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Poll: 50 years after MLK, civil rights goals unmet

By Jesse J. Holland and Emily Swanson

WASHINGTON (AP) - Fifty years after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., only 1 in 10 African Americans think the United States has achieved all or most of the goals of the civil rights movement he led, according to a new poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Three-quarters of African Americans said there has been little or no progress on fair treatment by police, and more than half answered the same about fair coverage by the media, political representation or equal economic opportunities.

Currently, things are steadily "going on a quick downward spiral," said Stephanie Sutton, 42, a Silver Spring, Maryland, housewife who is black. "Inequality touches everything, from work, police, schools, education, income, houses."

Even when it comes to voting rights - the high point for perceived progress for all of Americans in the poll - just 34 percent of blacks said there has been a lot of progress made toward equality. Another 29 percent said there has been at least some progress.

"We're going backward to where we're starting to see more black males mostly getting assaulted by police officers unjustly and stuff like that," said Kyla Marshall, 28, of Lansing, Michigan, a state government worker who is black.

Americans overall were only slightly more optimistic. More than half said major progress has been made toward equal voting rights for African Americans, but just a quarter said there has been a lot of progress in achieving equal treatment by police or the criminal justice system. Among whites, 64 percent think there's been a lot of progress and another 25 percent think there's been minor progress on voting rights, while 28 percent think there's been a lot of progress and 31 percent partial progress toward equality in the criminal justice system.

The poll found that 30 percent of American adults - 35 percent of whites and just 8 percent of blacks - said all or most of the goals of the 1960s civil rights movement have been achieved. Most of the remainder said partial progress has been achieved.

"I think the civil rights movement was phenomenal in forcing banks, political systems and educational systems" to change, said Grant Jay Walters, 53, of Hamburg, New York, who is white. "I think it absolutely achieved its goals. I do not think the civil rights movement can go in and change the hearts of men. There's still a lot of racism in the communities and I'm not sure how you can ever make that go away."

The poll was taken about six weeks ahead of the 50th anniversary of King's death.

King was shot and killed April 4, 1968, outside his second-floor room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, by segregationist James Earl Ray. King has since been acknowledged as an American hero for his quest for freedom, justice, equality and peace among all races.

The poll found only one area - voting rights - where a majority said a lot of progress has been made for racial equality since the civil rights movement. In total, 57 percent of Americans said there has been major progress on equal voting rights, though just 39 percent said there has been major progress on political representation for African Americans.

Close to half said there has been major progress on reducing segregation in public life - 47 percent - and equal access to good education - 48 percent. About a third said there has been at least some progress in those areas.

On the lowest end of the spectrum, just 23 percent said there has been a great deal of progress in fair treatment of blacks by police or the criminal justice system, and nearly half said there has been little to no progress in either of those areas.

Whites were more likely than blacks to think there has been progress in every area asked about in the poll.

Blacks are "claiming racism but I don't see it myself," said Tommy Romero, 47, of New Iberia, Louisiana, who is white. "They're claiming it but it's all about what they feel about the past, slavery and everything else. That's how I feel."

Romero said that things overall have gotten much better considering the racism of the past, especially in the South.

"Things were terrible back then," he said. "The way minorities were treated, drinking at separate fountains, eating at separate restaurants, and sitting on certain parts of the bus, stuff like that, police beating on them, that just made no sense."

In general, 54 percent of Republicans and just 14 percent of Democrats think most or all of the goals of the civil rights movement have been achieved. That ranged from 76 percent of Republicans and 46 percent of Democrats saying there has been a lot of progress on voting rights, to 43 percent of Republicans and 9 percent of Democrats saying there has been a lot of progress on fair treatment by police.

Just over half of all Americans - including 79 percent of blacks and 44 percent of whites - said African Americans continue to face disadvantages to getting ahead in the United States. That's compared with 22 percent who said blacks actually have advantages and 26 percent who said their race makes no difference in getting ahead.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,337 adults was conducted Feb. 15-19 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.9 percentage points.

The poll includes a total of 388 black respondents, who were sampled at a higher rate than their proportion of the population for purposes of analysis. The margin of sampling error among blacks is plus or minus 7.3 percentage points. For results reported among all adults, responses among blacks are weighted to reflect their proportion among all U.S. adults.

Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods, and later interviewed online or by phone.

Online:
AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research: <http://www.apnorc.org>

For AP's complete coverage marking 50 years since Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, go to <https://apnews.com/tag/MartinLutherKingJr>



HANDS UP, DON'T SHOOT! Young people at the March for Life in Washington D.C. Photo by "Freddie Allen/AMG/NNPA."

NAACP spearheads lawsuit to overhaul plan for 2020 Census

By Kevin Freking

WASHINGTON (AP) - The NAACP is spearheading a lawsuit filed March 28 against the Census Bureau and President Donald Trump, saying the federal government is unprepared for the 2020 Census, and that will lead to a massive undercounting of African-Americans.

The group wants a federal judge to oversee the Census Bureau's plan to avoid an undercount for minority communities.

The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Maryland contends that understaffing, inadequate funding and the use of online forms will exacerbate historic undercounts for communities of color.

"As we continued to look at past undercounts and the Census Bureau's preparations for 2020, we came to the conclusion we were witnessing a train wreck in the making," said

Bradford Berry, general counsel for the NAACP.

The decennial census is required by the Constitution and used to determine the number of seats each state has in the House, as well as how federal money is distributed to local communities.

Berry said his organization has been working with the Yale Law School Rule of Law Clinic on concerns about the 2020 Census. They used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain records from the Commerce Department about its preparations.

Prince George's County, Maryland, joined in the lawsuit. Its elected leaders said the county stands to lose critical federal funds and voting power if the 2020 Census takes place without major changes. Blacks make up a majority of the county's population.

The 2010 Census undercounted 2.1 percent of the black population

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The 2010 Census undercounted 2.1 percent of the black population nationally and 1.5 percent of the Hispanic population, according to a Census Bureau estimate.

The lawsuit has been months in the making and is separate from efforts being taken in states, including California, New York and New Jersey, to prevent a citizenship question from being included in the decennial census. The Census Bureau did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the NAACP's lawsuit.

Lawmakers on Capitol Hill have also expressed concerns in recent months about the Census Bureau's preparation for the 2020 count, and recently passed legislation to increase spending at the agency by \$1.3 billion this fiscal year. That's double what the Trump administration had requested, and GOP lawmakers said the bump would allow for adequate preparation for the decennial census.

Judge: Release video of police beating of jaywalker

ASHEVILLE (AP) - A North Carolina judge has ruled all video in the case of a white police officer accused of using excessive force against a black man accused of jaywalking should be released.

Local news outlets report Buncombe County Superior Court Judge Mark Powell said March 26 it was in the public interest for footage captured by police body cameras to be made public. Powell set an April 2 release date.

District Attorney Todd Williams said the release would threaten his ability to prosecute the case.

Video footage captures former Asheville Police Officer Christopher Hickman ordering Johnnie Jermaine Rush to put his hands behind his back. It shows Hickman punching Rush's head and using a stun gun while holding him to the ground last Aug. 25.

Hickman was later charged with felony assault.

Charles Barkley gives \$250,000 to online black history course

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APNewsNow.

HERNANDO, Miss. (AP) - Charles Barkley has donated \$250,000 toward educating Mississippi and Alabama high school students about African-American history.

The Commercial Appeal of Memphis, Tennessee reported March 29 the basketball Hall of Famer and TV analyst's donation to the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi will help fund a digital course on African-Americans' contributions to public service, science, art and sports.

The course is taught through a partnership between the foundation and education technology company EVERFI.

Barkley says in a statement every child in his home state should have an opportunity to know their history. The Alabama-native says he was born during the civil rights era and has gratitude for Medgar Evers, Congressman John Lewis and Martin Luther King Jr.

Foundation CEO Tom Pittman and EVERFI CEO Tom Davidson say thousands of students will be involved.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., shown here at the 1963 March on Washington, was assassinated 50 year ago April 4. (NNPA released file dphoto.)