

Welfare to work

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney, Associate Editor
Thursday, 06 September 2012 00:00



Now let me preface this piece by making a few key factual points before I dive all the way in on this article.

First off, I'm a Black male. Not a surprise to most, but maybe a surprise to some. Secondly, I am a gainfully employed Black male, working for myself, having owned my own business since 1997. Lastly, I am an Independent voter. I vote my conscious and my principles and no party has "ownership" over me.

That is not to knock anyone who is a Democrat or Republican; it's just to say that I am a freelance voter, who has strong convictions about many key issues that are important to me. Now, with that being said and out the way, let me jump in the deep end of the pool.

I happened to check out a poll conducted recently by The Washington Post (using a random sample of 1,020 people) asking Democrats, Republicans and Independent voters the question: "Why do most Black voters so consistently support Democrats?" Now while every person was asked the same question, persons who identified themselves as represented a specific political party affiliation provided totally different answers. In all fairness to all of the people polled, "Don't Know" was the leading response for persons from all parties.

It was the response given as a close second by those identifying as Republicans and several coming from Independents and Democrats that struck a chord with me. That response was that Black voters primarily voted for Democrats because we are dependent on the government and are seeking a hand out.

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Okay, so to get a more real life example, check out this true story. I happened to catch a Black reporter who was interviewing a delegate at the Republican National Convention this past week and the delegate was asked why more Black people weren't there and overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party. Please know that I'm not picking on the Republican Party.

So, to pretty much summarize what the interviewee said it went a little something like this (to the black reporter who has a REAL JOB)....."Well, it's because you guys only want to stay on welfare and have the government take care of you."

Black reporter then comes back and says, "Sir, do you believe that ALL Black people are on welfare?" Guy then doubles down and says, "I was driving down the street in my neighborhood and I saw some Black people in their front yard having a celebration. I stopped to ask what the party was for and they told me that one of the gentlemen that lived there at the house finally got his disability check. I asked how much it was and they told me it was \$700 a month. If you want the government to take care of you people then keep voting Democrat. If you want a job, then join us." Black reporter says, "Then I must be a Republican huh?"

Now listen, I see beyond this interviewee being a Republican, because there are Democrats and Independents that are equally as naive and ignorant. See, it's easy to deem all Black people a certain way based on how the media portrays us and I can't help but admit that there are many in the Black community that don't help our cause. But that's the case with every race.

Hey look, let's face it. There are people in every race that are dependent on the government and are seeking a handout. There are people in every race that are on government assistance and welfare. But, it's not just Black people. I get so sick and tired of knowing that the word welfare has become synonymous with Black people, as if other races aren't recipients of it.

Sadly, it is how the media and society seeks to craft the conversation, in order to make Black people look like the poverty-stricken, lazy, do-nothing, handout seeking folks that we are not. I'll tell you what though; I'll let you keep on thinking that I'm one of those helpless, needy Black folks who have depended on the government to give me a handout and government assistance, so I can make ends meet. I will also inform you that I agree with you that I should seek to wean myself off of government assistance and get a job or start a business to sustain myself and my family.

As a matter of fact, I am ready TODAY!!!! How about this? Since you are so concerned about me getting a job, how about you hire me and guarantee me a job (considering I do quality work),

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with a decent wage for the next 12 months? Better yet, how about you allow me to become one of your primary suppliers of your goods and services? While we are at it, how about making sure that my qualified, business-ready company partners with you on some of your major contracts, when I reach out to you to do some business? This will ensure that I can build the necessary capital (while working for myself), that I need to take my family and hire others in my community to do the same.

Now I'm being a bit sarcastic, yet serious at the same time. To reverse this trend, it requires action, not rhetoric from those that have a desire to see it changed. I am not super-sensitive, whereby I will let some poll or some comments define me. But, since many people are in the defining business, I would love them to help a brother out (Oops did I just say that.....lol). I mean, can you just make sure that the people who didn't have the same resources and opportunities you had are able to earn their keep with more than just moral support?

Let me know when you are ready to take me from welfare to work. I'll be anxiously waiting.

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