

Faith, Not Race, The Big Factor in Prop 8 Vote

January 10, 2009
John Ridley

In the postmortem of the passage of California Prop 8 banning same sex marriage, there was much finger-pointing. How could this happen in California? Whose fault was it? Initially the blame came to lie at the feet of blacks for -- allegedly -- voting disproportionately in favor of the proposition.

And with that came a whole lot of haranguing. What? Blacks are bigots? How can they of all people not recognize that separate is not equal?

Now comes new evidence that blacks did not vote more disproportionately for Prop 8 than any other ethnic group. Political affiliation, ideology, age and most significantly frequency of religious service attendance were bigger factors in determining one's vote than race. Once tabulated as being as high as 70 percent, a new, more accurate post-vote survey finds the number closer to 57 percent.

And the study's coauthor, New York University assistant professor of politics Patrick Egan, notes that number has more to do with faith than race. It reflects a higher level of church attendance among black Americans. So, then, it would be more accurate to move black voters into the category of all voters who made their decision on Prop 8 based on faith and/or other influences rather than segregating blacks into a particular pro 8 block.

This really isn't news to anyone who tracked George Bush's increased support among black voters from about 8 percent in 2000 to about 12 percent 2004. It was largely behind the talk of a Constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage.

As a person of color it would be nice to see the number of Black Americans who stand against equality in marriage continue to trend downward. But at the same time it's unfair to unduly blame blacks for Prop 8's passage.