



UNITY PHOTO

Jackson front-runner in all regions

Jane Barth

Excitement is building as millions eagerly await Jesse Jackson's formal announcement October 10 at the National Rainbow Convention in Raleigh, North Carolina, that he will run for the presidency of the United States in 1988.

Jackson brings to the race the most progressive platform, the strongest grass-roots appeal, and the greatest ability to mobilize a new democratic majority to defeat the Republicans and the right in 1988.

In the 1984 Democratic primaries, Jackson won 3.5 million votes, 20% of the popular votes cast, and captured 85% of the Black vote with his theme of empowerment, peace and democracy.

This time, Jackson will enter the race as the clear front-runner, out-polling his nearest competitor by 2 to 1. "Able" Mabel Thomas, Georgia state representative, told *Unity*, "I think it's important that Jackson's candidacy is portrayed as a front-runner, not only in name recognition, but on the issues."

Expanding the Rainbow

Born and raised in South Carolina, Jesse Jackson is a leader of the African Ameri-

can people's struggle for empowerment and justice. Since 1984, Jackson has crisscrossed the country and the world on an 18-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week crusade to articulate the Rainbow vision and agenda.

His message is being heard by an expanding audience and base of support. From white farmers in Iowa to striking Chicana and Mexicana canner workers in California, Jackson has stood with them in their moments of trial, and now in 1988, they are standing with him as he begins his second quest for the presidency.

Roger Allison, a farmer and executive director of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, told *Unity* that Jackson has earned this support because "He spoke out when no one else was talking about what was happening to farmers. He has a message of economic and social justice, and ties us all together."

"I've supported Jesse Jackson since 1984," said Alfred Louie, director of the Chinatown Senior Citizens Center in New York City, to *Unity*. "It's time to have someone who is concerned about everyone's welfare."

Jackson has also increased his support among Black elected officials, businesspeople and professionals, including some like Congressman Mickey Leland of Texas, who

bucked the enormous pro-Jackson sentiment in the Black communities to support Walter Mondale in 1984. With the early endorsement of Chicago's Mayor Harold Washington (who did not officially endorse Jackson in 1984), and the support of 18 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, many more endorsements are expected.

Sunbelt strategy and Super Tuesday

Jackson campaign strategists are paying attention to the Sunbelt states of the South and Southwest. On Super Tuesday, March 8, 1988, 11 Southern and "border states" such as Kentucky will hold Democratic primaries and caucuses. Jackson has a good chance of winning the South and a recent Roper poll, conducted for *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, showed Jackson holding a substantial lead at 27%, compared to Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee, who is running second at 13%.

In addition, the campaign seeks to permanently alter the voting patterns in this country by expanding the electorate through massive voter registration, noting that 85 million eligible voters — mostly poor, minorities, women and working people — did not vote in 1984. For Jackson and the peo-

continued on pg. 4



Supporters greet the Rev. Jackson at the Iowa State Fairgrounds, September 1987.

Jackson and the '88 elections...

continued from pg. 3

ple to win in 1988, these voters need to be brought into the electoral process, changing *who* votes and *how* elections are conducted.

Enforcing the Voting Rights Act, and challenging barriers to democratic participation in the electoral process, is as important now as in 1984. For example, Jackson received 20% of the popular vote, but just 11% of the delegates to the Democratic National Convention because of "winner-take-all" systems and other schemes. Jackson supporters in California forced the Democratic Party to adopt the proportional representation system, which will go before the state legislature in early 1988.

The Black vote is a powerful force on Jackson's side, since even in states such as Mississippi where Blacks are 35% of the population, they are traditionally 45% of the vote in the Democratic pri-



Jesse Jackson supporting striking cannery workers in Watsonville, in the summer of 1986.

maries. In addition, some Southern states such as Georgia have "open primaries" in which people need not vote with their registered party. With the Republican field crowded with conservative contenders (Vice Presi-

dent George Bush, Senator Robert Dole, Rep. Jack Kemp, and TV evangelist Pat Robertson), conservative Southern Democrats are expected to "cross over" and vote in the Republican primaries instead. This, in turn, will increase the

already huge impact of the Black vote.

And this time around, Jesse Jackson has increased his support among whites as his theme of economic justice for all resounds throughout the country. Anne Braden, a long-time activist in the South and a leader of the Kentucky Rainbow Coalition, told *Unity*, "As a white Southerner, I feel that 1988 can be the year when we make a significant breakthrough in beginning to change the racially divided voting patterns of the South. Many white Southerners are rallying to the banner of Jesse Jackson." The Roper poll in *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* shows that Jackson has more white

Southern support than contenders Paul Simon, Joseph Biden, Richard Gephardt or Bruce Babbitt.

Georgia state Sen. Arthur Langford told *Unity*, "People throughout the South are very excited, because more serious issues are being discussed, from foreign policy to welfare to the education of our children and youth. People are going to the Rainbow Convention to make a commitment to get Jesse Jackson nominated in the primaries and elected in 1988."

With Jackson's overwhelming base among Black voters and increasing support among whites, he could emerge from Super Tuesday as the front-runner, with the largest bloc of delegates going into the remaining three months of the primaries.

In the Southwestern section of the Sunbelt, Rev. Jackson has taken action to build a stronger Black-Latino alliance. With 15 million Chicanos and Latinos concentrated in five Southwestern states, the Latino vote could become the "sleeping giant" of the 1988 elections.

Mario Obledo, past president of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), supports Jackson and is one of the national co-chairs of the Jackson campaign exploratory committee. He told *Unity*, "Jackson has been with our community on issues of civil rights, equal job opportunities, struggles for better housing, access to good health care, immigration, farm workers, and so on. He is an advocate for justice and peace. In other words, he's one of us."

Other prominent Chicanos and Latinos have also come out in early support of Jackson, including Texas State Rep. Roman Martinez and Houston City Councilman Ben Reyes.

Turning the tide

The Rainbow Convention and Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign come at a time of renewed democratic struggle, spearheaded by forces in the African American community, against Reagan and the right.

Since 1982 there has been the fight to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national holiday, followed in 1983 by the victory of Mayor Harold Washington. Jesse Jackson's 1984 campaign came about in this context, setting the basis for the Free South Africa Movement that swept the country in 1985, and was a major force in helping turn the tide against the right.

The tide is beginning to turn against Reaganism, and spirits will be high at the National Rainbow Coalition Convention in Raleigh, North Carolina. There will be workshops and activities throughout the three-day conference, designed to focus on issues, to inspire people and to enable people to leave the convention with a concrete idea of what needs to be done.

There will be Rainbow plenary sessions and workshops on topics such as Rainbow economic policy, fighting contra aid and apartheid, and combatting domestic racism.

"I'm looking forward to the Rainbow Convention as an exciting development in American politics," said Arthur Kinoy, co-chair of the National Committee for Independent Political Action

and a member of the Rainbow Coalition's National Board, to *Unity*. "It's something all progressive people should support, to build the Rainbow as a permanent inde-

pendent mass-based organization."

So as thousands of Jackson's supporters gather in Raleigh and millions more cheer from across the country, it is becoming evident that a broad, progressive majority coalition, which can really change the face of this country, is beginning to be built.

There are different points of view, but a spirit of unity is expected to prevail. What people have in common is a conviction that Jackson, the front-runner, represents the best hope for 1988 and beyond, and that a powerful people's movement for jobs, peace and justice is a crucial necessity if we are to avoid fascism and war.

Special thanks to Pam Smith of the Jesse Jackson '88 Exploratory Committee for her help and information used in this article.



Black supporters in Atlanta, December 1984. Jesse Jackson is a leader in the African American people's struggle for empowerment and justice.

Jackson stood with white farmers, Chicanas striking the canneries, now they stand with him