

Bush enjoying post-attacks approval among blacks

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The man who garnered less than 10 percent of the African-American vote in the controversial 2000 presidential election is enjoying unprecedented popularity among blacks for the time being, according to survey results released Monday by two of the nation's largest African-American Web sites.

BET Interactive, which is the parent company of BET.com and 360hiphop.com, a site devoted to hip-hop culture, announced the results of ongoing polls that have been conducted on the sites since the Sept. 11 attacks. The results suggest that President Bush's approval rating has more than

doubled since the terrorist bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Nearly 45 percent responded that they approved of the president's handling of the terrorist attacks, while 34 percent disapproved and 21 percent did not have an opinion. Nearly 10,000 votes were cast in the non-scientific poll. The figures seem to mark a vast improvement for the president. In August, visitors to the sites gave Bush only a 26 percent approval rating.

Although the latest numbers may indicate that the president is enjoying more popularity among African Americans, he still has a way to go. More than 80 percent of white Americans approve of the way the presi-

dent has handled himself in the wake of the attacks, about double the number of blacks.

"I see the polls show that African Americans have some reservations," said Retha Hill, vice president of content development for BET.com. "While the polls show that African Americans' support of the president is not as high as white support, 45 percent is a big



Bush

improvement and a swing for people who only a month ago were screaming for the president's head."

While the way the nation is responding to the terrorist attacks has Bush riding high, issues already brewing could put him back in the doghouse among African Americans. Bush is steadfastly standing behind Mobile, Ala., Judge William Steele for appointment to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. Steele's nomination has been fiercely opposed by the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference because the judge threw out a discrimination case filed by three African-American employees of a Pennington,

Ala., paper mill.

The president's nominee for the nation's drug czar, John Walters, is also expected to meet resistance from the Congressional Black Caucus and others. Many fear that Walters' strict beliefs regarding drug offenses will fill prisons even more with young African-American men.

The National Newspaper Publishers Association, a trade association group for hundreds of African-American newspapers around the country, also recently ran a story on its Web site claiming that Bush is being criticized by minority journalists in the White House press corps for answering questions from only white reporters. The

article quoted several reporters of Middle Eastern origin who complained about the practice. A White House official told NNPA's White House correspondent that the issue would be looked into.

The BET Interactive poll also asked African Americans their opinions on several other issues. Most respondents (71 percent) believe that the government cannot protect the nation from future terrorist attacks. Nearly 60 percent of respondents also said that they would not be willing to go to war if the draft was reinstated. The majority of respondents (64 percent) believe that peace is not an option in terms of the conflict with Osama bin Laden.

Habitat

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In 1997 Habitat created a development of five new homes on 13th Street. Elizabeth House Scales moved into her home four years ago. She was relocated from Skyline Village. She moved in with her three daughters, who Jasmine, then 8, LaFreda, then 14, and Shermeka, then 18. Her life has changed for the better since she became a homeowner.

"When I lived in Skyline, the walls were breaking, and there were roaches everywhere. I could not cook in the kitchen because the roaches would come out. I was strung out on drugs. I was just down and out," Scales said. "I got down on my knees and asked the Lord to take it away. I gave my life to the Lord. I saw a flash on TV about Habitat, and I called. Two weeks later, they came to see me."

Scales enjoys her new home. She has a large kitchen so she can move around and a large living

room. She has three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

"Habitat made a great change in my life. Ever since I have been saved, there has been a change for me," Scales said. "I don't mind telling where God brought me from. When they told me they had a house for me, I was ready to go. I sent all of the 12 churches that were involved a thank-you card."

Scales' rent dropped from \$300 a month to \$268 as a homeowner. She has worked at Bojangles for 15 years.

The Rev. Donald Jenkins, pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church, is in favor of the blitz of homes if positive

change will follow.

"This blitz will change the face of the community and make it more family-oriented. These homeowners will have to remain there for at least five years," Jenkins said. "This means they will have to put time into building the house, and they will have to take care of it. This could make a big difference."

"It is a great idea to build the homes, and I am proud that the Methodist denomination is involved. This idea would lead to more community development. That would be great," Jenkins said. "If this will help revitalize the area, I think it is great."

"Usually if a person moves who was paying rent in public housing, their payment notes go down," Jenkins said. "Also, children who normally have no privacy, get privacy. Because they have washer-dryer connection provided in the Habitat homes, families do not have the inherent problems of housing developments, having to contend with

everybody else's problems."

Max Morgan of Centenary United Methodist Church recalls that the idea for putting homes in neighborhoods that needed improvements began when he worked in partnership with St. James AME Church and Goler Memorial AME.

"It was important to the people at St. James that there be some improvement in that area. The idea took hold. We moved nice families in the community, and we decided, why not finish out the street?" Morgan said. "We were all so enthused about what happened on 13th Street. This was a natural follow-up. We caught our breath, (recuperated), did more fund-raising so we could go to the next street."

"Many of the houses could not be repaired and had to be replaced. Once the city made the lots available, we took on the mission," Morgan said. "The Methodists get a good feeling from having done a job together."



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