

# Study: Young Blacks politically engaged

By Lorinda M. Bullock  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Think America's youth is nothing more than a bunch of lazy and ungrateful text-messaging, mall-dwelling, iPod-blasting brats? If so, think again.

A recent survey released last week from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement says to think again, especially when it comes to America's Black youth.

According to the study, African-American young people are "most likely to vote regularly, belong to groups involved with politics, donate money to candidates or parties, display buttons or signs, canvass and contact the broadcast media or print media."

The study also said Black people between the ages of 15-25 were most likely to raise money for a charity, tying with Asian-Americans.

"Consistent with previous research, African-Americans are generally the most politically engaged racial/ethnic group," the study said.

The Maryland-based organization compiled information from telephone and email surveys done earlier this year with 1,700 young people ages 15-25.

The study's result departs from other studies that conclude Black youth are more prone to wind up in the justice system, be killed by a peer, become pregnant or contract a sexually transmitted disease.

Melanie Campbell, the executive director of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation said she is not surprised that Black youth are getting more involved, especially after the popular "Vote or Die" campaign in 2004 led by entertainers like P. Diddy and the recent Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

"The 2004 election, the youth vote overall went up but it was largely in part because Black youth turned out in much higher numbers than they had in about 10 years," Campbell said.

"Katrina, young people decided to do an alternative spring break. That's a clear example that young people are connecting the dots that they need to be involved. It's not just the vote but being involved in one's community. That was volunteerism at its best. We should celebrate that but build on it."

Campbell's Washington-

based organization was instrumental in registering young Black voters during the 2004 elections and in its 10th year of the Black Youth Vote initiative.

As November approaches, the group is working even harder until Election Day criss-crossing the country in a voter registration drive. So far, this year, the group has registered 350,000 voters aged 18-30 years old.

Campbell's staff and volunteers are all practically in this age group. She said peer-to-peer encouragement has been the most effective in registering voters.

"A lot of young people are out here organizing, and they want to be involved, and we as a community have to embrace that. We have to make sure we continuously find avenues and vehicles for them to be able to engage their

peers and lead the effort for and with the community," she said.

Asian-American youth came right behind African-Americans, and like African-Americans, they are more likely to volunteer, sign petitions, raise money and persuade others about elections.

In direct comparison to young Whites, the study said, "Whites are the most likely to run, walk or ride a bike for

charity and to be active members of a group. They are least likely to protest, donate money to a party or candidate or persuade others about an election."

The study showed that Latino youth had the highest levels of disengagement and were the least likely to volunteer, contact officials or boycott. But 25 percent of young Latinos have protested "more than double the rate

for any other racial/ethnic group."

Recent large-scale protests about immigration may have contributed to these numbers, and the study also mentions that the protesting may factor into increased Latino voter participation in November.

But while minorities are getting more vocal about their concerns, when it came (See Study, Page 13)



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