

Jesse Jackson calls for justice and economic revival

Enthusiasm greets Jackson's announcement of presidential candidacy

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Contributed

PITTSBURGH — Under cloudy Labor Day skies, Jesse Jackson stood on a hill in this city's Black community, against a backdrop of skyscrapers housing the headquarters of U.S. Steel and Mellon Bank, to announce his intention to run for President of the United States.

He came to march in this city's 100th Labor Day parade, and to state that his candidacy will be formalized October 10 at the National Rainbow Coalition Convention in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Jackson had earlier spoken at a Labor Day mass at St. Benedict the Moor Roman Catholic Church, at Freedom Corner — the historic starting point for many civil rights marches in the 1960s and for the Labor Day parade. From the pulpit, he presented his Workers Bill of Rights. The people spoke in unison: "Workers have a right to a job." Rev. Jackson replied: "People need jobs, and there are jobs which need to be done. . . . We can end plant closings without notice, and unemployment without hope."

Jackson joined the parade



Mayor Harold Washington endorses Jesse Jackson in Chicago.

alongside striking workers of NBC affiliate WPXI. All along the route, people called out, "Run, Jesse, run! Jobs, Jesse, jobs!"

"Jesse brings out a feeling of pride," said a Black janitor to *Unity*. "Here's a Black man from a poor Southern family, the son of a janitor, running for President. He says he's 'giving America a chance' to be a real democracy."

Jackson flew to Labor Day

in Cleveland, then to the Caribbean Festival in Brooklyn, which drew over 1.5 million people. When Jesse spoke the crowd burst into spontaneous chants of "Run, Jesse, run!"

The next day in Chicago, Mayor Harold Washington announced his endorsement of Jesse Jackson for President — in recognition of the overwhelming mass sentiment for empowerment in the Black community which Jackson

represents, and which was decisive in the mayor's own victory. Washington's move is expected to inspire more elected officials to endorse Jackson, which will add to Jackson's impressive roster of supporters.

The core of Jackson's support comes from African Americans, and issues of empowerment and voting rights are at the heart of his campaign, especially since the

1988 elections will set the basis for the 1990 congressional race. This Congress will reapportion congressional districts, affecting the balance of Congress into the 21st century.

Jackson also addresses a wide range of issues, broadening his support since 1984 among labor unions and workers, farmers, students and peace activists, and other people of color. Gloria

Betancourt, a leader of the Watsonville cannery workers, told *Unity*, "Jesse came to support us Mexicana workers and our strike, and he told us, 'The hands that pick broccoli can pick a President.' Jesse is our choice!"

Jackson is the front-runner and there is growing recognition that he could win. As his campaign makes gains, efforts to undermine him will increase. Right after his announcement, the media attempted to portray his campaign as futile, with interviews from civil right leaders Joseph Lowery and Tyrone Brooks who do not support Jackson or believe a Black man can win.

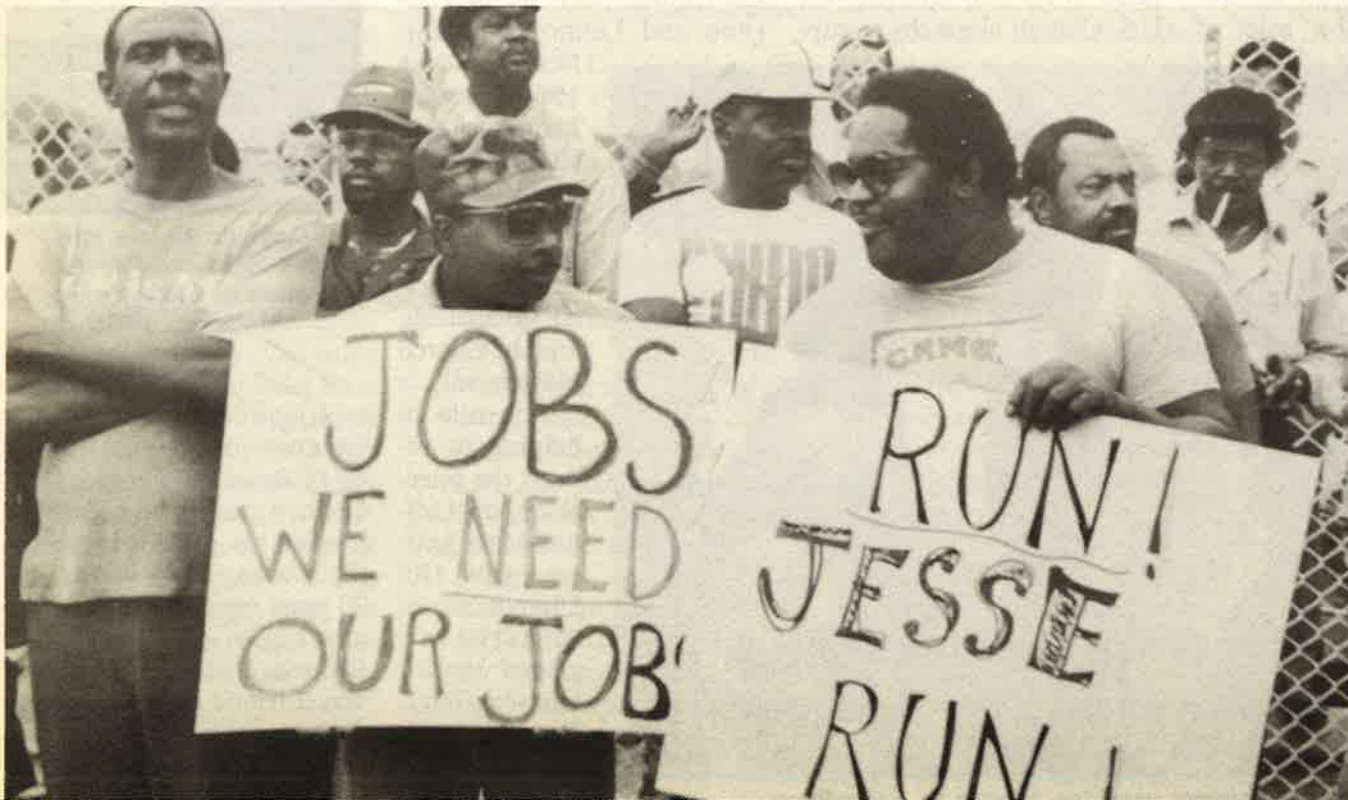
But through hard work and supporting struggles others have shirked, Jackson has built a bedrock foundation of support at the grass roots. In Watsonville, people say, "Everyone said we couldn't win, but we did! If we could win our strike, Jackson can win the Presidency!"

Jackson said, "We are changing phases today," toward kicking off his campaign. There are varying levels of state organization; so far, a million dollars has been raised, with support from Black business and elected officials being key. At Harlem's Apollo Theater, a star-studded benefit featured Bill Cosby and Roberta Flack. It was hosted by Percy Sutton, chairman of the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation and former Manhattan Borough president.

The African American people solidly support Jackson, and now is the time to put more pressure on elected officials and others to do more for Jackson's campaign.

The left also has an important role to play in seeking the broadest and deepest unity around Jackson's candidacy. This means mobilizing all sectors of the Black community, as well as other oppressed peoples, from the grass roots to the business, civil rights and political leadership. Special attention should be paid to forging the unity of the Black and Chicano/Latino communities. In the trade unions, it means working with the rank and file, but also with union leaders at all levels. The left should stand for the broadest unity, and carefully uphold the legitimate interests of all sectors and classes of this united front.

As Rev. Jackson said on Labor Day, "We can build a coalition in quest of jobs and peace and justice."



Jackson joined these G.E. workers on the picket line in Chicago, September 8, 1987.