

NATIONAL NEWS UPDATE

Push-Me Pull-You: A Political Tug-Of-War What Are You Going to do About Jesse Jackson?

by A. Lee Henderson

Political pundits in their usual tug-of-war are vying with each other to determine how far short of the mark Jesse Jackson will fall. They are hedging their myopic visions with speculations on the power he might have as a mainline political figure in either choosing the presidential nominee, impacting party leadership positions, or influencing the vice-presidential platform.

How far will you go to vote a losing candidate, joke the pessimists. But the infectious disease of losing does not appear to infect Jackson's energetic jousting for the presidency. Unfortunately, it has affected the intelligentsia to examine the battlefield with dour self-righteousness as they proclaim, "You know he'll never win!" They may lose votes for Jackson, but theirs is the critical edge that could also detract, with their defeatism, from the first Black presidential candidate's statistical strength. Certainly the lurking White backlash will relish such support.

Whether or not the electors will vote wholeheartedly for Jackson or attempt to staunch the anti-progressive clinch of the far right, all votes are counted!

The majority press today agrees that Jackson's campaign has evolved into political substance. He is taken seriously by all as a candidate for-throw on national issues. And he has emerged beyond his skin color as a formidable contender, an advocate for conservative military expenditure, a foreign policy rooted in humanism vs provinces of power, progressive taxes, childcare planks to add to national health concerns such as AIDS, and a rallying cry to the poor and the unemployed that crosses the color line. The rainbow coalition has coalesced. It appears as a unity of fused political power feeding off its own energy in spite of the anticipated bigot backlash that also masquerades as cynicism.

Blacks do not vote "black" in compliance with hypothetical Caucasian misconceptions that would deliver us all (some screaming in horror!) into Jesse's camp! The sting still exists in Chicago among those summarily shut out from Jackson's unilateral moves to fill the void of Harold Washington's death with a mayoralty replacement. Jackson generated a tumultuous situation. The inner circles vied for power. Adversaries, however, can be restored in the strange game of power politics and stratagems worked out to achieve the common goal. The question is whether that common goal has been perceived by those who choose pain above reconciliation. Whether it would be possible for Jesse Jackson to mend fences among those closest to him rests on a human enigma: "To err is human, To forgive divine." Perhaps that divinity is better rooted in Jackson, beyond his inspired rhetoric, than it is in the least of his detractors.

All of us must overcome the victimization of being in Jackson's words "the damned, the despised, and the dispossessed" martialled against unworkable old guard economic and social constrictions. We will eventually unshackle ourselves from limiting self-prejudice and judgments against those we have learned to fear and to hate. The fabric of our intolerance wears thin as we are exposed to universal matters of conscience, in the national government or the world community. As we apply more understanding to ourselves and our origins, we are better able to project the growth potential in others. A Jesse Jackson emerging from his own chains assumes greater status and an international stature. No longer does he embarrass those who ask for credentials. He has been busy operating, hands-on, in areas of critical economic concerns and also on long range foreign objectives.

The Jackson who has apologized for anti-semitic stabs is dressing the wounds of the peace proponents in Israel with his pro-Palestinian solutions based on finding a common ground for justice, not hostilities. Jackson is accountable in action on the scene in Central America, South Africa and in Washington, D.C.

In the United States there are 2 million new black voter registrations; 1.2 million in the South in 1984. Democratic victories in four southern states are tallied for Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and North Carolina, formerly considered marginal at best. There is meaning in these statistics for Jackson supporters who credit him, at least in part, for inspiring the rise in voters.

In 1984 Jackson won a solitary victory in Louisiana. On Super Tuesday he racked up five states. His almost unanimous support was said to come from Southern blacks. In 1984, for example, Jackson got 55 percent of the black vote in Georgia and 57 percent in Alabama. In 1988 he won 96 percent of the black vote across the South.

With a banner of "Economic Democracy" he has waved off the skeptics decrying his former standard cry of "Our time has come!" as government for the blacks. Today's Jesse Jackson is responding to the nation and to all of its people with a pragmatic concern for constitutional justice for all.

Jackson's indefatigable energy has scored heavily among the young, the "Yuppies" and the celebrity contingent of film, TV, and music makers. For the anti-apartheid recording of Stetasonic's Brooklyn Rap A.F.R.I.C.A., used as a video study guide for classrooms and also media-theatrical release, Jackson was the inspiration and featured on the production.

On Martin Luther King's birthday CBS-TV commentator Jimmy the Greek Snyder claimed that blacks were "bred" since the days of slavery for athletic performance. Later, he apologized for the remarks. Russell Adams of Howard University Afro-American Studies Department (quoted in U.S. News and World Report 2/1/88 issue) said "We now have a climate where people feel less danger. The convert racists feel they can come from under cover." However, in defense of the heartfelt apologies rendered by Snyder, a compassionate Jesse Jackson, himself bearing the stigma of having erred for remarks construed as anti-semitic, rallied to broadcast for Snyder, side-by-side with him. Overlooked by the media was the ability of Jackson to give strength to a human being's need to re-evaluate his thoughts and actions without having to bear the onus of being a bigot, when in reality, he was simply-and-naively foolhardy without good intentions.

To strengthen his image as a national political candidate for the presidency Jackson has tuned himself to responsibilities toward a nation of diversity. Whether that new Jackson mold penetrates his spiritual substance, innoculating his psyche and removing the scars of early experiences and perceptions that lacked critical evidence, we will come to know in the future.

The future is too long to wait, however, if Jackson is to make his mark. Our own prejudices, equivocations, and hypercritical enmities must be resolved if we are to be fair to Jesse Jackson.

The sentimental past can crucify Jackson if we fail to de-mystify the Martin Luther King retrospectives and blame Jackson for being less passive than the 80's demand.

As Jackson is quoted in the January issue of Vanity Fair Magazine in an article written on the campaign trail by Gail Sheehy, "A lot of people aspire to the presidency. But they don't take the time to think presidential."

Although Sheehy credits Jackson's charisma beyond its superficial blush to its motivational sweep with young blacks and fearful whites who overcome their distance to reach out to touch him, she probed his psychological scars without anesthesia. Relentlessly pursuing his antecedents in Greenville, South Carolina, including the myth of father-who-never-came-home from service: actually home town resident Noah Robinson, Sr. and his legitimized son Noah Robinson, Jr., Sheehy creates a sentimentalized vision of the blood father claiming Jesse as his own with "little nickel" handouts to the boy whose half-brother enjoyed the privileges . . . the father and the home! Although the soap-opera continuity of the wealthy Noah Robinson, Jr. and his half-brother Jesse Jackson are used by the media to confuse onlookers with an emotional subplot, Jesse Jackson has outdistanced his past. The muckrakers will stir muddy waters in search of smirch. But those of us with clear heads to contemplate the real issues must stand our ground.

The Los Angeles Times recently reported from the Gallup survey and found an unusually high level of education among white Jackson supporters. They quoted Frank Watkins, Jackson's political director as saying, "I have absolutely zero faith in any polling." Noting that the Jackson campaign is unable to afford voter polls of its own, their people provide evidence of wide backing among blue collar workers and large numbers of the less affluent, too.

Watkins is reported to cite a poor, middle-aged white couple, shabbily dressed and nearly toothless who came into the South Carolina campaign headquarters before the March 12 Democratic caucuses. "The man leaned over to me and whispered, 'I don't care if he is a nigger. I'm going to vote for him!'"

Says Jackson of his 8 percent share of the white vote dubbed "Peugot proletariat" in Illinois last week, "My focus is not so much on the color of votes but the number of votes."

The labor rallies with their chants of thousands of blue collar workers leaning towards Jackson offer him reason to hope for their growing support.

In Pittsburg, California, nearly 10,000 people protested to modernize a steel plant there. Jackson was there offering his solidarity, similar to what he has done, reports labor writer of the Los Angeles Times Henry Weinstein, in auto assemblers' causes in Flint, meatpackers in Milwaukee, farm laborers in Calexico, hospital orderlies in Philadelphia, paper workers in Mobile, and firefighters in St. Louis.

Regarding as "the only candidate speaking for workers, oppressed people, union or non-union," said Gene Gifford, a 44-year old steam fitter from Martinez, California who backed Walter F. Mondale, the AFL-CIO candidate in 1984, "He's got my support."

The 10,000 people protesting in Pittsburg, California broke out in cries of "Win, Jesse, win!"

The cries seem to be building to a groundswell, although there may be a counterswell rumbling of threatened restrictive reprisal. The backlash may be out there lurking, but for those of us who are not afraid, our need to take a Stand again, Somewhere, urges Support.

Dr. A. Lee Henderson, Publisher of The Portland Observer (Portland, OR), also the Publisher of "The A.M.E. Christian Recorder" and the Connectional A.M.E. Church, Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203.)



Hispanic Named to National Guard Top Brass

WASHINGTON, D.C. — William A. Navas, Jr., of Puerto Rico, was named brigadier general of the Army National Guard on Oct. 5, 1987. The promotion, which had been recommended to President Reagan, was announced by the Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, Jr.

General Navas is currently deputy director of the Army National Guard. His career spans over 21 years of active commissioned service, including duty as combat commander in Vietnam. In 1984, his strong leadership was exemplified when he commanded the Combined Task Force Minuteman I, which conducted the first engineering training exercises in Latin America. The exercises are the forerunner of Blazing Trails, a program adapted for all Army Reserve units.

As deputy director, General Navas, 44, an engineer, helps formulate and administer all programs, policies and plans affecting the Army National Guard of the U.S. which consists of over 425,000 citizen-soldiers in 54 states and territories. He has received many military honors including the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and the Vietnam Service Medal.

Born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Navas attended high school there, then earned a B.S. in civil engineering from the University of Puerto Rico in 1965 and an M.S.

in management engineering from the University of Bridgeport.

In addition, General Navas attended eight military schools, including the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center, where he studied terrorism in low-intensity conflicts.

Upon graduation from the University of Puerto Rico's Reserve Officer Training Corps program, he became second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers in 1965 and in 1966 entered active duty as an officer in the Regular Army. He served as commander of the Wertheim Subdistrict in the Federal Republic of Germany, then assumed command of Company A, 168th Combat Engineer Battalion, in Lai Khe, Vietnam in 1968.

In 1970, Navas was appointed captain in the Puerto Rico Army National Guard and commander of Company C, 130th Combat Engineer Battalion. He became a major in 1972, a lieutenant colonel in 1976, and as a full colonel in 1981, he accepted an Active Guard and Reserve appointment as director of plans, operations, training and military support of the Puerto Rico Army National Guard State Area Command. He was promoted to deputy director of the Army National Guard last May.

General Navas is married to the former Wilda Cordova of Mayaguez. They have two children, Gretchen and William III, and live in Alexandria, Va.

Jackson

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interests which dominate the entire legislative and electoral process. This road would force open within the Democratic Party a long overdue debate over the future of American public policy, and illustrate that the economic, educational; social and political interests of Afro-Americans are generally identical to those of a majority of working American people — Hispanics, Native Americans, the unemployed, working women, the homeless, the elderly, and others.

Which road will Jackson take? Ron Daniels, head of the Rainbow Coalition, understands full well these alternatives; others close to Jackson realize the historic opportunity, yet still perceive of the current mobilization in traditional electoral terms, thinking only of the kinds of concessions which might be granted to them at the Atlanta Convention. But politics is, in the final analysis, the raw struggle for power. The Rainbow can advance the real struggle for progressive and Black empowerment only if it is bold and uncompromising. If it takes the easy road of compromise and dealmaking, it will betray its own vision of a just, democratic society.

Black Population Has Grown By 11 Percent Since 1980, Census Bureau Says

The nation's Black population grew by 3.1 million or 11 percent from 1980 to 1987, according to the Commerce Department's Census Bureau.

The bureau's latest annual population estimates by age, sex, and race indicate that Blacks totaled 29.9 million in 1987 compared with 26.8 million in the 1980 census. Only 19 percent of the growth was from immigration.

The Black population has been growing faster than the total population and its proportion of the total rose from 11.8 percent in 1980 to 12.2 in 1987.

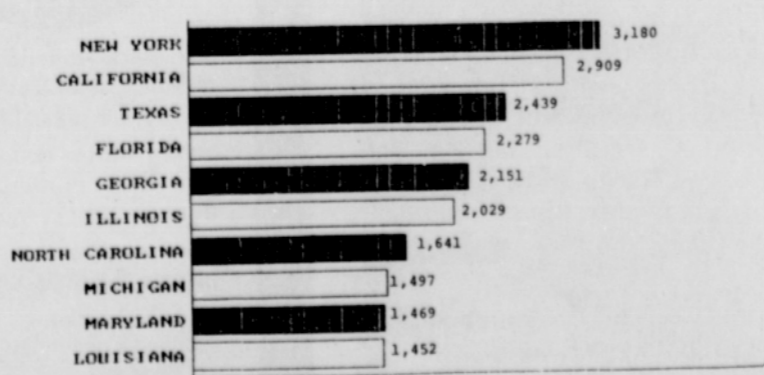
The report shows the White population grew from 195.1 million to 206.2 million during the period, an increase of 6 percent. Most of the gain also came from natural increase.

Here are other findings from the report for 1987:

- The Black population's median age was 27.2 years compared with 33.0 years for Whites. The six-year difference has remained fairly constant since the 1970s.

- Black females outnumbered Black males 15.7 million to 14.2 million. Males outnumbered females only through age 18.
- White females totaled 105.3 million compared with 100.9 million White males.

TEN STATES WITH THE LARGEST BLACK POPULATION: YEAR 2000 (numbers in thousands)



SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Civil Rights Restoration Act Vital to America

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On the eve of the Senate vote to override the President's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, delegates to the American Jewish Congress' National Biennial Convention urged the House and Senate to overturn the President's veto.

The American Jewish Congress, a civil rights and religious liberties organization, claimed that "President Reagan's veto last week of the Civil Rights Restoration Act (S. 557/H.R. 1214) was a major disappointment to all those committed to the protection and advancement of civil rights in America."

The resolution also strongly criticized the Moral Majority for advancing "malicious and provocative mistruths . . . in an attempt to block the override of President Reagan's veto." The

delegates further noted that the Moral Majority's "characterization of this most important bill as a 'gay rights legislation' is not only a misrepresentation of the act but also completely overlooks the importance of this bill for assuring the rights of those discriminated against because of age, race, gender, or disability."

Celebrating its 70th anniversary as an advocate of civil rights in the United States, the American Jewish Congress called the Civil Rights Restoration Act "a reaffirmation of our nation's commitment to the principles of non-discrimination. It is the protection of individuals and their access to institutions receiving federal funding that remains the main issue."

The delegates concluded by calling for a veto override, describing that action as "a matter of simple justice."