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## If It's Not on a Sign, It's Not Racist!

Posted Wednesday, October 20, 2010 8:36 AM | By [David Weigel](#)

As the NAACP gets set to release a report on the Tea Party, I'm seeing a [lot more chatter](#) about UCLA grad student/Cato scholar Emily Ekins's project that allegedly debunked "racism" in the Tea Party.

*Ekins set out to photograph every single poster and sign at the 9/12 Taypayer March on Washington in September to see if the tens of thousands of Americans that make up the [Tea Party](#) movement are really running on racism.*

*After tediously combing through the crowd and over 250 photographs later, Ekins discovered, based on the signs, that the claims of rampant racism simply weren't true. "Over 50 percent were about limited government and lower spending, and only about 6 percent were controversial in nature," Ekins told Fox News.*

I know Ekins and don't doubt that this is what she find. I think the NAACP was fairly silly, when it launched its campaign against the Tea Party, [to focus on](#) "offensive Tea Party signs." But I'd be surprised if the NAACP's report hones in on that. Why? Because why are the signs that people hold in front of TV cameras the best way of determining whether they have darker motivations for being there? If you spend a lot of time talking to Tea Partiers, as I do, you do, sadly, encounter people who doubt that Barack Obama was born in America, even though they don't have "village in Kenya has lost its idiot" signs. And you encounter people who blame ACORN for the subprime mortgage mess, instead of mostly white Wall Street and hedge fund gamblers. In polls, you find that Tea Partiers [are more likely than other people](#) to think that government policy focuses too much on the needs of black people.

Now, all of that does not mean "the Tea Party is racist." I don't know how a "racist" movement could have gotten behind Tim Scott, Allen West, Ryan Frazier, and Nikki Haley. But judging whether or not people have socially unacceptable biases based on whether or not *they broadcast them on signs* make a ton of sense.

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