



BET Founder Robert L. Johnson Releases National Black Opinion Poll

The Zogby poll surveys African-Americans on Obama and social and economic issues.

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Robert L. Johnson, founder and chairman of The RLJ Companies and founder of Black Entertainment Television, wanted to know whether African-Americans feel better off since President Obama was first elected, so he commissioned a poll. Johnson released the findings of his national survey, conducted by Zogby Analytics, at a National Press Club event Tuesday afternoon.

In addition to rating Obama, respondents answered questions about Black unemployment, immigration, gay rights and other issues.

"I didn't know of any other organization that has recently conducted a poll targeted to African-Americans with this combination of social, economic and political questions, so I decided to do it," Johnson said. "I wanted to create a discussion within the Black community and the broader community to bring to the forefront of public debate key issues of primary concern to African-Americans."

Not surprisingly, Obama received a 91 percent favorable rating. In addition, 72 percent said his election has helped them.

Thirty percent said they are financially better off than they were four years ago and 25 percent said that African-Americans generally are doing better. A majority, at 53 percent, believe that Obama's presidency has been positive for race relations.

When asked why they believe Black unemployment is double that of whites, 50 percent pointed to the failure of the education system for minorities and African-Americans; 48 percent cited a lack of corporate commitment to hiring minorities/African-Americans; and 25 percent said it's due to a lack of good government policies.

Johnson also attempted to gauge how African-Americans feel about the Latino population that is growing in both size and political influence.

The poll found that 63 percent of Blacks favor a path to full citizenship in 10 years for undocumented Latinos, but 16 percent said it should never happen. Fifty-one percent said that Latinos "will achieve greater economic

growth than African-Americans over the next five years," because they face less racism and are given more opportunity and better education.

In his remarks, Johnson recalled a speech Obama delivered during his recent trip to Israel in which he noted that despite their historic struggle, African-Americans have held onto the "hope that a better day was on the horizon." Johnson cautioned that hope should not be blind.

"My concern and maybe even fear [is] that if this faith-like hope or 'promise of a better day on the horizon' is not rewarded with real and measurable economic change during and after the Obama presidency, the failure to do so could ... result in a major shift from hope to despair for millions of African-Americans who today look at this nation in the age of Obama and say 'our glass is half-filled and we are still hopeful.'"

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