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## Latest Winthrop ETV Poll Surveys African Americans in 11 Southern States

### Quick Facts

- African Americans polled about race relations, equal opportunities and the president.
- Data shows mix of fear and optimism.



*Scott Huffman*

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The results of the groundbreaking [Winthrop/ETV Poll](#), conducted exclusively among **African Americans** in 11 Southern states between Feb. 6 and Feb. 22, are in.

Taken just days after President Barack Obama's inauguration, the poll asked southern African Americans about everything from the state of race relations and equal opportunities, to their expectations of the Obama presidency, and how he might handle certain issues facing the nation.



*Adolphus Belk Jr.*

The results were exclusively during the Thursday, Feb. 26 edition of South Carolina ETV's "**The Big Picture**" program at 7:30 p.m. ET. ETV is the public television and radio network in South Carolina.

The Winthrop/ETV Poll was conducted among 659 African Americans from AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA. Data utilizing all respondents has a margin of error of plus/minus 3.82 percent. As is true with all survey data, any results that use a subset of the respondents will have a higher margin of error. States are sub-divided as follows: Deep South: AL, GA, LA, MS, SC. Peripheral South: AR, FL, NC, TN, TX, VA.

The survey was designed by **Dr. Scott Huffman**, director of the Winthrop/ETV Poll initiative, and **Dr. Adolphus Belk, Jr.**, director of the African American Studies program at Winthrop University.

Commenting on the results, **Huffman** said, "The data show an interesting mix of both fear and optimism among African Americans across the South. On the one hand concerns about the economy and unemployment were overwhelmingly listed as the most important issues facing our country. On the other hand, despite the spiraling economic crisis, 7 out of 10 felt that the country was on the right track. This is nearly a mirror image of the national trend. I think this figure demonstrates the hopefulness of southern African Americans with respect to the direction of the country in the wake of the election of Barack Obama.

"However the trust and optimism shown for the Obama administration clearly do not emanate from expectations of preferential treatment. None of the African Americans surveyed believe that the policies of the Obama administration will favor blacks over whites. Instead, there is near-universal agreement in the opinion that blacks and whites will be treated the same."

Adds **Belk**, "The poll results clearly indicate that southern African Americans are satisfied with President Obama and the way he is handling issues of the day. But there is something going on with race relations in the South and the nation overall.

"We asked people to compare where they are today versus in the 1960s. Some 60.3 percent say, 'Yes, there's real progress in America,' but that number drops almost 10 points when Deep South respondents looked at progress only in the South."

Among the **Winthrop/ETV Poll** findings:

- With other polls finding Pres. Obama's approval rating hovering around or below the 60-percent mark, African Americans in the South give the new president a 90 percent approval rating. Congress, however, comes in at under 36 percent approval.
- When asked about the current path that our nation is taking, 70 percent of African Americans living in the South feel that the country is on the right track.
- Despite feeling that the country is headed in the right direction, a full 85 percent said that they would rate the national economy as very or fairly bad.
- Overwhelmingly, the two most important issues facing the U.S. today are the economy and unemployment. Such hot button topics as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, health care, energy and immigration barely registered with respondents.
- Almost 75 percent of the poll's respondents not only think that the election of Barack Obama will open up more opportunities for blacks in America, but that his election will also lead to more real progress in getting rid of discrimination.
- Over 96 percent of those polled feel that the policies of President Obama's administration will treat both blacks and whites the same. Slightly more than one-quarter feel that the poor will be favored over the rich.
- While over 52 percent of all respondents say there has been a lot of real progress in getting rid of racial discrimination against blacks in the South since the 1960s, over 50 percent also believe that race relations in the South are generally bad.
- Michael Steele was elected as the first black chairman of the Republican National Committee on Jan. 30, days before the Winthrop/ETV Poll began calling respondents. The results of the poll show that less than one-third of southern African Americans feel that the Republican Party is working to attract African Americans.
- After a contentious and sometimes ugly primary season, the Clintons have again found favor with southern African Americans. Almost 80 percent believe that, as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton will project a positive image of America to the world. Additionally, almost 87 percent feel that Pres. Obama's decision to appoint some members of Pres. Bill Clinton's administration to his Cabinet was a good choice.
- Attorney General Eric Holder said on Feb. 18 that the U.S. is a "nation of cowards" and that "average Americans simply do not talk enough with each other about race." The Winthrop/ETV Poll found an almost even split between those who are and are not comfortable talking about race with someone of another race. However, almost 58 percent say that the 2008 presidential election made it easier to have these kinds of conversations.

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