Interview with **Jesse Jackson**
Date: April 11, 1989
Interviewers: Madison Lacy Davis, Jr. and Henry Hampton
Camera Rolls: 1076-1081
Sound Rolls: 134-136
Team: A

Interview gathered as part of ***Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s***. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

Preferred Citation
Interview with Jesse Jackson, conducted by Blackside, Inc. on April 11, 1989 for *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in ***bold italics*** was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize II*.

[camera roll #1076]
[sound roll #134]

00:00:12:00

Camera crew member #1:

OK, marker.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark one.

[slate]

Camera crew member #2:

It's all yours, Davis.

00:00:16:00

Interviewer #1:

Let me take you back to 1980. It's May of 1980, the verdicts have come in on the, the policeman who killed Mr. McDuffie and one of America's worst riots takes place. You go back there. Why did you got to Miami and what did you hope to accomplish?

00:00:31:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, because there was a need and people with whom I had worked across the years were crying out for help for fear there would be even more killing and more rioting. There are two dimensions of the Miami scene as I reflect upon it. One is its history of being one of the places where, where African people landed. From West Africa to South America, Brazil to the Caribbean to the forts in Florida and Virginia, up, up the coast. It's a long and proud history of African Americans in Miami. Also because it is so close to, to Latin America and to the Caribbean, there's a great sense of, of internationalism in Miami, a port city. In the deepest days of segregation there was some sense of a thriving African American community in, in southern Florida. Then with the Cold War with Cuba, African Americans were made third class citizens. Whites were first class citizens in terms of, of access and opportunity. Cubans, in some sense, were encouraged to come here in the struggle with Castro, to undercut Castro, and thus there was this kind of subjugation. And many promises made, almost no promises kept. Why no economic development, well you see a highway cut through the community which undercut them economically and, and humiliated them because they did not have the political power to fight back and to protect themselves. Banks and savings and loans companies were red lining the communities. No money is available for affordable housing, medium or small businesses. So there was great sense of, of economic exploitation. But strangely enough, even in the riots of the '60s, never did pure poverty incite a riot. It was always some police, people spark that set the flame into explosion. And that's exactly what happened when McDuffie was, was killed in, in 1980.

00:02:41:00

Interviewer #1:

Now when you were there in Overtown, you stayed with a Black family in Liberty City, I recall. Can you recall any impression or story that gives us some insight into how people felt?

00:02:54:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, you know, the people are basically conservative, Christian, patriotic, but also humiliated. These were not people looking for trouble. They were looking for a job. Looking for respect. Looking for protection. And they found none of that. And while the government made provisions to bring the Cubans in, they never made any provisions to a-allow the African Americans who lived there to maintain a, a standard living or to grow. So you had a very high unemployment rate among the youth, inadequate job training, almost no program for building affordable housing. So, what you saw in the riot really were voices of despair, the voices of the unheard. And so, people with their backs against the wall, particularly the young, lashed out and, and fought back. In part I went there because of my concern and fear

that they would simply be slaughtered, that they would be killed without any sense of mercy. But also, at that time Mr. Carter was the president and there was a bit more sensitivity. I recall President Carter sending a team of people, Ernie Green and Lamond Godwin, Alexis Herman, a team of people from the White House to analyze what could happen in the short term in terms of some immediate relief. So, there was a certain sensitivity from the White House, but there had been no, no program there that would provide any kind of economic parity. You know, when Europe was down and had to be developed, they offered twenty-year, two percent, long-term loans, government secured. That was the heart of the Marshall Plan, not just grants, the chance for economic growth and development. Well, the Miamis of our nation never got that kind of consideration, never got that development. And even this day, it remains a tinder box.

00:05:00:00

Interviewer #1:

Given that you stayed with the people in Miami, were you buoyed by their sense of hope?

00:05:05:00

Jesse Jackson:

I was, but also I wanted to share with them my sense of presence and concern. I also knew that because I had been there many times before, that my presence there would attract the media in some measure. The media became their form of protection, because the elements that would gun them down in a violent way had to deal with them differently with, with the lights on. And we also, we also met with the, the editorial boards trying to interpret the crisis. Because sometimes in the excitement, the media can incite more of a crisis in a given community, and what these people basically wanted was their civil rights, the right to an education, the right to a job, the right to a decent house, ability to walk their streets in safety and security.

00:06:00:00

Interviewer #1:

All right, let's stop down now.

[cut]

00:06:03:00

Camera crew member #1:

And marker.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark two.

[slate]

00:06:06:00

Interviewer #1:

Tell me more about Miami.

00:06:07:00

Jesse Jackson:

When I think about the cities of, of great joy in the heart of the segregated South: Charlotte, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; Augusta, Georgia, where James Brown and Leon Austin and the Buicks, that's where the quintet came from, New Orleans, but, but Miami was a great source of, of joy and excitement in part because of the weather, in part because it was an international city, but also there was a, a thriving African American business community in, in Miami that was decimated with urban removal. Also recall that in Miami there was a Holiday Inn near the, the airport. It was the first Holiday Inn in America that African Americans could stay, and, and all of the golfers, the professional golfers and Charley Sifford and Joe Louis and all of them would go once a year to the great tournament in, in Miami in February. There was something special about being able to go to Miami and stay in the Holiday Inn and, and go to the, to the tournament and go to, to, to the race track or take trips from Miami and go to, to the Caribbean or go to South America. There was a certain sense of joy and hope there. And, and Miami was, was torn asunder with no sense of replacement, no sense of hope and development. And these riots are almost always expressions of, of despair and desperation.

00:07:36:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's stop down again.

[cut]

00:07:39:00

Camera crew member #1:

And marker.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark three.

[slate]

00:07:41:00

Interviewer #1:

Once the Black community began in Chicago to react to Byrne excesses, how, how did PUSH begin to work with organizations and what was your role?

00:07:50:00

Jesse Jackson:

You know, you really must put the Chicago scene within the context of a, of a glorious history. I mean Oscar De Priest, one of our first African American Congresspeople from Chicago, Bill Dawson from Chicago, the, the Daley, Dawson combination which delivered for Kennedy the presidency in 1960, and then the modern period would have to be Dr. King coming to Chicago, leading open housing marches, and that's when I really emerged on the scene. I had been with him as had many others in Selma in '65, the year before, and he made the judgment really based on appeal by Al Raby and Bill Barry and a combination of people to come to Chicago. And the, ***and it was said that you could not expose segregation in the North because it was subtle. The fact is it was everything except subtle. It was dynamic. It was real, blatant, ugly, violent.*** And as he marched toward Gage Park and, and marched toward the southwest, bricks were thrown and there was this great confrontation between the police and the residents there because they had somehow been taught that African Americans were, were dirty and indecent and, and violent. They had these fears. Their, their, their fears had not been relieved, and there was a struggle for a, an empowered political community, the Silent Six. Dr. King began to give voice to those fears and frustrations in Chicago, and then Mayor Daley died and one of his loyal servants, Wilson Frost was the mayor pro tem, should have been acting mayor. They locked him off of the fifth floor of City Hall. Well, then Bilandic was given that job in, in that arrangement. Well, Mayor Byrne beat him but in part because a significant number of, of independents, African Americans, Hispanics, progressive Whites went with Jane Byrne and she had a, a little pizazz, a li, a little gusto, and, and we knew it was a, a break. And I remember when several aldermen who went with her for the first time said, Now that she has won, she has met with George Dunne and that group before meeting with us. We are afraid. And there was a meeting in my office with Harold Washington and several aldermen. They said, We need somebody to help us. And so Harold and, and I think Nancy Jefferson, two or three of us, went down to Jane Byrne's transition office, and after meeting with her it was so clear that she had no special sense of obligation to the element that made the break to elect her. Harold said, We're going to have trouble with her administration unless something fundamental changes. And there was a sense that we had to keep organizing because we had not yet been recognized with, with parity, that we were

still somehow less than peers, and so the organization continued. Because she had a lot of exciting activity, ChicagoFest, and because she did reach out in ways that say, Daley and Bilandic never had, there was sense that somehow you couldn't beat her—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Jesse Jackson:

—I mean, she was female. She was not hostile. She was not polarizing the city, per se, and yet we were not involved in the equation. So, I used to do a morning, a talk show every Sunday morning. And on this particular Friday, Dorothy Tillman and Marion Stamps and Lu Palmer were arrested at the Chicago Housing Authority—

00:11:30:00

Interviewer #1:

I think we better stop down.

Camera crew member #1:

Stop.

[cut]

[camera roll #1077]

00:11:35:00

Camera crew member #2:

Mark four.

[slate]

00:11:38:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, you were telling me a story about you, Dorothy Tillman and others going to see Mayor Byrne.

00:11:42:00

Jesse Jackson:

You ne—no, I'm sorry. Right after Jane Byrne was, was elected, the aldermen who had gone the independent route and supported her, who had won, felt that they should have access to see her immediately. Her first meeting was with George Dunne and the forces that we had defeated. They felt very insecure and had a meeting in my office. In that meeting was Harold Washington, in that meeting was, was Nancy Jefferson. And, and the combination of us, we said, Let's get an appointment with her. Well, since I had endorsed her publicly the Saturday before and she had gone downtown saying I was a significant leader, whatever that meant, I called her and was able to get through. But when we met with her there was a sense that there was not the traditional hostility, but not the sense of partnership, the sense of parity, the sense of mutuality. And Harold Washington said, We're going to have trouble with this administration. We must really keep, keep pressing forward. Because she, she ran an administration that was not polarizing and was not hostile and ugly, it was very difficult to get a grip on it. But one day, Ja—Dorothy Tillman and Marion Stamps and Lu Palmer went to a Chicago Housing Authority meeting where you have this tremendous number of African American, Hispanics and poor people li—poor people living, but no real power on the Chicago Housing Authority Board, and they were arrested. And I went to help get them out of jail, and as well as some other people. But I had become exhausted with what to do to really get people's attention to galvanize them. So, I did this weekly radio show and on this Sunday morning someone called and said, Well, Jesse, why don't you guys just boycott her coronation? The ChicagoFest really was just her coronation, her pretense for running for re-election. I wanted to say, But brother, you don't understand. Organizing a boycott against the ChicagoFest with all of the money involved and the big artists coming and the high expectation, people coming from all around the country to ChicagoFest, I couldn't say he was wrong, but I could not, I mean, I, I could not tell him, You don't understand. I said, I'll get back to you next week. So, I called Lu Palmer, I called Reverend Evans and said, You know, we need to consider this boycott. They said, Well, you know, it's hard to do. We can't say no because it's rational. So, by that Wednesday about fifty odd groups came together, Joe Gardner, a lot of people came together many of whom who had not been together for a long time, but we decided we were going to give each other a chance. There was a sense of redemption in that meeting. A sense of, let's give each other a chance. No matter what side of the spectrum, in the machine, out the machine, let's try it. And that Saturday morning at PUSH, we announced ChicagoFest boycott. We then began to call the artists, people like Odetta said I will not cross your picket line. Stevie Wonder said, I will not, I will not cross the picket line. When these big artists said they would not cross the picket line, that gave it added momentum. We then had ten days of picketing in front of ChicagoFest and really ten days of mass media access and education because they measured each day whether or not the boycott was successful. Well, that gave us a sense of focus, and we then said, But, let's take this to the next conclusion. Ed Gardner of Soft Sheen Products financed a voter registration drive, and Lu Palmer had been arguing the case we'll see in '83, we'll see in '83. And of the people who were considered for running, it was just a sense that Harold Washington was the best. Harold had been in the machine, but he had become an independent Democrat, so he knew forces on both sides. He had a sense of its internal mechanism. He had a sense of independence, thus he had credibility that made him a bridge builder, so to speak. Harold said, You know I really don't want to run. I'm in Congress now. I finally have something I

really want to do. And he had become a good congressman rather quickly because he had the background as a legislator. He said, I'll tell you what. If you really want me to run, register fifty thousand new voters and raise two hundred thousand dollars. That was his way of saying, [claps] I don't have to run. Well, because the spirit was high, we rai, we registered nearly four hundred thousand voters, raised nearly a half million dollars. Harold could not say no and thus out of that context the Harold Washington candidacy was born. So, it was the protest at, at the Chicago Housing Authority, it was the ChicagoFest boycott, it was the mass education, it was the voter registration. And Harold said, I have three demands. One, there must be one candidate, maximum unity in the base community, the African American community. He said, But we can't stop there, there must be coalition. Reach out to the Hispanic community, to labor and to progressive Whites because Chicago is a coalition city. We must find common ground across these lines of, of race, region, religion and the ward. And thus that coalition was in fact the force that, that prevailed.

00:16:58:00

Interviewer #1:

Hatcher told me that the Black middle class, too, was a significant factor. That they took the initiative after, after some reluctance at a certain point.

00:17:07:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, I, I think it's fair to say that when you really make progress is when you rise above these class divisions which become a way of putting people down, like who is the most loyal or who is the Blackest? Who is the most dedicated? At some point in time we must deal with our commonality because our caste system or our skin color is more pronounced than our class system. As people like Metcalfe begin to fight police brutality for example, a, a, a dentist was beaten to death, and so, it's your pedigree, not your class, that becomes the final factor. And when a community hits that point of, of dignity and it fights insult with dignity and finds common ground above skin color and above religious denominations and finds its commonality in its dignity, not division in its classes, you have a, a very powerful force.

00:18:09:00

Interviewer #1:

Tell me something about Harold Washington. From all I've seen and heard of him, he was a magnificent man. Give me some recollection, impressions of him.

00:18:16:00

Jesse Jackson:

You know, I, I shall never forget when, when Dr. King was leading marches in Chicago, there was this, the machine Blacks, the Silent Six who could not protest because they were operating within the context of Daley's apparatus and that was the independent struggle. Well, obviously the independent forces identified with Dr. King. The machine forces, the religious leaders, the political leaders actually had a press conference. Some of them were singing songs to Daley, serenading Daley, Must Daley bear the cross alone and all the world go free. Give me this day our Daley bread. Certain kinds of—well it was humiliating, you see, and so we had this division, a kind of class division, in the movement, not in the movement, in the machine. And so, one day I was talking to Harold Washington and Rudy Polk in Harold's apartment right down from my office on 47th Street. So, Harold gave me, it was four-hour meeting, it was almost a, a tearful analysis of how he had grown up with the desire to be free just like anybody else. Now he admired and respected Dr. King, but the Chicago political options were of such, there was some good people trapped in the machine and there was some not-so-good people not in the machine, some not in it because they couldn't get in it, but it was more complex than with Dr. King or not with Dr. King. And he explained his evolution toward independence. He'd say, He knows it. He studied it, and the precinct captain in it don't like it. This was 1966. This was like six years before he really made his public break with the machine. So, Harold had a tremendous sense of etiology. Harold was an intellectual and a political activist. So, when he became mayor it was not just a ceremony, Now, I am mayor. He said, Now that really means reform government. It means open government. Open the books, fair government, fair job distribution and promotions and contract distribution and ethical government. Well, in Chicago that's revolutionary government, you know. Open, fair, ethical government, where Chicago becomes our kind of town. So, he had a sense of etiology and a sense of, of political integrity. He was a man whose shoulders was as broad as Chicago's broad shoulders. He was tough enough to be equal to the task of being mayor of that city.

00:20:51:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's stop down now.

[wild sound]

Interviewer #1:

Very good.

[beep]

Interviewer #1:

You've just blown through about six of my questions. [laughs]

Jesse Jackson:

Oh.

00:21:00:00

Interviewer #1:

[laughs]

[cut]

00:21:02:00

Camera crew member #1:

Hit it.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark five.

[slate]

00:21:05:00

Jesse Jackson:

Moses got to the Red Sea and had a rod, they had a fit of faithlessness, he dropped the rod and the blessing became a cursing and could have bit him and destroyed him. It was not that he regained his faith in God that he pick up the rod and stretch out his hands. A people with a vote, with a, with a broken spirit will not pick it up and use it. Harold was able to renew our faith and bring about this broad-based coalition and people's minds and their votes and their sense of obligation, opportunity and privilege [claps] consolidated in this man. He had, he had this tremendous person, and within him we found a comfort and a security. And so, the miracle was unity in the community and reform government, reform, open, fair ethical, reform government. Maybe even for Chicago and maybe for the nation, revolutionary government.

00:22:06:00

Interviewer #1:

OK.

Camera crew member #1:

Cut?

00:22:08:00

Interviewer #1:

Yep.

[cut]

[camera roll #1078]

00:22:09:00

Cameraman:

There's a marker.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark six.

[slate]

Camera crew member #1:

This is camera roll ten seven-eight.

Camera crew member #2:

OK, go ahead.

00:22:15:00

Interviewer #1:

Were there—tell me the story about Mondale coming to town and—

Camera crew member #2:

Oh, jeez.

[door closes]

Camera crew member #2:

OK, go ahead.

00:22:30:00

Interviewer #1:

[laughs] OK, now we're ready.

00:22:31:00

Jesse Jackson:

In, in route to Harold's victory there was a, a, a sense finally that we could win. We didn't have the money. I mean, Byrne had the money and, and Daley had the favor of many. And yet Harold was a third, was a long shot. He didn't have the money but he had the skill and the will to work. And we were on a roll, we had momentum. We heard that, that Ted Kennedy was coming to town to support Jane Byrne, and Mondale was coming to town to support Daley. So, I called fifty leaders around the country. I got Willie Brown and Maxine Waters and Congressional Caucus members to appeal to them, that they were for the liberal, progressive agenda. Here was Harold, a Democratic congressman, and don't violate us in this way. And they said, We have to come 'cause we made these commitments. ***Well, there was a sense that we had been abandoned by liberals,*** that somehow liberators had to meet liberals. And if they, if, ***if the most progressive liberals, Mondale and Kennedy had this disregard for what the Chicago movement meant, we could only change that by becoming their peers. That meant someone had to begin to run against them in the primaries*** and function at their level of party politics. Well, I began to raise the question that a Black ought to run. It was far from my mind, running. Because if I had had politics on my mind, at that time, for myself, and Harold ran for mayor, I would have been considering running for his job as Congressperson, but that was not really on my mind. I was still protesting to open the system up and I kept raising it and of course it, it, it was met with a certain amount of contempt. Aw, be serious, who can run? Who is qualified? I said, Somebody should run. Well, I met with Andy Young three times. I tried to convince Andy to run. Andy'd just become mayor. He said, Well, I don't want to do it. I don't think it would work. I said, Andy, someone needs to do it. I met with Maynard Jackson twice. Maynard had, was now out of politics. He was in the business. He was credible. He was articulate. He had all of the, the right stuff, and he wouldn't do it. I kept raising the proposition. It became a part of national debate. Should someone do it or should they not? At some point, "Run Jesse, Run" began to emerge. I wanted to pull back but I couldn't because it would of, it would of appeared as if I had been insincere, that I was playing with the people. I was not playing, but I was not talking about myself. I had made almost no preparation to run, but then somebody had to run, so ***it is out of that context of fighting for Harold and fighting against liberal contempt that my own candidacy emerged out of this crucible, out of this process.***

00:25:37:00

Interviewer #1:

Stop down here.

[cut]

00:25:39:00

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

Camera crew member #1:

Gimme one second.

Camera crew member #2:

Shot number seven.

00:25:52:00

Interviewer #1:

OK. Give me some feeling for Resurrection City. That was sort of like an early Rainbow experience. What was it like with all—

Jesse Jackson:

Well—

Interviewer #1:

—the different kinds of people?

00:26:00:00

Jesse Jackson:

The context of it is, the Saturday morning before Dr. King was assassinated he called this emergency staff meeting at his office in Atlanta, Georgia. He had this vision that we should wipe out poverty, ignorance and disease, but you couldn't do it on an ethnic basis. That was not, that was never going to be any plan to wipe out Black poverty that would leave the Hispanics in poverty or Whites or women in poverty or Native American in poverty, so we had pull people together. And on this Saturday morning he said, I've had a migraine headache

for three days and sometime, because our movement is divided, I feel like turning around, just quitting or maybe becoming president of Morehouse College. Andy Young said, Dr. King, don't talk that way. He said, And, don't say peace, peace when there is no peace. Let me finish, he said, but, I, I can't turn around. People like DuBois and, and Frederick Douglass and Mary McLeod Bethune, they wouldn't let me turn back. He said, But then, I thought about fasting, maybe to the point of death. And even though Stokely and Rap and, and, Whitman, Roy may have different points of view on, on strategy, we're still friends. At the point of death they would come to my bedside, we could reunite. And then he said, as if something struck him, But, but we will always be able to turn a minus into a plus. We can turn a stumbling block to a steppingstone. Sometimes my works feel to be in vain, but then [claps] the holy spirit comes, I'm revived again. He preached himself out of a depression. So, let us move on from there on to Memphis. He was killed on April the 4th. The struggle had to continue. We were going toward Resurrection City, Renewal City. Well, Dr. King was killed April 4th. Robert Kennedy killed June the 5th. There was a sense the White House had abandoned us and our leaders were dead. And I remember on this particular morning coming to Resurrection City and Dr. Abernathy had appointed me mayor of Resurrection City, and so there I was the mayor of a Washington City, not too far from the White House. And I looked in the faces of the people, mostly women and children, and I had nothing to offer them, no money, and they had eyes [Inaudible] and no money even to get back home. And I remember having read a book by Dr. Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, and he talked about when you're down to your irreducible essence and you have nothing, yes, no material thing, you have your person. You're still somebody. You're God's child. And I said to them, Repeat these words, say I am. And they said, I am somebody. I may be poor. I may be unemployed. I may be unskilled, but I am somebody. Respect me. Protect me. Never neglect me. The whole "I am somebody" came out of that context in Resurrection City. The next day we***, we had to march for some food, so we decided to march to the Agriculture Department because we were putting focus on, on feeding and, and nutrition.*** So, we went and took a couple hundred people there and, and we had been eating out of cans and the like down at Resurrection City, raining, in the mud, and good, good food in the Agriculture Department. So, we got through, they were very nervous because we were there and the cameras were there. I said, Well we, thank you very much. They said, But, who's going to pay us? I said, Well, I tell you what. You should submit us a bill between what you owe us and what we owe you, we'll pay the difference. The guy said, No, you're crazy. He said, This is not the Agriculture Department, this is a private service. I said, We've come to the Agriculture Department to eat, and count up what you owe us and what we owe you. Dr. King had preached his 1963 speech about, about a balanced check. And so, we left. They wouldn't arrest all of us, but the next day they did make Dr. Abernathy force us to pay for the meal, [laughs] but that was the context of that meal.

00:30:06:00

Interviewer #1:

OK.

Camera crew member #1:

I could stop there. I—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Camera crew member #1:

—have to change tape.

00:30:09:00

Interviewer #1:

OK. And cut.

[cut]

[sound roll #135]

00:30:11:00

Camera crew member #1:

And mark it.

[slate]

Camera crew member #2:

OK.

Camera crew member #1:

[inaudible]

Camera crew member #2:

Shot number eight.

Camera crew member #1:

Mm-hmm. OK, it's all yours.

00:30:24:00

Interviewer #1:

What were your feelings when Resurrection City was closed down?

00:30:28:00

Jesse Jackson:

There was a sense of betrayal, a sense of abandonment. The dreamer had been killed in Memphis and there was an attempt now to, to kill the dream itself, which was to feed the hungry, which was to bring the people together. And rather than come forth with a plan to, to wipe out malnutrition, they were wiping out the malnourished. The first time I had ever really experienced tear gas was in Resurrection City. They, they drove us out with tear gas. They gassed us. They shot Dr. King, now they were gassing us. And they didn't change the law, and after that period, no one else since that time has ever been able to set up any kind of a tent or protest arrangement there on those grounds. I was determined to, to keep the struggle moving, if you will, to keep hope alive, but I left there with an awful sense of, of, of betrayal and abandonment.

00:31:31:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's cut.

[cut]

00:31:34:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark.

[slate]

Camera crew member #2:

[inaudible]

00:31:40:00

Jesse Jackson:

I think December 9th. Was it? December 4th?

Camera crew member #1:

I don't know.

Jesse Jackson:

December 4th.

Camera crew member #2:

[inaudible]

Interviewer #2:

December 3rd, I think.

Jesse Jackson:

Huh?

Interviewer #2:

December 3rd, the raid.

Camera crew member #2:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jesse Jackson:

N-night of the 3rd, right?

Interviewer #2:

Morning?

Jesse Jackson:

Morning the 3rd?

Camera crew member #2:

It was night.

Jesse Jackson:

Huh?

Camera crew member #2:

Night.

Jesse Jackson:

Panther raid. That was the 4th.

Camera crew member #1:

4th. December of 1969.

Camera crew member #2:

'69, right.

Jesse Jackson:

Yeah. December 4th, I think.

00:32:06:00

Interviewer #2:

Yeah. K.

00:32:07:00

Interviewer #1:

OK. You recall yo—how did you first learn about the police raid on Fred Hampton's apartment? What was your reaction?

00:32:14:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, the news blasted out. There was sense of, of intolerance toward the Panthers by the police because they had this sense of, of agitation to, to bring clarity to what they call exposing the contradiction, and they would feed the children as a way of dramatizing the malnutrition. And they would challenge police brutality which had become in many ways a way of life, and of course they irritated the police. And there was this organized raid to kill them, and for some time there was an attempt to cover it up. But people like Dr. Charles

Hurst wouldn't let it go. I remember Bobby Rush who was Fred Hampton's closest friend, they went to—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Jesse Jackson:

—kill him too, but he was not where they went to get him.

00:33:08:00

Interviewer #1:

We got rollout. Let's stop right there with Bobby Rush. We'll pick it up.

[cut]

[camera roll #1079]

00:33:12:00

Camera crew member #1:

And marker.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark ten.

[slate]

00:33:16:00

Interviewer #1:

All right. We were talking about the Black Panthers and you were saying about Bobby Rush, Fred Hampton's best friend.

00:33:22:00

Jesse Jackson:

Bobby Rush, Fred Hampton's best friend, was being sought, he felt to be killed. They invaded the house where he was living. And I received a call early in the morning, one

Saturday morning, that he was a fugitive and he was going to turn himself in to me before the people on the platform at our regular Saturday morning breadbasket meeting. And, by turning himself in to the police before several thousand people, that became his, his protection. I actually preached Fred Hampton's funeral and my sense was, in those first few days, the media was so anti-Panther it was as if their being killed was a kind of relief. And then the community realized that, that blood had been spilled, an assassination and a, a massacre had taken place. And, and there is, from the point of Fred Hampton's blood to Harold Washington's inauguration is a kind of straight line of indignation and dignity fighting insult. So, Fred Hampton's assassination and Mark Clark is very much a part of the equation for changing the politics of Chicago.

00:34:48:00

Interviewer #1:

You—the Panthers used a great deal of profanity like "off the pig" and threats. How'd you react to this?

00:34:56:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, I learned early on to separate their language from their message. It was their way of, of expressing a sense of violation, a sense of not being stockholders or stakeholders, of being locked out. And though I had another language pattern, our message was the same. I'd just met with Fred, for example, and Bobby a few days before he was assassinated and had a sense of kinship with them. And of course when, when he was killed, his parents asked me as well as the other Panthers to, to preach the funeral because I had a sense of him and his history and what he was about.

00:35:35:00

Interviewer #1:

One final question and not about the Panthers, about the civil rights movement and us. What, what have we wrought? What has been the price that we've had to pay for what, what we've done with the civil rights movement?

00:35:51:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, we've started from further back than anybody else. After all, the Constitution designates African descendants as three-fifths human. No immigrant group had to face that mathematical equation, three-fifths human. A little lower than people, a little higher than animals. Two hundred fifty years of free labor, just the interest from that, you know, would

free us economically now. Another hundred years of legal apartheid, the segregation in this country. After all of this struggle, public accommodations, equal access and protection under the law as opposed to separate but equal, now the right to vote. I mean, the most fundamental shift from slave ship en route to championship has been to be empowered, to be enfranchised with this right to vote. And I submit to you that in 1988, I got more votes than Mondale got for the nomination in 1984. Within our lifetime, this ongoing struggle will have an African American as nominee of a party, indeed, as President of the United States of America, and so the goal is with, is within reach.

00:37:10:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, stop down here.

[cut]

00:37:13:00

Camera crew member #1:

Marker.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark eleven.

[slate]

00:37:18:00

Interviewer #2:

The year is 1972 and the convention in Gary, Indiana is being planned for Black politics.

00:37:26:00

Jesse Jackson:

What stands out about Gary within the context of Montgomery, Birmingham, Atlanta, Selma, Memphis, Gary; Gary was up South, it was up North. Gary was a city where an African American, Richard Hatcher had taken control, had won. I mean, Richard Hatcher and Stokes were the first two urban mayors of, of this, of this century, so you had the shift from Southern focus to, to the North, and you had a mayor who had achieved this. He could have a convention in his city. There was a sense of dynamic all about that, but then there was a question seven years after Selma, '72, what plans did we have to make Gary and Cleveland

happen in Detroit and other cities across this country? So it was a, a great historical moment, a great sense of history, but also a, a sense of independent politics. It was not a Democratic Party convention. It was not Republican convention. It was a, a Black political convention that gave strength to Hispanics and women and workers and all those of who had marched previously in the civil rights movement, they find Gary a certain reference point.

00:39:01:00

Interviewer #2:

The idea of a third political party emerged in, in Gary. In fact it was put on the, the agenda.

00:39:08:00

Jesse Jackson:

Because ***there was a sense of alienation from the Democratic Party. Democrats taking us for granted, Republicans writing us off, and the agenda items for jobs and peace and justice would no longer be an afterthought for some other party or some other person. There was a sense that we had to assert this new dynamic.*** And, and, and even with that there was a tension because even though that was the, the etiology, there was the mixed emotions about Shirley Chisholm's candidacy, for example. The same people who believed that in '72 and '84 still were shaky then about my candidacy in '84. But much of the, the, the crucible out of which that idea came forth emerged in the context of, of Gary. It's not the first time the idea had come forth, but somehow Gary gave it special meaning. After all there were ten thousand people there from all over the country.

00:40:10:00

Interviewer #2:

Do you remember the cultural trappings of Gary? The, the connection to Africa, the sense of, of art and poetry?

00:40:16:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, in the sense that Amiri Baraka played a tremendous role in, in that convention. And later the Gary convention gave strength to winning in Newark, for example, for Ken Gibson, where Baraka also played a tremendous role there. What was difficult was pulling together all of these tribes from the many plantations that we have come from. I mean, there was Coleman Young from Detroit and there was Hatcher and there was Stokes. We had six, eight congresspeople at that time, deep South, all these various forces with these various views of themselves finding, if you will, common ground, and Gary became that. And though it was difficult to pull the people together and difficult to finance, somehow the, the spirit and the

will and the people germinated. Something happened in Gary. Gary indeed was successful because it is an historical reference point.

00:41:13:00

Interviewer #2:

Your feeling after you delivered "Nation Time," the speech.

00:41:17:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, I sensed that I was speaking to the alienation but giving it some sense of direction. ***I had drawn much of the strength of "Nation Time" from a poem written by Leroi Jones, Amiri Baraka at that time. The sense of people saying, what's happening? Say, nothing's happening, man. Say, what's really happening? It's nation time, it's time come together. It's time to organize politically. It's time for partnership.*** It's time for a new equation. It is indeed, whether you're in California, Mississippi, it is nation time. And out of that, that speech, many young people around the country began to gravitate toward a sense of national, indeed international consciousness.

00:42:06:00

Interviewer #2:

One memory. Do you remember standing and, and watching the other delegates? One, one personal memory that, of that time?

00:42:15:00

Jesse Jackson:

The joy was so many people there and yet with a certain sense of expectation and security. I mean, the only real rough point was, there was so many cameras there they were blocking people's view. And we had spent a lot of time previously trying to get the press to cover our activities, cover our events, but they came in such great numbers there, they actually got in the way. So we had to literally stop to tear down, you know, their structure so people could see. They wanted to really see what was happening on the stage, and there was a sense of alienation from the press that was also was a part of it. I think the only kind of rough political point was Coleman Young protested and left. But eventually, the fact that Coleman had come, the fact that all of us had come gave us a sense of kinship and reference. I, I, I remember Gary with a great sense of, of fondness and a great sense of, of love for all the people who were there.

Interviewer #2:

Terrific.

00:43:22:00

Camera crew member #1:

Cut?

Interviewer #2:

Cut.

[cut]

00:43:24:00

Camera crew member #1:

There's a mark.

Camera crew member #2:

Mark twelve.

[slate]

Camera crew member #1:

We're just going to let [unintelligible] here. All right.

00:43:31:00

Interviewer #2:

Latter part of '66. [door closes] The word Black power comes out in the national landscape.

Jesse Jackson:

Black power was presented—

Camera crew member #2:

Can we start again?

Interviewer #1:

Start over.

Camera crew member #2:

I'm sorry.

Camera crew member #1:

Sorry. OK.

00:43:44:00

Jesse Jackson:

The connotation of Black power in the media was violence. The fact is Black power was power sharing. It was, was equity. White power was self-evident, no one had to scream it out. White power was all White anchor people on the morning and nightly TV shows. White power was all White governors, all White senators. Mayor of every major city, White. So, White power was self-evident. And Stokely did two things. One, by declaring that this was a quest for power and begin to call racism, racism, that disease at the soul of our country, which has divided us for so long. He talked about the need to have a share of power and that racism should not, should not stop it. And I think at first Dr. King reacted to it because the media tried to make anyone who identified with Black power as being a kind of leper. And finally Dr. King had to sit down and write and define Black power, and he became maybe the most articulate spokesman and exponent of it and began to put it in some real perspective. Remember a group of Black churchmen in, in New York wrote a, a four-page ad in *The New York Times* just defining what Black power meant and what White power meant.

00:45:15:00

Interviewer #2:

You're in Chicago at this point and the, the, the Southern movement is looking for a Nor- Northern location. It moves to Chicago, called the Chicago Freedom Summer. What, what were the things that were tried? What was the, the sense of—

00:45:29:00

Jesse Jackson:

Critical to that movement is James Bevel. It was Bevel's creative urge, I mean, and then some others were saying, Let's go to Harlem. Let's go to New York, 'cause there was kind of base in Harlem. It was Adam Powell in Harlem and others who had been associated for a long time, but Bevel sensed that coming to Chicago was a place to go. He was a big factor not only in coming to Chicago but also in conceiving of the ways to heighten the Northern

contradiction. Because it was said that we could not, we could find a, a Bull Connor and a Jim Clark in the South, but racism up North was, was subtler. Because after all, you could go to Wrigley Field and the White Sox Park and Blacks and Whites could sit together, that you could not really prove Northern racism. But, of course, there we found in open housing marches, once we marched off of that plantation there was the rock throwing in, in, in Gage Park, there was the, the violent reaction in Cicero. And so, the kind of field general of that was Bevel. But it was not just about confrontation to expose the contradiction. It also was an attempt to take the profit out of slums. Because at that time, many former inner-city residents owned the buildings, they got tax write-offs. Profits up, services down. So, the slums were the result of a kind of separation of, of capital incentives from development. So, it really was a kind of whole movement. It was both protest and development, and it was dramatic.

00:47:06:00

Interviewer #2:

What kind of adversary was Richard Daley?

00:47:09:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, he was a, a formidable adversary because, whereas Jim Clark and Bull Connor, it was White versus Black. ***Daley had Blacks on his staff and Black officials and some Black ministers who marched with Dr. King in the South, went to school with him at Morehouse, but on Daley's plantation they had press conferences and urged Dr. King to leave Chicago saying, There is no place for you here. It really broke his heart to see some of his classmates turn on him in Chicago.*** A minister had a press conference on, on the West Side saying, Dr. King, go to hell. And even though he was not a guy with a big church, the fact that a Black minister would say, Dr. King, go to hell, it made national news. It was not, the, the, the size of his congregation. He's not a, a political peer of Dr. King's in that sense, but Daley had all these forces to use and he used them.

00:48:16:00

Interviewer #2:

He would sometimes preempt things that you would try. He would send in the city to do better, like picking up trash.

00:48:21:00

Jesse Jackson:

Well, see, Breadbasket became a, a factor in beginning to galvanize Blacks and progressive Whites in that city, but they have been also used as downright intimidation. Reverend Clay

Evans, a tremendous minister who was pastor, who was head of the, of the pastors conference, the ministers conference at that time. One Northern program Dr. King had was Operation Breadbasket. Getting ministers to fight for jobs from corporations. They did not open up jobs to use the boycott. And so, when Reverend Evans identified with Dr. King, he faced the shutdown of access to capital to, to build his church. Many ministers closed their pulpits down to Dr. King in Chicago, but if they opened them they would face billing and code violations the next day. So, in some sense, that was an, an intimidation of the voice of religion in Chicago. Reverend Evans would not bow. Because Dr. King was able to preach at his church, he faced the wrath of that machinery, and for seven years, what was to be a new church was just steel and frame. We finally got, got it through with the help of Reverend Don Benedict and others, Seawind [sic] Independence Bank, but seven years later, and that was the power of that machine. I remember one night being downtown, Dr. King, Andy Young, Walter Fauntroy; an investment banker told us, Daley has the power to let any building in this town go up or shut it down. If you'll just back off, we can get the church. Reverend Evans said, Whenever that church is built, it will be built on a solid foundation. I will not bow, will not surrender, I will not forsake Dr. King, and he held out, he held on.

00:50:12:00

Interviewer #2:

Dr. King said that he was more frightened in Chicago, Marquette, Gage Park than he'd been anywhere else. You led a march there, going into Gage Park.

00:50:24:00

Jesse Jackson:

Whites had been so oriented about the inhumanity of Blacks. The crowds on both sides, the police were having to beat back Whites screaming and hurling insults, and eventually they broke through the police lines and they began to throw rocks. Indeed Dr. King was hit in the head with a rock. He had not seen that kind of violent and aggressive action toward him, booing and, and hissing and name-calling and rock throwing. He had not witnessed that in Atlanta or Birmingham or Montgomery or Selma. He met it in Chicago.

00:51:07:00

Interviewer #2:

You determined to, to take a march into Cicero, perhaps one of the most frightening parts in that, in that, in that period for any Black person to go. A young ma-man had been killed there.

00:51:16:00

Jesse Jackson:

It was an attempt to get the nation to make housing segregation illegal, to make certain that no group had the right to use racial covenants in housing, and, so as to lock people out. I mean, in Chicago in 1966, there were actual operative covenants. This is Chicago, not Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia. Chicago. There was some covenants that said a Black person can only live in the back of the big house. You had restrictive covenants, plus you had redlining and real estate brokers would only show you houses in certain areas, or they would do what they call blockbusting and simply exploit you economically. I suppose you had twenty-five percent of the people living on ten percent of the land which meant that the very laws of supply and demand made slum property valuable because people were hemmed up. One concrete manifestation of that is the housing projects like Stateway Gardens, where you got all these people living up on top of each other. All that was a part of a redlining, gerrymandering, political disenfranchisement process. Dr. King said it would take six to eight years to break it up. The press gave him six months and said Dr. King failed. But the seeds that he sowed in 1966 germinated in Harold Washington's candidacy and victory in 1983. It took us seventeen years, but you can trace it in so many ways from Dr. King's marching, Fred Hampton's assassination, the boycott in, in '82, Harold's victory in '83, a kind of straight line, the progress and struggle.

00:53:03:00

Interviewer #2:

Were, were you frightened?

00:53:07:00

Jesse Jackson:

I really was not frightened. I was in the army, the non-violent freedom army, and my expectations were of such I could not be disappointed. I could, I had to be disciplined. I mean, there was a sense that what was happening was in the day. I remember one Sunday we, we marched. Andy White and I were, we were on the church steps, and while we were there we were being stoned on the church steps. They actually chased us all back into the block. Again, now this is Chicago, you know, up North, 1966. While on one side of town they were, they were hailing Ernie Banks as a great football hero, and later Gale Sayers as a great football hero, there was these areas where we could not, could not walk through without being violently attacked or killed and certainly could not move. And so we, we had, we had the challenge, and really on the belt was leadership. We rose to the occasion.

00:54:16:00

Interviewer #2:

Non-violence, which was such a key part of the Southern struggle—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Interviewer #2:

—is not a Northern—

Camera crew member #1:

Rollout.

Interviewer:

Ah.

Camera crew member #2:

[laughs]

Jesse Jackson:

Is that the last question?

[cut]

[camera roll #1081]

00:54:25:00

Camera crew member #1:

And marker.

[slate]

Camera crew member #2:

One second, please. OK.

00:54:35:00

Interviewer #2:

1984, Democratic National Convention in San Francisco and you literally have the eyes of the country and a portion of the world. You are a person born poor who has taken himself on

that enormous journey. What are the feelings as you ascend to that podium and with all the tension and conflicts that—

00:54:55:00

Jesse Jackson:

I just felt an awful sense of burden and responsibility. I felt that I was speaking for people who could not speak for themselves, and from that platform I could only feel myself to be a servant. I knew that there were people listening in, in their cabs and orderlies in hospitals and maids in people's kitchens and, and ditch diggers and teachers and youth and parents and sharecroppers. I saw those people in my mind and I felt some need to, to tell their story within the tradition of the struggle, that made it poss-possible for me to stand there. And so, I remember that, that night mostly with a sense of, of burden and responsibility. And when people responded the way they did, there was a, a certain second of, of fulfillment that, that we had, for a moment pierced the veil and had been heard but for an instant.

00:56:10:00

Interviewer #2:

We began this series with the death of Emmett Till, which was my personal memory of, of the beginning of the movement, and we've carried it through Selma, Birmingham, Albany, up into the Chicago and the, the, the great runs of the late '60s, the tragedy of the death. What, what do you think it's all meant? And what do you think it's done to the people who have made that movement, African Americans?

00:56:34:00

Jesse Jackson:

We've come full circle. From coming here as slaves, descendants of African people to the point that an African American is now the number-three Democrat in the House of Representatives. An African American now heads the Democratic Party. We now have 305 urban mayors who are African American. We are the centerpiece of progressive coalition politics, the workers and, and women and youth and peace activists in this country. We are now the central focus in American politics to free South Africa, for peace in the Middle East, for peace in Central America, to end the arms race. So, we are bigger than, than our race or as a moral force. So, we do not really represent left wing or right wing. We represent the moral center, and that's a coveted position. That's why we must resist the drugs and the killing and the fratricide and the immoral and decadent behavior, because what we have is really what the world wants. It does not really want more weapons and more materials that have no function. What we have is enviable moral authority, and when we speak, people all over the world listen, even when we don't have office, we have the position. And I would say to young America, Malcolm had moral authority and Medgar Evers had moral authority and Martin Luther King had moral authority, Rosa Parks had moral authority. That is that one

authority. We may or may not get our place in the military hierarchy, in the economic hierarchy, in the political hierarchy. We should fight to get our share and help fashion it in humane ways. The one thing that we have that must never lose, and that's moral authority as we fight for the moral center. After all, hope and love and sharing and family and peace and justice are all moral center concepts. We must hold on to them with an obsession, with a sense of joy and a sense of responsibility.

00:59:06:00

Interviewer #2:

What has this movement done to—

Camera crew member #2:

I have to do a sound change.

Jesse Jackson:

Great.

Interviewer #2:

How many feet do we have left?

Jesse Jackson:

Got no feets.

00:59:15:00

Camera crew member #2:

I, I—

[cut]

[sound roll #136]

00:59:16:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark.

[slate]

00:59:23:00

Interviewer #2:

This series of events, the series of people, of moments we call the civil rights movement has, has touched all these things. Is—does it have a timeframe or is it something that goes on forever?

00:59:37:00

Jesse Jackson:

In one sense it's an eternal quest for justice and peace. We may say that we're in a third stage now. Maybe the first stage we were subordinary in terms of designation as sub people or three-fifths human, fighting to end slavery, to end lynching, to end legal segregation, illegal apartheid. We were by law sub people. So we fought against the subordinary to the ordinary. The ordinary is equal protection under the law, public accommodations, open housing, the right to vote, school of your choice. These were hard-earned victories but they really are ordinary in the sense that we have a job to do greater than just arriving, we must now give leadership. And that becomes this generation's challenge. We cannot just accept equal access in drugs, we must choose hope over dope and offer leadership. We can't just accept equal access to decadence, we must help transform the nation and make it better. And so, ours is a greater challenge than to have a house, it's to fight for housing, or to fight to eat. It is to feed people or to fight not to be killed, it's to, it's to stop the killing. It's not just to get free, it's to free South Africa and to free the Middle East and free Central America and free the world of its insecurities that drive us to make weapons that we cannot use in wars that we must not fight. And so, I would say from subordinary to the ordinary. And ordinary is great because, because of the subordinary. We've been down so long until even seems like up. Really, up is offering a leadership beyond race and sex and religion. So, when I win Maine and Puerto Rico and Alaska and Michigan and Mississippi, that's moving to another sta-stage of our development. And I'm convinced that just as our athletic skills have taken us beyond narrow boundaries of race and our artistic skills have taken us beyond that, as in the case of what Marian Anderson did fifty years ago, Stevie Wonder does today, politically we must now offer that quality of political, social, economic, moral leadership to the whole world because we came here on an international trade mission, slavery, and now the rejected stones must become the cornerstones of a new order of justice in our nation and peace in the whole world.

01:02:37:00

Interviewer #2:

Thank you, Reverend.

Jesse Jackson:

Thank you.

[applause]

01:02:40:00

Camera crew member #2:

Just everyone silent for thirty seconds.

[cut]

[end of interview]

01:02:46:00