcasts and can be seen on local PBS stations. Check listings for times.

Borland, 37, has been starting and running businesses since her graduation from George Washington University. Yet people always seem surprised to meet a black woman entrepreneur, she said, as if it doesn't seem quite possible.

"They don't say it, but I can see they're stunned. You can read it on their faces," Borland said.

Several years ago, she said, she got fed up with that reaction, and with the way she felt the media pigeon-holed blacks as either criminals or entertainers, but never as successful CEOs.

So she came up with "The Business Owners" as a corrective. Aimed at dissolving stereotypes, the show profiles black entrepreneurs through a film biography and interviews.

About 50 half-hour shows have been produced, and the program has acquired a national following—Borland said she receives stacks of mail—for its portraits of people such as Wally Amos, founder of Famous Amos Cookies; Cathy Hughes, who controls Radio One, parent company of a number of radio stations; and Kenneth Wilson, chief executive of Baltimore Inner Harbor Marina.

The show has attracted funding from Washington Gas Light Co. and the Wall Street Journal, its chief underwriters, among others. Those two

companies receive on-air credit in exchange for financial backing, which Borland said can run from \$8,000 to \$12,000 per company per episode.

Borland won't say how much money she brings in but said that "The Business Owners" breaks even.

Meanwhile, Borland has other ventures cooking. Single and intensely dedicated to her career, she seems to thrive on daunting projects, all of which have some connection to her business life. During the 1992 presidential campaign, she was Ross Perot's campaign director for the District. She liked Perot for his entrepreneurial philosophy but was disillusioned with him when he dropped out of the race.

She has also run three marathons and more than 10 triathlons, the last one in August. Why? "I do triathlons not to win, but because they're [about] endurance. As an entrepreneur you have to have endurance."

Now she is focused on creating a new cable network called Global Village, featuring shows on businesses and cultures of foreign countries. Bor-



BY TOM ALLEN—THE WASHINGTON POST

**Gloria Borland's television show profiles black entrepreneurs.**

land has run pilots on four cable systems in the Washington area that consisted of movies and news shows from abroad. With the help of an investment banker, she is trying to raise \$50 million from investors to launch the network.

John Mansell, a senior analyst who specializes in the television business for the consulting firm of Paul Kagan Associates Inc., said that starting a new cable network is risky, partly be-

cause crucial access to satellite and cable systems is not guaranteed. "If she's able to get \$50 million, I give her a better chance," he said.

The irrepressible Borland shows not a trace of concern. She cited the humble beginnings of the Bethesda-based Discovery Channel, one of her role models, and said, "I really think it's my purpose to put programs out there that can help people understand the world better."