

LAURA S. WASHINGTON

Year of the Black Candidate



RUN, JESSE, RUN! In September, on Chicago's South Side, the script was flipped. This time it's Junior who's aiming for the top of the ticket. The younguns may be taking over. It's about time.

On Sept. 6, Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.) beckoned the media to his front lawn in Jackson Park Heights to announce that if he can raise \$4 to \$6 million and register 100,000 new voters, he will run for mayor of Chicago.

The six-term congressman and first-born son of the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr. hopes to take on the scion of another legendary political family, Richard M. Daley. It's almost certain Daley, Chicago's chief executive since 1989, will run for one more term in the February 2007 mayoral primary. A win would set him up to surpass the tenure of his father, Richard J. Daley, who died in 1976 after 21 years in office.

They called the senior Daley "the boss." Daley the younger has been dubbed "mayor for life." In recent months, however, his clout has faded in the face of a growing, multi-layered federal investigation into alleged corrupt hiring and contracting practices.

Jackson, 41, has hammered at Daley and a Democratic Party establishment that, he says, "is part of a prehistoric and bygone era that somehow slipped into the 21st Century." He suggests the Daley administration is neglecting the city's have-nots, and voters want change.

Two other African-American pols have already announced they will challenge Daley: Dorothy Brown, Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court, and community activist Bill "Dock" Walls. Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.), a Puerto Rican who represents part of Chicago's North Side, is also mulling a run. Still, it's the prospect of a Daley/Jackson match-up that has the political junkies salivating.

From Chicago to Los Angeles to Newark, efforts like Jackson's may be signaling a changing of the guard. The fiery preachers who rely on race-based protest tactics are being eased aside by political professionals bearing arsenals of polls, mailing lists and PACs. For example, Adrian Fenty, the 35-year-old Democratic nominee who is looking like the certain winner in Washington D.C.'s mayoral race, is known to carry two Blackberries.

Don Rose, a Chicago-based political consultant and longtime Jackson-watcher, cites two developments: Barack Obama's elevation to a U.S. Senate seat in 2004 and Co-

rey Booker's capture of Newark's City Hall. A victory for Jackson may "represent the prospect of a new generation of black urban leadership," says Rose, an advisor to Harold Washington, who was elected Chicago's first black mayor on a progressive platform.

The pundits have already pegged 2006 as the Year of the Black Candidate, as a plethora of African-American hopefuls run for top tier slots nationwide.

Rep. Harold Ford Jr. (D-Tenn.) is looking to become the first black senator from the South since Reconstruction. Retired Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swann wants to unseat Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell. Ken Blackwell aims to be Ohio's next governor; ditto for Assistant U.S. Attorney Gen. Deval Patrick in Massachusetts. In Maryland, Lt. Gov. Michael Steele and former NAACP chief Kweisi

Mfume made respective bids in the Republican and Democratic senate primaries.

They represent a sign of political maturity and diversity in black leadership—three of them are Republican and only one, Mfume, is tied to the ossified civil rights establishment. That connection may have worked against him—he lost his Sept. 12 primary bid.

Jackson represents both the old and the new. He was elected in 1995 to represent Chicago's 2nd Congressional District, which spans the city's South Side and Southern suburbs. He has since crafted a solid progressive voting record, bolstered by a sophisticated political apparatus that employs internet-based fundraising and issue-based communications.

Jackson learned much at daddy's knee. His father, the founder of Rainbow PUSH, remains a civil rights icon who has advised and scolded presidents, run twice for president himself, and has traversed the world's troubled spots as an unofficial ambassador. However, the elder Jackson is also at the front of a withering line of '60s activists that don't connect with younger voters.

"Junior" must stretch way beyond the base of elderly and church-going blacks that know his father best. Mirroring the nation, Chicago's fastest-growing ethnic group is Latino. White progressives are another crucial constituency in building a cohesive progressive agenda.

In some circles, Jackson's controversial father may be a liability, and the son's ability to attract voters outside of the base is untested. He must burnish his progressive credentials and hone his vote-getting abilities to succeed. One thing's for sure: Get ready for some colorful and contentious political theatre. ■

From Chicago to Newark, the fiery preachers are being eased aside by political professionals armed with polls, mailing lists and PACS.

THE FIRST STONE

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

The Importance of Not Getting Over It



IN JUNE SEVEN STORIES Press published the book I co-authored with Steven F. Freeman, *Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen? Exit Polls, Election Fraud, and the Official Count*.

We had spent the previous year and a half examining the exit polls and learning about the problems posed by electronic voting.

I took up this task, devoting evenings and weekends to it, because I thought the subject was vitally important. Yet the months since the book's publication have been frustrating. No newspaper or magazine, from either the corporate or independent media sectors, has taken the subject seriously enough to review our book.

I had thought that with Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s article "Was the Presidential Election Stolen?" published last June in *Rolling Stone*, the topic would become part of a national debate. Yet the only media outlet that has given the subject serious consideration is Salon.com, where Farhad Manjoo slammed Kennedy's article and its thesis, and then refused to respond when Salon.com published a devastating critique of his argument by my co-author.

Why the silence? After talking to colleagues in the independent press, I have come to the conclusion that the possibility of a stolen election is not given credence for three reasons.

The first reason is pervasive, continuing ignorance about the 2004 exit polls and what they indicated. A prime example is the obituary written by *Washington Post* pollster Richard Morin on the death of Warren Mitofsky from an aortic aneurysm on September 1. Mitofsky, the father of exit polling, had boasted that of the 2,500 or so

exit polls he worked on only six were wrong. Here is what Morin wrote:

At the time of his death, Mitofsky found himself in the peculiar position of arguing for the inaccuracy of his own 2004 exit poll. That survey found John Kerry leading early on Election Day, only to lose his advantage when the actual ballots were counted.

Reading Morin, the reader would conclude that the exit polls indicated that Kerry was only leading "early on Election Day," when in fact by the end of Election Day the exit polls still had Kerry ahead in every state, particularly in the key 11 battleground states, and most particularly in the states of Nevada, New Mexico and Ohio.

That a discrepancy exists between the exit polls and the official count in the 2004 election is not a matter for debate. What is open for discussion is what caused the discrepancy.

One hypothesis is human error. This is the explanation preferred by Mitofsky. Speaking of the discrepancy, he said, "I just don't believe in conspiracies. I'm much more a believer in something practical, like incompetence." Mitofsky posited that the discrepancy was caused by more Democrats than Republicans filling out the confidential exit poll questionnaires.

In our book we spend 92 pages examining both Mitofsky's theory that Republicans refused to participate in the exit polls at a higher rate than Democrats and his explanation that "poorly trained interviewers" were to blame for this phenomenon. Using exit poll data released by Mitofsky, we conclude, convincingly I believe, that his incompetence hypothesis does not stand up to scrutiny.

An alternative hypothesis is that the exit polls were in fact accurate, and that the official vote was interfered with.

This raises the specter of a conspiracy. Mitofsky wasn't alone in wanting

nothing to do with the "C" word. Alexander Cockburn wrote in the Dec. 6, 2004 *Nation*, "As usual, the conspiracy nuts think plans of inconceivable complexity worked at 100 percent efficiency." His sentiments were echoed by ABC's Cokie Roberts, who explained, "This notion ... [t]hat there's just this vast conspiracy flies in the fact of human experience. We've never known a conspiracy to work that well."

Yet on Election Day 2004, 64 percent of Americans voted on direct recorded electronic voting machines or optical-scan systems, both of which are vulnerable to hacking or programming fraud. And with these new technologies, it would only take a few people to steal an election.

ACCORDING TO A September 2005 investigation by Congress' Government Accountability Office, such systems contain flaws that "could allow unauthorized personnel to disrupt operations or modify data and programs that are critical to . . . the integrity of the voting process."

Proof of this came on September 13 when Princeton University's Center For Information Technology Policy released the results of a new study, "Security Analysis of the Diebold AccuVote-TS Voting Machine," which found that the most commonly used electronic voting machine is vulnerable to programming fraud.

The researchers obtained a Diebold AccuVote-TS direct recorded electronic (DRE) voting machine. (They decline to say from whom.) After analyzing the machine's hardware and software, and subjecting the machine to a number of experiments, they reported, "We found that the machine is vulnerable to a number of extremely serious attacks that undermine the accuracy and credibility of the vote counts it produces."