

# Point of View

## To Be Equal

# THE JACKSON CANDIDACY

by John E. Jacob

Jesse Jackson's extraordinary performance in the Democratic primaries has revolutionized American politics. For the first time in history, a black citizen stands a chance to become a major party's nominee for the presidency.

Jackson has done what no other candidate of either party has done — framed a cohesive program that appears to fit the mood of a nation that's impatient with the unfulfilled promises of recent years.

His phrase, "economic violence" touches a chord among the urban poor, workers in smokestack industries, and suburban liberals. His debating skills and ability to discuss the issues while other candidates engage in personal attacks, have elevated the tone of the campaign.

The black vote, vital to any Democratic candidate, has been in his pocket from the start. That's understandable. Racial and ethnic pride is a legitimate political factor, and if John F. Kennedy could get the Irish vote in 1960, there's no reason why Jesse Jackson shouldn't have a similar claim on the black vote in 1988.

But he's also made inroads

into the white vote, which the pundits said was beyond his reach. He has amassed delegates in states with small black populations, suggesting that many whites are willing to cross racial lines to vote for a candidate



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with a message they can support.

The polls show a decline in the percentage of white voters who say they would not vote for a black presidential candidate. The more exposure Jackson has received, the less resistance there's been. That doesn't mean race is no longer a factor in the election, but the Jackson campaign is breaking traditional taboos and is successfully challenging traditional wisdom.

As candidates drop out of the race citing money problems the Jackson express has rolled along, despite being the least-well financed

campaign. Its victories have come through grass-roots appeal, not through expensive, slick TV ads.

All of this has thrown Democratic bigwigs into a dilemma. They don't believe Jackson can win in November, but at the same time, they can't deny him what they promised — that the candidate with the most primary

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votes will get the nomination.

It's finally dawned on all those people who asked: "What does Jesse want?" that what Jesse wants is what Dukakis, Gore and the others want — to be the next president of the United States. Even asking that question of Jesse when it was not asked of other candidates betrays a racial bias that says blacks can't expect what all Americans are taught to aspire to from childhood on.

The Jackson candidacy faces a tough, uphill battle.

The racial issue will intensify, since almost a third of Democrats say they wouldn't vote for a black. And it is questionable whether the electorate will vote for a left-of-center candidate without a major economic or foreign policy crisis to push them in that direction.

A lot will depend on Jackson's continued ability to define issues in ways that appeal to voters who don't share some of his views — just as Reagan won the votes of many who did not share his extreme conservatism.

Having successfully challenged conventional wisdom so far, Jackson has to be taken seriously and the myths of his unelectability need to be reexamined. Above all, his Party cannot be seen as denying him a nomination earned in the ballot booths.

It looks like an interesting couple of months ahead — and a period in which America will be further educated to the realities of democratic life in a multi-racial society.

## Marching on Washington: Then and Now

by Norman Hill

The month of April evokes two great leaders who, working separately and together, forged the greatest civil rights victories of the century. It was 20 years ago April 4 that Martin Luther King Jr., was brutally cut down by an assassin's bullet in Memphis. April 15 marks what would have been the 99th birthday of A. Philip Randolph, this nation's premier black labor leader and civil rights campaigner. And both men figured prominently in a historic event whose 25th anniversary we are celebrating this year — the 1963 March on Washington.

It was Randolph and the late Bayard Rustin who organized the massive March for Jobs and Freedom that brought 250,000 Americans to the nation's capital. And it was Dr. King's eloquent closing address that captured its meaning and inspired a nation.

The 1963 march was the watershed of the modern civil rights movement. It was strategically effective precisely because it had a clear and discernible goal: the abolition of segregationist legal barriers barring black Americans from full participation in all facets of American life.

Its aim was to pressure Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act and to undertake a program for economic justice. The march did not embrace any peripheral issues, fringe causes, or hidden agendas. This was the key to its success in galvanizing public and governmental opinion in support of the civil rights movement. Within two years of the march, Congress passed comprehensive civil and voting rights legislation which allowed social and economic mobility for millions.

Much has changed in the 25 years since the march, some for the better and some for the worse.

Today, with the persistence of racism, a significant segment of the black population has prospered. But millions of others continue to be mired in the wretchedness of poverty, unemployment, homelessness and social stagnation. For them, the

In this critical election year, marching to the ballot box will send a more powerful and important message than marching in the streets. Today, the black vote provides powerful leverage to press our demands for social and economic justice. In

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causes of social alienation are no longer segregationist laws but economic dislocations.

Clearly in 1988 the most effective way to address the issues of class and poverty is not a march on Washington, but a march for Washington. The revolution launched by Randolph, Rustin and King must be continued in the political arena.

1986, it changed the balance of the Senate. In 1987 and 1988, it has propelled a black man to the fore in the presidential race. And in November, it will play a pivotal role in races for the Senate, Congress and the White House.

## REGISTER VOTE

The views expressed on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one indicated as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represents this publication.

"There is no doubt that a race that doesn't respect itself forfeits the respect of others, and we are in the moral-social position now, of losing the respect of the whole world."  
—MARCUS GARVEY

