



Protests against racism erupted in Portland and across the nation this summer.

PHOTO BY SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

Bias Perceptions Grow Amid Racial Progress

For some, Obama's election upset social order

BY ERIC TEGETHOFF

The number of white Americans who believe they face discrimination is on the rise, raising the question of how this might affect the country.

According to a recent poll, 55 percent of white Americans believe their group experiences racial discrimination.

Clara Wilkins, an assistant professor of psychology at Wesleyan University who studies prejudice, says this perception has grown rapidly since Barack Obama was elected president in 2008.

For many, Obama's election was a sign of racial progress, but Wilkins says a subset of white Americans saw this as upsetting the social order.

Somewhat counter intuitively, her research finds people who believe the country is fair and just also are more likely to perceive discrimination against white people in the wake of Obama's election.

"For people who think society is fair, they're the ones who sort of tend to think that the order of society where whites have greater access to wealth, power, status, etc. - that is legitimate

and it's fair and it's not based in bias," she states. "And so, if you reject those beliefs - you think that it's not fair - then those are the people who actually welcome social change."

As Wilkins notes, the reality is that vast inequalities in wealth and electoral representation still exist for racial minorities.

She says the growing number of hate groups nationwide after Obama's election is one of the dangers from the perception of prejudice against white people.

The Southern Poverty Law Center identifies a number of white supremacist groups in Oregon.

Wilkins and a colleague at Wesleyan have been able to measure the growing perception of bias.

In one of their studies, participants either read an article on racial progress or one that had nothing to do with race.

Those who read the article on racial progress were more likely to believe white people experience discrimination.

And according to Wilkins, further research

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

DWELL
REALTY
WHERE DO YOU DWELL?

RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

COMMERCIAL SALES/ LEASING

RELOCATION SERVICES


Dwell Realty Commercial


Dwell
Property Management

WWW.DWELLREALTYPDX.COM

5265 NE MLK Jr. Blvd, Portland, OR 97211

503.208.3797