

JESSE 88

Amiri Baraka

Repeatedly, while waiting for myself to rise totally to the occasion of catching up with presidential candidate Jesse Jackson, I used images of our long time friendship and varied association to fuel the dynamic which would embody the questions I would ask.

Thinking about Jesse in Iowa, I thought about farmers and “straight out” Americans. How would that be? Jesse with the straight outs?

There was no question in my ultimate mind dialed conclusion that Jesse could handle it. How remained as such, intriguing, its “How?” self.

But it is the feeling for America — ever been in Iowa, boy?

Yeh, drove through there — me and my family in a brand new '78 Chevy stationwagon.

Nothing. Cow odor and corn. A couple stops. Except the music, like when you get too far from the cities — ugly shit!

It was a con puzzle feeling. Like would there be some kind of *con* involved? Some snake oil, or lugubrious backing away from reality that would pass for public non-offense. Some merits (for Niggers!) You too. Unless caught widout your people somewhere out there, no gun neither — could you survive?

It's like Howard Beach is part of the white faces and twang. How do black people walk up to white, regulation Americans and deal with them

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Jesse Jackson during his college days at North Carolina A&T.
Photo: North Carolina A&T University

like they're intelligent — like both you and them are? Perhaps impossible!

Would the Iowa America be like on television but able to immediately, kill?

Reading about New Hampshire, I tried to imagine Jesse there — some how hidden by cold white nasty distance creating meta-objects. Was speech still possible? Can, and at what speed, would African American speech travel?

Or would anything with a head as cold as it would have to be in New Hampshire hear? What would shiny or slick or fast breathing, deep feeling words sound like?

Could they be heard? (And as what?)

Can snow understand the sun? Is the water or angelic vapor rising the heaven of divine transformation these devils must experience to reintegrate themselves with rhythm — therefore turn on hearts — beat life into them, preventing the conflagration of Human Society.

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Chicago does not only exist in America and this is its spice, its promise, its threat to the evil empire, at least its section marked "exclusion."

Jesse, Farrakhan and Harold Washington. When Harold fell (and Jimmy Baldwin and John Killens), it struck me how powerful Black people were in Chicago.

It is the northern capital of the Black Bourgeoisie, i.e., not New York. Fake integration — as Weldon Johnson analyzed in *Black Manhattan* weakens the socio-economic strength of the Black owners in New York City.

But Chicago is as segregated — from was to is — as classical north America. There, deeper and stronger consolidation of a intra communicating self reproducing Black business and professional class developing through economic focus on the African American community can be found.

There is a deeper wider more fundamental economic national consciousness in Chicago, that in NYC is more strictly limited to pre-60s Garveyites.

Chicago, historically called “The Second City” (now LA is 2nd in population) then has always in essence been in tune with “Second Class” citizenship.

And then when we know that this cold burg was founded by a black explorer, DuSable — further irony. Because we know this would never be a first choice.

All this as part of a background of judgement and analysis as to who and why Jesse Jackson is so important and significant to the world, despite all efforts to preach the contrary — especially by a general “American” backwardness posed like whip cream atop the head and navel of U.S. society.

He is important, as whatever kind of American he is. Whatever kind of person. Yet it is as an African American he is most easily and finally identified.

His very “inelectability” out of the mouths of so many fellow travellers of white supremacy and privilege does not hide the ineluctability of what Jackson is and represents! His fame has come from activism in the “Civil Rights Movement.”

If a Black cannot be elected President, then Baldwin was right, the American Dream *is* White Supremacy. More background would be helpful here, so that Jesse Jackson’s biography can show the development of his

A massive Black empowerment movement swept Harold Washington to his 1983 victory as Chicago’s first Black mayor.





Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with Rev. Jesse Jackson.
Photo from UP WITH HOPE, a book by Dorothy Chaplik

thinking, leading to his candidacy for the presidency. As well as America's development and tragedy.

Jackson's presidential candidacy is one implied and expressed general presumption of the movement. Suppose Dr. King had run for president (allowed to live) or even Malcolm X?

Or suppose Farrakhan runs for Mayor of Chicago? Even the most militant of the 60's Black Liberation Movement activists called for Black Power. It is the *method* which was always in contention. But by that also to say the content, which suggests and shapes methodology and form.

Jesse Jackson knows the U.S. is not a democracy. Unlike the various white candidates who say it is one even if it aint for, you know, poor people, niggers, spics, chinks, women, &c.

For this reason, people need and desire the Rainbow that Jesse has set in motion. Not only because of Jesse, but because that is why Jesse is valuable to them in the

first place. Because he seems to be strong enough to put together finally a multi-racial, philosophically progressive, well-organized spearhead to further the deep aspirations of not only the African American people, but Americans of whatever nationality who are clear enough to want to openly express their feeling that American society is in deep need of complete change!

Jesse's public image enlarged with the building of his *Operation Breadbasket* in Chicago. It was his declaration of independence from the King family and the older SCLC minister-operatives after King's murder.

At the 1984 Democratic convention in San Francisco, the contradiction between Coretta King and her support for Mondale (along with Andy Young) and Jackson's own popular candidacy emerged. She spoke at one black leadership caucus and said there was no single leadership focus in black America. Directly across the table from Jackson.

At the open black delegates caucus her defense of Mondale, even invoking the name of her martyred husband brought cries of outrage from black delegates, particularly the black women!

Breadbasket was SCLC religion powered social awareness and activism brought to the black northern "capital." Side by side, as a reflection of black class formation with Elijah Muhammed's *Nation of Islam*.

A black economic strength based on a black bourgeoisie, from John Johnson and *Ebony*, *Jet*, *Negro Digest/Black World* to George Johnson, AfroSheen, black hair products. Heavy connections as well with the Daley machine and an independent black politics that elected Harold Washington, Mayor!

Jackson's campaign is as much a measure and description of American society as King's campaigns. The violent legal apartheid King fought has been rendered impotent and so has been replaced by propaganda and rhetoric and out of favor grant losing social programs whose elimination is blamed on the poor and the needy and the oppressed nationalities.

Jackson is a veteran of the struggle and victory over American Apartheid. He is a *statesman* and a qualified and beloved black leader! Opinions about him define both the oppressed and the oppressor in this country.

Black people know a great deal about Ronald Reagan, as they did Carter, Ford, Nixon, LBJ and JFK. Ask them to choose, the majority, between those names and Jesse Jackson. They know for sure Jackson is *smarter* than Reagan — definitely better looking. In San Francisco before a group of black car dealers Jackson said the only thing Reagan could beat him doing was "taking afternoon naps." The crowd roared!

Black women, including his beautiful sophisticated wife, Jackie, want Jesse so much because they know most women would have to dig him. But not like this!

The Civil Rights and 60's and 70's Black Power and Black Liberation Movement was a social upsurge that also created an economic advance, as well as political gains for the African American people.

A legacy of 60's black mass struggle was the strengthening and expansion of the black middle and upper classes. There was also the clear advance in electoral politics. A Black Congressional Caucus for example could be formed as black congressional representation expanded with more significance than at any time since Reconstruction.

Black mayors began to be elected in major cities. Hatcher-Gary: Gibson-Newark, &c. And as the bloody 60's confrontations that caused American Apartheid to retreat and disguise itself drew less intense as the 70's moved along, the movement developed a thrust toward new political organization aimed at electoral politics and economic development.

I met Jesse 1st during the period of the Black Power Conferences, during the 60's. By 1969 as chairman of the Committee for a Unified



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., naming Rev. Jesse Jackson to head Operation Breadbasket of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Cirilo McSweeney, at right, was appointed treasurer. Photo from Jet magazine

Newark (CFUN), I took Ken Gibson, Newark's future 1st black mayor, to Chicago for the national coverage that *Operation Breadbasket* by now could provide.

Jesse brought black celebrities, actors, entertainers, civil rights leaders, charismatic ministers to Breadbasket. He was intimate even during the earlier civil rights movement with black and white media stars since SCLC routinely got them to do fundraisers. But at Breadbasket, post MLK, Jesse became the focal point. His constant economic activism, his calls for "economic democracy" and political background raised him very publicly into the living pantheon of black leadership.

He was also a bonafide personality in the black glamour set. At home with Muhammed Ali, striding up the aisle in Las Vegas with a baseball cap on, or hanging out with Sidney Poitier or Harry Belafonte aided and abetted his rising political profile but added to his own star status. It gave him an aura of the glittery fame available only to the media and entertainment giants.

Jackson is not only at home with black religious leaders, rights activists, labor figures, but virtually every major black politician in

the country. For black people and many others he is a genuine star!

What's more, a great many of these figures, important themselves, look to Jesse for political guidance! It was not an isolated relationship, for instance, that could find late jazz immortal Julian "Cannonball" Adderly saying that "Jesse Jackson is my leader!" Spoken with a trace of levity, fitting the relationship, but definitely sincere.

It is this broad gamut of relationships with the very key figures in the black community, internationally, that provide definition of Jackson's strength.

But what is also clear and needs to be emphasized is that Jesse Jackson is respected, even *loved* by the majority of black people! Certainly in this country, but I'd add Africa and the West Indies and anywhere else in the African diaspora.

My wife, Amina, returning recently from the beauty parlor told me this: At one point in the free flowing multiple dialogues that are the musical score and spontaneous scenario of beauty shops, one sister called out, "Any black people got a license to vote, in these times, and dont vote for Jesse Jackson oughta be tarred and feathered!"

Raised fists came out from under dryers to affirm and further animate the proposal. A male T-shirt selling black nationalist named Luqman served as cheer leader!

"I'm gonna make a T-shirt about you, Demetrius (the beauty parlor's proprietor)! If you wanna find out what's happening in the black community you gotta come here!"

During the Gibson *Community's Choice* campaign in Newark in 1970, Jesse and his "Operation Breadbasket" Band came in to Newark and helped create the dynamic for the election of the 1st black mayor of a major north eastern city. Earlier, when Jackson introduced Gibson to his Breadbasket constituency, he joked about Gibson's hickish appearance, "highwater" pants and a close haircut in the midst of "Afro" time.

Jesse himself had an Afro during that popular black upsurge and frequently wore dashikis. He could talk to the militants as well — Malcolm, Karenga, Carmichael, Huey Newton,

As part of his early civil rights activities, Rev. Jesse Jackson demonstrated for economic opportunity at the national headquarters of A&P in New York City.



Bobby Seale. Tho some were critical and even wary of him because he always had his own agenda.

Some of them thought of him as a media opportunist who was building a self aggrandizing pork barrel reformist institution. But Jesse was a legitimate member of the broadest United Front of black progressive movement. His influence and prominence were already recognized by all.

In 1970 the Operation Breadbasket band came to Newark a couple days before the election and were an important element of the final dynamism of that peoples' victory. Election night Jesse strode into central election headquarters (CFUN's "502" High Street offices) like a jubilant cabinet member. He spoke to the assembled activists then marched with the rest of us down the center of Broad St., as the people danced in the middle of the street and on top of buses. Then he swept into Symphony Hall and swept the already ecstatic citizens off their feet almost blowing the lid off the double capacity crowd there celebrating Gibson's victory and "black power."

He laid out the grand design of our triumph as the function of his own inspiration and vision! But he was brought to Newark because he had been with Hatcher in Gary, and Stokes in Cleveland.

Part of Jackson's rejoinder to Democratic presidential candidates and like minded media about his popularity being based on "name recognition," was that if he was named Kennedy in Boston or Rockefeller in New York that would be true. But his "being known" was based on marching with Dr. King, long years at fighting racism and economic exploitation, media stunning exploits like the diplomatic coup of getting Syrian president Assad to free black U.S. flyer Goodman, &c. &c. &c. It struck home to most black people as an unassailable truth, whose public declaration was like an incredible punch line!

You mean media attention is great except for Jesse Jackson (black people)? Jackson's life has been hot media copy, the other candidates for the most part were just now being formally introduced to the American public. Jesse had a 20 year head start, he enthusiastically explained, as a public servant. A "workhorse," he likes to say, "for the people"! These were his popular and public and ubiquitously recorded credentials!

The 1970 CAP conference gave Jesse, dashiki, Afro and all, a chance to begin to fine tune the focus of his national and international networking. The conference itself had been formed as a conscious attempt at unifying black political efforts and creating institutions to stabilize and advance the black movement. *Jet* magazine carried prominent photos of Urban League's Whitney Young and Minister Farrakhan, supposedly two opposite poles of black political desire, both speakers at the gathering, in a high five type of unity handshake. Jesse was shown at a press conference with black Canadian militant Brenda Wilkerson & CORE's



Rev. Jackson with Lt. Robert Goodman, the U.S. pilot captured by Syria, whose freedom Jackson helped win, December 1983.

newly ascended chairman, Roy Innis. (That same weekend 4,500 people met in Washington at a convention to draft a new U.S. constitution, called by Huey Newton and the Blk Panther Party.)

But as the civil rights movement, itself constantly assaulted and murdered by white supremacists in the south, gave way by the time of the March on Washington to the Malcolm X galvanized line of Self Determination, Self Respect and Self Defense, anti-western black nationalism, Jackson himself, like the greater part of the black movement, was influenced and even inspired by this nationalism, in one form or another.

The irony of a Milton Coleman exposing Jackson's "Hymie" comments during the '84 campaign is that Coleman was during the 70's editor of the militant PanAfricanist newspaper *African World*. At that time Coleman would have criticized Jackson for not being militant or black enough! However backward such remarks are, it is hilarious that Jackson obviously was talking to Coleman in a language that he thought would still qualify him as a 70's militant, to Coleman, as old comrades of a more nationalist period!

Similarly, Jackson's Farrakhan connection in 1984 is quite natural seen in the context of the post 1970 political united front signified by the Atlanta meeting. Such unity is intensely popular to black people, everywhere, no matter what anybody else wanna think! Howard University students at the National Black Student Conference in Washington in 1987 passed a public resolution before some 2500 students, calling for Jackson to reunite with Farrakhan! Farrakhan had been the inspiration of the conference, Jackson did not appear, though advertised and scheduled to speak.

But there is an obvious contradiction between being a black national leader and President of the United States, to peep present U.S. society! Except that if the just struggle of the African American people for democracy and equality is indeed just, why should there be a contradiction? Must an American president, by definition equal white supremacy?

Jackson's candidacy is important to black people because it is meant to strike at the glittering head of American Hypocrisy. To loudly and with great spirit signify and agitate and reanimate social struggle in America.

At the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. From left to right: Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher, Michigan Congressman Charles Diggs, Amiri Baraka and Rev. Jesse Jackson.



The fact that candidate Jesse is also Rev. Jesse is in the African American tradition, as late as King, Elijah Muhammed, Malcolm, or Tutu for that matter. There is a powerful and moving historical connection between black politics and religion. Black religion always expresses Black Liberation, however understood!

From the Sorrow Songs, Spirituals, to Gospel or Blues — Rap or Bop or Cool, the culture wants freedom, “Howsom’ever it get here!”

From the 1970 Atlanta conference on, electoral politics grew increasingly more relevant to the black movement, that fact itself a victory of the civil rights movement. The right to *vote* has always been a spearhead of black democratic movements. The degree of opposition to slavery, disenfranchisement, gerrymandering, segregation and discrimination, the holy chorus of black national oppression, are the measure of black development!

The 1972 National Black Political Convention in Hatcher’s Gary, was organized by a coalition of black nationalists and black elected officials and activists. The three person administrative body heading the Gary meeting of some 8000 black people to forge a National Black Political Agenda, was Detroit Congressman, Charles Diggs, then recently elected chairman of the House Committee on Africa, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary and myself as head of the Congress of African Peoples. But stride for stride, based partially on Hatcher and Jackson’s previous and historical relationship, Jesse was abreast of and able to influence the direction of the leadership.

He was then still advisor to and charismatic leader of many diverse black political forces, able to leap tall racism with a single bound. But he was not a U.S. politician but a black one! Sometimes in that contradiction between popular black activists and electoral politicians Jesse could be “excluded,” by the self organization and self importance of black elected officials. A constant dismissal of black activists by these politicians was that they had no “real” constituencies, because they had not been elected to office, and therefore they were not really important — only gadflies of one sort or another. The Black Congressional Caucus became the freedom shrine of the old civil rights movement in its transition more completely into electoral politics.

There is a photo of the Gary convention (*Jet*) of Hatcher, Diggs and I in front of a podium during a press conference opening Gary. Jesse Jackson, dashikied and Afroed is right at Hatcher’s ear. Jackson called for a black political party at the convention!

In Miami however whirlwinding around the 1972 Democratic convention there, Jackson and a host of black electoral politicians eventually just attempted some privileged connection with the ill fated McGovern campaign. Although there was a National Black Agenda drafted by the thousands at Gary which was supposed to be the voice

of the African American people and black people and progressive people world wide!

The document was supposed to be the negotiating minimum program of the black freedom movement. But the black politicians' real and attempted connection to McGovern at Miami was not based on the Gary agenda but on the personal and class interests of a developing black



Operation PUSH marching in 1981 to demand that Congress extend the Voting Rights Act.

Photo from Operation PUSH

electoral class. And Jesse Jackson struggled even then to lead and negotiate for these elected officials and some resented it.

“Operation PUSH” was a more secular and fundamentally political civil rights organization animated by a middle class oriented, black economic agenda. Through PUSH Jackson took on the major corporations about franchises for black business, affirmative action and employment, pointing out with boycotts and selective buying the power and influence of the black consumer and a black middle class and entrepreneurial class expanded by the civil rights movement. At a

gathering of black Ford Lincoln Mercury dealers in San Francisco a few weeks ago, the dealers testified long and strong about how Jesse had got them their franchises, as they raised money for the presidential campaign.

Dizzy Gillespie, Dick Gregory, Eldridge Cleaver are recent black candidates who have run for U.S. president, at varying levels of political reality. Shirley Chisholm announced before the '72 Democratic convention, but the Black Caucus and visible sector of Black political leadership impolitely rejected and ignored this. Though Ms. Chisholm could have been nominated by the Gary convention, but she sought only to present her candidacy as a base for negotiations with the Democratic and as it turned out Republican party. Her closest aide became a Rockefeller aide right after the election.

Jesse Jackson's emergence as a full blown and the most serious and significant black candidate in '84 could not be surprising to black people or knowledgeable political analysts. It was absolutely in character and an expression of black development and desire. After the recent Bork hearings, one media commentator asked Jackson if he thought white southern politicians had learned anything from the widespread abandonment of Bork by white southern senators with large black

constituencies. "Yes, they learned how to count," Jackson quipped.

One fruit of voter registration and civil rights activism is an enlarged black electorate, constantly growing now that the open terror of southern apartheid has been routed.

As a candidate Jackson's presence is critical to a whole roster of people, most importantly the black majority, if only to raise issues the other candidates would eschew or water down. What is covered with the racist truism of Jackson's "inelectability" is that there are real correspondences and grounds for unity between the black masses and white working people, including farmers and the rural and urban white poor. But Jackson's *blackness* disqualifies him in all kinds of explanations of the efficacy and existence of U.S. white supremacy.

"People say, 'Can you win, Jesse?' I tell them anybody can win who gets the votes! I know *I* can win! If you dont think so, please dont get in my way!"

Yet it was Jackson's presence and stance on the issues that propelled Gary Hart into significance in 1984 as a white "cover" (as in the record business) for black leadership. Hart was like Elvis Presley to Jesse's

Jackson supporters in Iowa on the eve of the Iowa caucuses, 1988.



Big Joe Turner or Fats Domino or Big Mama Thornton. A white commercial cover for black expression!

Hart's abrupt victories in New England were a translation of Jackson's influence. But Hart's "New Ideas" did not exist. Hence his faltering and failure. Even in the present campaign, post-Donna Rice Hart's cry that he speaks for "those who have been left out" reeks for some like a cynical rip off of Jackson's basic stance!

Jesse in describing another of a present (now former) candidate's mutations and about face on the issues, again influenced by Jackson's populist thrust said that, "I told him why dont he start saying 'I am some body'? and take the whole thing!"

In 1984 the media and power centers loudly raged against Jackson's candidacy. The Israeli lobby was among Jackson's most visible critics since they knew Jackson would oppose Israeli Middle East politics and call for better U.S. relations with the Arab world!

Jackson has moved among the international 3rd world leadership since his days with Dr. King. The entire 3rd world "anti imperialist" movement is seen sympathetically by the black majority. Jackson could not speak for the central core and mass of his constituency if he did not support 3rd world liberation and the final destruction of colonialism.

Rev. Jesse Jackson at a 1987 march in Stanford, Calif., honoring Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday.



U.S. South African policy is the U.S. rulers' weakest and most vulnerable position. Jesse raised this consistently, leading demonstrations, befriending Tutu and Mandela. His presence among the candidates moved the entire electorate and candidates to the left.

Even the Rightist attempt to split the Democrat's constituency by dividing blacks and Jews did not work as Reagan's people wanted. A majority of U.S. Jews still voted against Reagan and his implied "Christianization of America." Ninety-five percent of the black electorate opposed Reagan. Jesse Jackson's constant exposition on the requirements of black political power educated hundreds of thousands. The fact that there were 11,000,000 unregistered blacks. In many states enough votes to have defeated Reagan, reignited black

voter registration and education drives.

In 84 Jackson's candidacy was made light of by some black elected officials. Old SCLC comrade, Andrew Young, Charles Rangel, Julian Bond were among them. Rangel headed up Mondale's black desk. It meant that there was a split between the black people who thought Jesse's campaign "impractical and symbolic" and others who supported the Jackson campaign. At San Francisco, Andy Young was openly booed and hooted when he served as a Mondale spokesman against Jackson's attempt to get a resolution accepted at the convention opposing the "double primary" held in the south which calls for candidates to win by more than 50%, therefore allowing white voters to unite against the black candidate in run off elections.

The split also reflected a black bourgeoisie still hedging its bet on black Self Determination. One prominent contributor to Jackson's campaign also had his representatives high up in the Mondale organization. And was moreover conveniently absent from the convention "for business reasons."

Ken Gibson gave the "over the top" vote for Mondale, passing on one round of voting, in order to achieve this. But Gibson also supported Abe Beame against Percy Sutton, even though Sutton had come to Newark in 1970 and walked the streets for Gibson!

Jackson's candidacy meant he had to be dealt with by black politicians, even be considered their leader. There had to be resistance to this in some quarters.

But for the 88 campaign most national black political figures are backing Jackson. Including Rangel. Only one black congressperson has announced support for one of the other candidates.

There was a fire to the 84 campaign fanned ironically by American resistance to the idea, but the idea of a black presidential candidate is not frivolous to black Americans! It is another heartfelt declaration of full American citizenship.

In 88 frenzied media opposition has been replaced by a consistent or even inferred disqualification of Jackson by reason of Blackness.

Hart and Biden's abrupt eclipse left only Jackson as a progressive



Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe with Jesse Jackson, 1986.



Rev. Jackson with celebrities supporting his campaign: (from left to right) boxing champion Mike Tyson, Melba Moore and Beverly Johnson.

Democratic candidate. This meant the party was in disarray. Cuomo was baited and coaxed. He apparently will wait to be "unanimously drafted." This "disarray" has even recalled Hart, juicy extra marital stumbling and all, to election center, at least serious since he is still white!

Meanwhile the Republicans rebound from Iran-Contragate, Bork/Ginsberg, Reagan's growing host of indicted and indictable cronies and the Wall St. crash and both Bush and Dole have grown stronger if only in contrast to a black man's being the most popular Democratic candidate.

Clearly in 88, the U.S. is at a cross roads of deep historical significance. Past Reagan to the right, shot from the same guns that wasted both Kennedys and Malcolm X and Martin Luther King is an ominous conservatism that puts one in mind of the Weimar Republic in Germany in the late 20's. The next stop was Hindenburg to Van Papen to the National Socialists!

The media broke the religious demagogues because their "white christianity" was too shrill an attack on cultural and religious pluralism in the U.S. Without at least a cosmetic maintenance of this constitutionally

guaranteed separation of church and state, everything from the Inquisition to Hitler's pogroms can be imagined!

Reagan and the far right's power could be significantly turned around by a Democratic victory. But at the base of progressive social motion in U.S. society is the disposition of African American struggle. Since it is the spearhead of general democratic struggle in the society, from resistance to chattel slavery to the civil rights movement, until today.

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I met Jesse again in San Francisco where he was addressing the Black Lincoln Mercury dealers convention.

Just before we entered the room he was telling me about a convergence of interests that must animate the Rainbow of his progressive and populist campaign. I have seen Jesse Jackson grow with applause and acknowledgement of his accomplishment.

"Do you really feel you can have Phil Benton's job (as head of Lincoln Mercury)? Well, if he *gave* it to you, you might give it back. If you don't believe it, even if you get it, you couldn't. If you don't believe it, don't get in people's way!"

"I was telling Brother Baraka, about the Super people and the Sub people — Got 3/5ths of a human being and then 7/5ths." It is like a history lesson sung — politics, economics. The roar is like recall and future vision.

Jackson believes it is not only white supremacy, but sometimes Black submission or adjustment to it that is in opposition to Black desire. Again and again a theme reappears, "When we begin to behave like giants, other people will begin to make adjustment to us!"

I had left Jesse to speak at the ball. The car dealers were leaping up to go just after Jesse finished. "I gotta go upstairs and change clothes." It was black tie.

My 1st question walking down the hall was how had he changed. He spoke of a confluence of interests. He was leading up to it as we entered so he could speak.

"We can be what we choose to be!!"

He is black people themselves, in this sense, bursting free of white supremacy as well as the sickness it causes those it has deemed "inferior."

His description of the Iowa campaign — his face-off with the "Straight Outs" animates both of us. And the contrasts between Homeboy Jesse bringing word of the struggle, news from the front and the magic of his Iowa confrontation form a cross cultural highway for his concerns.

"White folks been getting 7/5ths since we only 3/5ths. So when we talking about equality, they think they losing something and we think

we're gaining. But Chrysler and Carnegie took those peoples' jobs, not Black people! That's why I talk about the Barracuda Syndrome. Barracuda are color blind. No lights down there — just small fish!

“Truck drivers, auto workers, coal miners, textile workers — who's hurting — nurses, &c. There's a whole new group of people hurting.

“They (the media) try to justify their own racism by painting all white people as irreparably damaged by white supremacy. Why paint all of Georgia like Forsyth County? If there's an Imperiale type person in the state, why paint the whole state like that?

“Can a Black be president, they say? Legally, constitutionally. Yet a few white people want to say white Americans are so terminally damaged by white supremacy they can't function. Herschel Walker lives with his white wife in southern Georgia — nobody said nothing. They tried to stop us from eating and staying where we wanted to before.

On the campaign trail in Bainbridge, Georgia, March 1988.

Photo: Leon Sun



Tried to stop us from buying houses where we wanted to. . . . We won institutional victory. We just raising it up further.

“So we can raise the minimum wage. Get comparable pay for comparable work. Get a National Labor Relations Board interested in improving the conditions and fruit of labor, not strike breaking! We want our youth to move from being attacked by the law to scholarship! We want to revive the War on Poverty. End the Contra-Aid in Angola and Mozambique, as well as in Nicaragua.”

Along with his “Jackson Doctrine”: International Self Determination, Human Rights and Economic Development — he has continued to call for a more coherent U.S. foreign policy.

The basic themes surface repeatedly that he is not only qualified but better qualified than most, and that it is white supremacy sometimes aided by black refusal to think Jesse can win (usually from Establishment Blacks) that are the only obstructions to his winning.

“When we get past the racial ‘norm’ of 7/5ths and 3/5ths, we can’t help but liberate not only ourselves, but everybody else at the same time.” He was laying out the ground to be covered post Civil Rights movement.

“Howard Beach, the subway shooting, are illegal. But that plant closing is *legal!*”

“Good grades are no longer a reason for university scholarships.

“This is legal. It’s *economic violence* we’re trying to deal with. Reaganomics is an ideology, pro-profit, aristocratic and anti-labor!”

We had been close and working together objectively for a long period. Now he wanted to fill me in. Show me as I had asked the track of the cat.

“People in North Carolina lost jobs, lost land. So why not Rosa Parks and Billy Carter (both endorsed Jackson in ’88)? When the lion and the lamb lay together! And they do in time of adversity. If the forest’s on fire, the lions and lambs don’t stay and acid rain pick, they get out of the forest together!

“Monday night in Greenfield, Iowa, not Des Moines, not students but



Rev. Jackson supporting paper workers on strike in Jay, Maine, 1987.

60 and 70 year old white people! ... I want you to see this and write about what's happening in these little farm towns."

It has been good. What is clear is that we are both genuinely glad to see each other. The "interview" has been really two old brothers in arms bringing each other up to date — but Jesse mainly has let me in on the new depth and power, the utter sincerity and correctness of his pursuit.

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Jesse Jackson's victories in the Super Tuesday primaries pageant are a "symbolic" reference to the existence of the African American nation in the Black-belt South.

The five states won approximate the core and outer limits of that nation, so that even in the dregs of U.S. bourgeois democracy, an election yields a referendum-like expression of a national consciousness. Especially because that consciousness (selection) was registered numerically, and as an expression of preference inimical and opposite the majority of Americans.

Latino community greets Rev. Jackson in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Photo: Randy Hughes



Elijah Muhammed, RNA, APP calling for five states, for a Black state, is based on an authentic democratic principle, Self Determination. These five states and the rest of the "Jesse space" in the South could *vote* separation if they wanted to. But the only correct demand is Self Determination. The natural and sacred right of people to determine their lives.

Jesse Jackson's campaign has been masterfully moved and inspirational, especially in its mass expression of Black and progressive political desire. The African American nation spoke Super Tuesday and raised Jackson by the *numbers* into an undeniable importance to the presidential election. This is so powerful because it confirms that Black people are critical to this society's functioning on any level. There is in the Jackson campaign a powerful catalyst for the reigniting and the reawakening of a whole people and a whole movement. A civil rights movement has moved full speed into the Jesse Jackson campaign. The Jackson campaign is this present period's civil rights movement.

The objective Rainbow is an exact physical parallel to The United Front and mass organizations and indeed even the communist party we seek, with the latter its working class leadership that must develop, for it is authentically brought into existence.

The Black Nation is the slave history and present of U.S. society and white supremacy capitalism. Super Tuesday is actually a Black-belt referendum! The political focus of the Black South joined with the Black oppressed nationality in the North who are linked by blood, experience, history and culture, define the major U.S. cities' obvious ideological and political link with the South. The fact that the whole of the African American nation is seen as a lower class speaks to the class nature of the national question. Only the destruction of imperialism can finally resolve it.

The 26 major cities where African Americans are large pluralities or majorities, connected and expanded by a rationalized African American national "state zone" in the South (i.e., the most continuous areas of Black plurality and majority), are a powerful political force in the U.S.



At an Asian Americans for Jesse Jackson rally during the 1984 campaign.



Rev. Jesse Jackson and his family. Standing (left to right): sons Jesse Jr., Yusef and Jonathan. Seated (left to right): daughter Santita, Mrs. Jacqueline Jackson and daughter Jacqueline.

Photo: Norman L. Hunter,
Jet magazine

Black people are 11% of the U.S. population. Jesse Jackson has consistently gotten 10% of the white vote. This 20% challenges the 24% of the population who voted for Reagan.

Progressive forces must support the Jesse Jackson campaign and build the objective Rainbow as a permanent vehicle for progressive community and electoral development. It is silly to talk about revolution and not even be able to elect a school board member!

Revolutionaries would be building mass and cadre structures on the energy and real advance the Jackson campaign can generate! Theoretically it is less complicated to transfer power in a district or ward or city or county or state than the entire U.S. national state. Would that revolutionaries better understand the practical and theoretical advance rainbow structures hooked to the campaign, which could function to elect local candidates even post-presidential election, would be. The progressive aspect of bourgeois democracy must be used to transcend it.

The growing dynamic of Black national consciousness is the call, the spark. It is the measure of the torture of labor in general. The intensified and outrageous "new" super-exploitation the weakening U.S. rulers must utilize to try to keep their coffers full. American workers are being tortured; fired, made to give up historic advances made in revolutionary periods.

The Black worker is the most extreme case, since national oppression, maintained racially, doubles the exploitation, the robbery and denial of rights.

The other oppressed nationalities, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, experience the same kinds of attack, but class exploitation is fine tuned to maximize oppression by *race* so that the darker the skin, the more oppressed one is likely to be even in the same group. It is the fall of Africa that is being reinforced for ages now by white supremacy, the social philosophy of Western capitalism.

The African American national question and its underlying focus on Black Self Determination cannot be dismissed or hidden for long. Super Tuesday and the Jackson campaign redefined that question and the Black Liberation Movement for the 1990s. □