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Obama's first 100 days

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IEN: It was an historic moment that was watched the world over. One hundred days ago, Barack Obama was sworn in as America's 44th president and first-ever African-American commander-in-chief. Since then, he has become a primetime fixture, selling his stimulus and economic recovery plan to a panicked public. Obama also made his first international visit, a trip to Ottawa to meet with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Canadian crowds.

For a look at his presidential performance, joining us from Washington is Solon Simmons, a political analyst and professor at George Mason University; and Brad O'Leary. Mr. O'Leary is the author of "The Audacity of Deceit".

Gentlemen, good morning to both of you.

SOLON SIMMONS: Good morning, Marci.

BRAD O'LEARY: Good morning.

IEN: Mr. O'Leary, I want to start with you. A hundred days in, how is the US president doing?

BRAD O'LEARY: Well, I think the public-relations polls have him still having an enormous impact on the American public, very positive. But the polls that are talking about the substance of what he's doing are running very negative.

IEN: What things are we talking about? Which kind of polls?

BRAD O'LEARY: Well, first, the Washington Post did a poll on Sunday. And it showed that 14 percent of the public felt that the stimulus was positive, and 12 percent of the public thought the stimulus was negative, the rest had no opinions.

On cap and trade, a new Zogby poll just released showed that 57 percent of the public opposes it,

and only 38 percent support it.

On Eric Holder's plan to introduce new gun laws, 25 percent of the public are in favour of it, and 57 [sic] percent of the public are opposed to it -- or 75 percent of the public are opposed to it.

On a number of other issues, including the attempt to diversify ownership of radio stations, 60 percent of the public are opposed to it. On the attempt to diversify talk radio itself, 66 percent of the public are opposed to it.

So, if you look at what he's introduced in the first 100 days, those policies are not being supported by the American public.

IEN: Let me get Mr. Simmons in here.

How bad is it? All style, no substance with US President Obama?

SOLON SIMMONS: Well, I think our first Hawaiian president has demonstrated he knows how to surf the political waves -- in the sense that he probably didn't come into this administration when he set out on his journey to have a great economic crisis. He knew he had a foreign-policy presidency, but he wasn't sure that he would have an economic crisis of this magnitude to deal with.

And so, he's come in on this very powerfully. And he's been of tremendous consequence.

I think that all we need to look at is to look at this famous stimulus bill, the AARA, to see that it's -- I think conservatives and liberals will agree -- it's a Christmas tree of liberal programs pent up for maybe decades that are now put into this bill. It would suggest there has been a sea change. There's a sense that there's something new, an opportunity for Democrats that has not been there in a long time. And he has taken advantage of it.

So, too, the Arlen Specter transition is a bit of a political earthquake, which shows that small changes in polarization between the parties have resulted in a big change in taking Arlen Specter.

On foreign policy, I think what we see is the return of a concern about Machiavelli: is it better to be loved or feared? He is risking recognition, taking what Machiavelli would've thought of as a risky strategy to rely on others' love of you to move forward. We'll see if that works, and it's not clear. The Taliban and Pakistan are the big test here.

And I think everyone agrees that on race relations there has been a tremendous change. I call it "the Bob Marley effect". There's a redemption song here where you see in a kiosk where once you would have seen Bob Marley on a T-shirt, now you see Barack Obama. There is a sense of African-American investment and white American pride that is palpable and has transformed politics, whatever happens on the economics or foreign-policy fronts.

IEN: And we'll see what happens in the next 100 days. The US president taking to the airwaves tonight.

Gentlemen, thank you both.

BRAD O'LEARY: Thank you.

SOLON SIMMONS: Thank you.