

## THE SUNDAY COLUMN



ELLIS HENICAN

### *One painful generation gap*

**I**t was the whisper heard round the world. And even now, no one seems quite certain what that whisper means.

Here was the aging lion Jesse Jackson, sitting in a TV studio, waiting to appear on Fox, forgetting the cardinal rule of TV studios: Always assume the mic is on.

Dissing the young cub Barack Obama in a crude and anatomical way. Beyond the obvious admonition — “Shut up around microphones!” — there’s such rich texture here.

It’s the story of one generation reluctantly giving way to another — half-supportive, half-suspicious of how the new folks will honor the past. There’s fear of irrelevance, fear of mortality, fear the new ones will arrive in the promised land and forget who helped to get them there. It’s a classic generational narrative, not limited to African-Americans, but as deeply steeped in that tradition as anywhere.

There’s a huge new study out commissioned by the media company Radio One that shines a fascinating light on the complex nuances of black America. The data add a “yes, but” to almost any presumption you might have.

Most blacks say they still struggle with discrimination. Seventy-two percent believe it’s important to teach their children to deal with prejudice. But African-Americans aren’t nearly as dejected by that as some racial theorists would proclaim.

Seventy percent have a plan for the future. Fifty-four percent are optimistic about what’s coming next. Sixty percent believe “things are getting better for me.” At a time of general blah in America, these numbers come as pleasant surprise.

Yet whatever you say about black Americans, there’s almost always a caveat. Even a phrase like “the black community” doesn’t mean any one thing. In fact, its members can’t even agree on what they want to be called these days: 42 percent say “black,” 44 percent say “African-American.”

All of which is to say, at the moment of hope and apprehension, as a torch is passed uneasily from one generation to the next: Be suspicious of all the old stereotypes.

The mics are staying open. The answers will remain complex.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

SUNDAY

ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT NEWSPAPERS

JULY 20, 2008

# Forum

## Race and the reverend

*Jesse Jackson doesn't know as much as he thinks*

The Rev. Jesse Jackson has found himself in embarrassing situations of late. Recently, he famously whispered to a fellow guest on Fox News that he believed Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama was "talking down" to black people by putting a big emphasis on black men living up to their responsibilities as parents.

Mr. Jackson expressed his skepticism crudely. His words were televised. He has apologized to Mr. Obama twice in recent weeks for his comments.

The underlying assumption of Mr. Jackson's words is that Mr. Obama is out of step with black America. But if the result of one of the most comprehensive surveys of African-American attitudes is to be believed, it is Jesse Jackson who is out of step. Radio One, the country's largest broadcast company serving urban audiences, commissioned a poll of 3,400 African Americans between 13 and 74.

The results of the survey at [www.BlackAmericaStudy.com](http://www.BlackAmericaStudy.com) would be illuminating to Mr. Jackson and all those who assume African-American attitudes about a host of issues have

remained static since the heyday of the civil rights movement.

Mr. Jackson would be surprised to find that 84 percent of African Americans polled agree with Mr. Obama that blacks need to be more responsible for themselves and that the federal government can't fix the most nagging problems that plague many black families.

Mr. Jackson also would be surprised to learn that 54 percent of those surveyed are optimistic about their future and that 70 percent are planning for their futures as constructively as they can. As for structural problems like access to health insurance, 83 percent have some form of it. A majority of blacks also agree that things have gotten better since the civil rights struggles of the 1960s that Mr. Jackson helped lead.

It would do Mr. Jackson well to expand his horizons about black Americans and question many of his own premises. Mr. Obama is doing well with black voters. Perhaps, in all humility, Mr. Jackson should ask himself "why" and adjust his own attitudes accordingly.



## NATIONAL REPORT

AUG. 4, 2008

### Survey Attempts To Teach U.S. About Black America

**Y**ou may have been unhappy with the portrayal of Blacks on TV. You're not alone!

Half of Blacks who watch TV don't relate to the Blacks they see on Black TV shows, and nearly half believe that Black TV reinforces negative stereotypes, according to a study recently released by Radio One, Inc.

Catherine Hughes, founder and chairperson of Radio One, hopes the survey will alert people who are involved in the creation of images in movies, electronics and print and show them that "there's a whole audience out there that no one is servicing" and that "it would be very wise to give the consumer what they are asking for."

In addition to focusing on the media, the study examines Blacks' beliefs and feelings regarding themselves, their families, futures and their trust/distrust in churches and the government.

Among other findings, the study showed Blacks to be optimistic. Fifty-four percent are optimistic about their future, 70 percent have a plan for their future and 60 percent say "things are getting better for me."

In fact, Blacks are becoming more involved in aspects of media such as the Internet and TV, with 68 percent of surveyed Blacks online and 90 percent of Black teens online.

Still, 70 percent of Blacks do not trust mainstream media, compared to 67 percent of Blacks that trust Black media.

The study, released by Radio One and Yankelovich research firm, surveyed 3,400 African-Americans between ages 13 and 74, making it one of the largest national surveys of Black America ever conducted.

This documentation, Hughes says, was crucial in proving and disproving things that Blacks and other people say about Black America that, until now, have only been assumed. "The time had come...it was long overdue."

Hughes says this survey is proof that Blacks want to see other Blacks on TV and in the media.

To view the survey, visit [blackamericastudy.com](http://blackamericastudy.com).

"I would hope that every Black person in America would go to [blackamericastudy.com](http://blackamericastudy.com). It will help us better understand ourselves and understand each other," Hughes says.



Cathy Hughes

# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Radio One survey shows black Americans optimistic

Posted by [Robert L. Smith](#) June 28, 2008 08:25AM

*Survey shows many are feeling good*

• Complete survey results are [here](#)

American blacks - including the 44 percent who prefer to be called African-American - know a lot more about themselves today, and that may be why they are feeling pretty good.

The largest-ever survey of black America reveals a diverse community that defies easy labels - but one blessed with self-assurance.

A little more than half of black Americans feel confident about the future of their community, and 60 percent agree that "things are getting better for me," according to polling done by Yankelovich for Radio One, a national broadcasting company that targets a black audience.

"Black America Today," released Friday, also reveals a lot of single parenthood, poverty and television watching in a demographic group of 39 million people. But the notes of optimism rise above the hints at despair.

Seventy-three percent of black Americans express the confidence to "do my own thing" and 70 percent, including teens, have a plan for the future.

With the national economy sinking and many of those polled acknowledging personal struggles, Michael Williams finds a lot of contradiction in the rosy outlook.

Williams, director of the Black Studies Program at Cleveland State University, said he thinks the respondents envisioned a broad context brightened by the emergence of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama.

"I think it has a lot to do with what's going on with the presidential election," Williams said. "Many black people, including myself, never imagined a black man would be in a position to become president of this country."

Blacks who look only at their personal circumstances might take a cloudier view, he said.

Still, the survey points to some valid reasons for optimism, especially among young blacks.

Pollsters surveyed 3,400 black Americans aged 13 to 74 in October and November with questions designed to elicit their attitudes and expectations and to sketch an image of their lifestyles.

They found an average household of three people, half led by a single parent, one-third living in apartments, families watching an average of 45 hours of television a week but mostly partaking in modern America.

The digital divide between blacks and mainstream America is vanishing, the survey found. About 68 percent of blacks use the Internet (compared with 70 percent of all Americans) and nearly 90 percent of black teens are online.

Meanwhile, 21 percent of the respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree, one third earn more than \$50,000 a year and nearly half own their own homes.

The survey suggests that young blacks credit their parents and grandparents for progress made by their community. Even members of the hip-hop generation, often maligned as selfish and disrespectful, expressed a healthy respect for the opinions and desires of their elders.

Bakari Kitwana, the Westlake man who wrote the book on the generation, is not surprised.

"The issue of the hip-hop generation has never been a lack of respect for what the older generation has achieved," said Kitwana, author of "The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture."

"It seems to be more of the older generation having a disdain for the younger generation's outlook. 'They don't work as hard. They don't value what black people always valued,' " he said. "I think the antagonism starts there."

Forty-six percent of blacks feel hip-hop culture has hurt the image of the black community, the survey said, but the blame for bad press is widely spread. Fifty percent of blacks do not like the way they are portrayed on black TV shows.

The survey also found a relatively isolated community mindful of group identity and the need for solidarity.

Fifty-six percent of those surveyed reported having "all" or "almost all" black friends. Meanwhile, 24 percent said they had experienced discrimination recently and 82 percent said they believed black parents need to prepare their children for prejudice.

The matter of what to call oneself is not taken lightly, the survey found. While 42 percent of respondents call themselves "black," and 44 percent prefer "African-American," nearly 90 percent said the choice is personally important.

"There's a process of transition under way," said Williams, 55. "My grandparents were Negroes. I'm African-American. As people come into different levels of awareness, they tend to mark that with a name."

# Rich mosaic of African American life

*National study finds far-ranging  
opinions, widespread optimism*

By Herbert L. White

[herb.white@thecharlottepost.com](mailto:herb.white@thecharlottepost.com)

African Americans don't fit in a tidy box of similar habits and attitudes.

Blacks have wiped out the digital divide, youngsters respect their elders and most are optimistic about the future, according to the findings of a study commissioned by Radio One, a Lanham, Md.-based communications company that owns two radio stations in Charlotte. Yankelovich, a Chapel Hill marketing firm, conducted the interviews of 3,400 African Americans.



Hughes

"While people are less inclined these days to think that all blacks are the same, they really do not understand the diversity within the African American community," Radio One founder Catherine Hughes said. "Blacks share many commonalities regardless of age, income and geography.

Please see MOSAIC/6A



DAN KLORES COMMUNICATIONS

Mostly female, head TV watchers and on tight budget, the Family Struggles segment is part of Radio One's Black America Study.

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# The Charlotte Post

# Mosaic of Black America

Continued from page 1A

but there are also differences — that suggest a new understanding of the past and a more optimistic sense of the future. We're confident that black Americans — and all Americans — will find the results of the survey useful and in some cases surprising, given perceptions about black life that are still pervasive in our country."

In essence, the survey found there's more to African American life than meets the eye. Indeed, blacks are nearly evenly divided on how they prefer to be described — 42 percent prefer to be called black while 44 percent favor African American.

The survey finds a mix of viewpoints through samples of 11 demographic groups. The survey, taken last October and November, includes teenagers and seniors up to age 74.

The survey identified specific segments within Black America today, ranging from Connected Black Teens, Digital Networkers and Black Onliners at the younger end, to Faith Fulfills, Broadcast Blacks and Boomer Blacks at the older end.

"We wanted to know in detail who we are, what we want and where we are going," said Alfred C. Liggins, Radio One's CEO and president.

A segmentation analysis identifies differences among African Americans on topics ranging from what it means to be black today, expectations



Liggins

for the future, consumer trends, media preferences and confidence in faith, government and financial institutions.

In the Connected Black Teens segment, for example, 25 percent of respondents say they are saving to start a business. Among Digital Networkers, the majority of whom are in their 20s, 45 percent are already saving for retirement.

Among the findings:

- The average household includes three people, with half living in a single family home. Half of respondents live in cities. Among 29- to 74-year-olds, a third are married.

- 61 percent are parents, 5 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds are parents, and half of all parents are single.

- 83 percent have health insurance, a majority (66 percent of women, 52 percent of men) has family doctors, and 40 percent of blacks who go online search the internet for health and medical information.

- 83 percent describe themselves as Christian, though only 41 percent go to church at least once a week. Seventy percent of women and 59 percent of men believe that faith in God is more likely to help them recover from a serious illness.

- 24 percent said they had been personally discriminated against in the past three months, and 82 percent said they believe it is "important for parents to prepare their children for prejudice."

- 67 percent overall said they believe the history of slavery is a key way in which blacks are different from other groups, but one-third also say that too much emphasis is put on the oppression of blacks.

- The digital divide has faded. 68 percent of those surveyed are online (compared to 71 percent of all Americans), and two-thirds of them shop online. Among teens, over 90 percent are online. Southerners are least likely to be online (63 percent).

- 72 percent want to learn more about how to invest. 50 percent believe banks and other financial institutions do not understand their needs; and only 8 percent trust credit card companies.

- 21 percent shop for fun frequently and 19 percent said they have to have what they like even if it costs more than they would like to spend.

- The education system and black media are most trusted to treat blacks fairly (30 percent) compared to 24 percent for the healthcare system, 12 to 16 percent for police, government, and mainstream media, and 8 percent for credit card companies.

On the Net:

Black America Today study,  
[www.blackamericastudy.com](http://www.blackamericastudy.com)

July 3-July 9, 2008

## New study on Blacks produces some surprises

By SAEED SHABAZZ

Special to the AmNews

Radio One, the nation's largest radio broadcasting company providing programming to primarily Black and urban listeners, believes it has conducted one of the largest-ever studies of Blacks in America. The survey, according to Radio One, provides some surprising insights into the thinking of Blacks today, such as that 70 percent of those surveyed already have a

plan for their futures.

The survey, called "Black America Today," discloses a comprehensive and nuanced look at how African-Americans feel about many aspects of life in America, and cautions against a simplistic reading of Black Americans as a monolithic group, states the opening paragraph of the survey's Summary/Overview.

According to a Radio One press release, the survey of

3,400 Blacks between 18 and 74 years of age is the only study to include Black teens and seniors and found that 54 percent were optimistic about their future, while 60 percent of those surveyed believe things have gotten better for them.

"While people are less inclined these days to think all Blacks are the same, they really do not understand the diversity of today's African-American community," stated Catherine Hughes, founder and chairperson of Radio One's board.

She said the folks at Radio One were confident that Black Americans and "all Americans" will find the results of the survey useful, given that misperceptions of Black life are still pervasive in America.

Radio One owns 53 radio stations in 16 urban markets.

According to the company, the survey was commissioned for two main reasons: one, to better understand the rich diversity among Black Americans, and two, to help Radio One better serve the large, diverse and most misunderstood group.

Alfred C. Liggins, CEO and

president of Radio One, explained that the study was needed to learn more about what Black Americans are thinking today about all aspects of their lives, including "their hopes for the future, their fears, the institutions they love and hate, where they get their information, whether they are plugged into the Internet, what they want for themselves and their children."

In studying the survey at [www.BlackAmericaStudy.com](http://www.BlackAmericaStudy.com), one may find a picture of what Black America looks like today. The average household of those surveyed has three people, half of whom live in a single-family home, one-third in apartments, one-third in the suburbs and half in cities. Among those 29 to 74 year olds surveyed, one-third are married, 61 percent Black Americans are parents (five percent of 13 to 74 year olds are parents) and half of all parents are single parents.

Educationally and economically speaking, 34 percent of those 18 or older surveyed have some college or a two-year degree, 21 percent a B.A. or

higher, while 40 percent have an income under \$25,000 (20 percent of whom are retired) and a third make \$50,000 or above.

According to "Black America Today," the digital divide has faded, with 68 percent of Blacks online (compared to 71 percent of all Americans). Two-thirds of Blacks shop online and over 90 percent of Black teens are online.

Black identity remains strong across all age and economic groupings, says the survey, with 56 percent of Blacks admitting to having "all" or "almost" all Black friends. Solidarity of Blacks remains strong, with 88 percent saying they have enormous respect for the opinions of their elders, while 71 percent overall said they believe Blacks need to stick together.

Discrimination in America remains an issue of concern, with 24 percent saying they had been personally discriminated against in the past three months.

And the media did not fare well in the eyes of many Blacks, with 50 percent saying they don't relate to the way Blacks are portrayed.