

Jesse Jackson: A Voice that Expanded the American Conversation

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, whose impassioned oratory and populist vision of a "rainbow coalition" of the poor and forgotten made him one of the nation's most influential Black leaders in the decades between the civil rights crusades of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the election of Barack Obama, died Tuesday, February 17, at his home in Chicago. He was 84. His family confirmed his death in a statement, saying he "died peacefully," but did not provide a cause.

Few figures in modern American history have blended faith, politics and civil rights advocacy as powerfully as Jesse Jackson. For more than five decades, Jackson stood at the intersection of protest and policy, urging the nation to widen its definition of opportunity and inclusion.

Born in 1941 in Greenville, South Carolina, Jackson grew up in the segregated South during the height of Jim Crow laws. Raised by his mother, Helen Burns, he experienced firsthand the inequalities that defined

the era. A gifted athlete and strong student, Jackson earned a football scholarship to the University of Illinois before transferring to North Carolina A&T State University, where he became active in the growing Civil Rights Movement.

His leadership abilities soon drew national attention. In the mid-1960s, Jackson worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). He was present in Memphis in 1968 during King's final campaign in support of striking sanitation workers - a pivotal and tragic moment in American history. That experience helped shape Jackson's lifelong commitment to economic justice alongside racial equality.

After King's death, Jackson founded Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) in Chicago, focusing on economic empowerment, voter registration and corporate accountability. Later, he formed the Rainbow Coalition, an alliance designed to unite people across racial, economic and geographic lines. The phrase "Rainbow Coalition" became symbolic of Jackson's belief that political power could be built by bringing together working-class Americans, minorities, farmers and urban communities under one banner.

Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns marked a turning point in American politics. While he did not win the Democratic nomination, his candidacies were historic. In 1988, he won several state primaries and caucuses, demonstrating that a Black candidate could build a broad, multiracial coalition at the national level. His campaigns helped expand voter participation, particularly among African Americans and young voters, and influenced the Democratic Party's platform on issues such as poverty, healthcare and foreign policy.

Perhaps Jackson's greatest significance lies in how he reshaped political possibility.

At a time when national leadership remained overwhelmingly white, he demonstrated that a Black candidate could compete seriously for the presidency. His campaigns paved the way for future generations of leaders and altered the expectations of what American politics could look like.

Beyond electoral politics, Jackson became a persistent advocate in international diplomacy and humanitarian causes. He negotiated for the release of American hostages abroad and spoke out against apartheid in South Africa. Domestically, he championed voting rights, educational access and economic fairness.

Supporters see Jackson as a bridge between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the more diverse political landscape of the 21st century. Critics have at times challenged his rhetoric or political strategies. Yet even detractors acknowledge his influence. His voice - often described as prophetic and preacher-like - echoed through convention halls, church sanctuaries and protest marches for decades.

In assessing Jesse Jackson's legacy, it is difficult to separate the man from the movement. He helped carry forward the moral urgency of the Civil Rights era while pushing it into the arena of national electoral politics. His work expanded participation, challenged institutions and reminded the country that democracy grows stronger when more voices are heard.



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FOR MARCH 3, 2026 PRIMARY ELECTION

Thursday, February 128:00am - 7:30pm
 Friday, February 138:00am - 7:30pm
 Saturday, February 148:00am - 3:00pm
 Sunday, February 15Closed
 Monday, February 168:00am - 7:30pm
 Tuesday, February 178:00am - 7:30pm
 Wednesday, February 18.....8:00am - 7:30pm
 Thursday, February 198:00am - 7:30pm
 Friday, February 208:00am - 7:30pm
 Saturday, February 218:00am - 3:00pm
 Sunday, February 2212:00pm - 6:00pm
 Monday, February 238:00am - 7:30pm
 Tuesday, February 248:00am - 7:30pm
 Wednesday, February 258:00am - 7:30pm
 Thursday, February 268:00am - 7:30pm
 Friday, February 278:00am - 7:30pm
 Saturday, February 288:00am - 3:00pm

EARLY VOTING AT THE ANSON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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POLLS ARE OPEN 6:30AM - 7:30PM

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- **Forge Strong Working Relationships with Surrounding Agencies**
- **Unbreakable Faith in God**

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March 3, 2026

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Sunday
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