

Jesse Jackson Dead at 84

Fiery orator, MLK protégé ran twice for U.S. presidency.



The front page of the May 25, 1984, *Pacific Citizen* shows Jesse Jackson at a Los Angeles campaign stop in Little Tokyo.

PHOTO: PACIFIC CITIZEN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, a protégé of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and two-time presidential candidate who led the Civil Rights Movement for decades after the revered leader's assassination, died Feb. 17. He was 84.

Already a well-known national figure, Jackson's visibility widened in 1984 and again in 1988 thanks to two unsuccessful-but-historic, profile-raising bids to become the Democratic Party's candidate for U.S. president, more than 20 years before a fellow Chicagoan and African American, then-Sen. Barack Obama, was elected to the White House in 2008.

In his 1984 bid, Jackson announced his support of Japanese American redress on March 9. (Page 4, May 6, 1988, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/mr2rscv2).

Jackson's presidential candidacy found support within the Japanese American and Asian American communities. He spoke in Little Tokyo on May 17, 1984 (May 25, 1984, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/bdf6ste3), and in 1988, was endorsed by four Asian American community leaders (April 8, 1988, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/3abb6wap). On Jan. 30, 2011, Jackson spoke at the inaugural Fred Korematsu Day (Feb. 4, 2011, *Pacific Citizen*, tinyurl.com/ly2dkadhv).

In 2025, it was announced that he had been hospitalized at a Chicago hospital for progressive supranuclear palsy, or PSP, a neurodegenerative disorder he has been "managing for more than a decade" and received a diagnosis for in April. The new diagnosis superseded the one he had received in 2017 for Parkinson's disease.

As a young organizer in Chicago, Jackson was called to meet with King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tenn., shortly before King was killed, and he publicly positioned himself thereafter as King's successor.

Santita Jackson confirmed that her father died at home in Chicago, surrounded by family.

Jackson led a lifetime of

crusades in the United States and abroad, advocating for the poor and underrepresented on issues, including voting rights, job opportunities, education and health care. He scored diplomatic victories with world leaders, and through his Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, he channeled cries for Black pride and self-determination into corporate boardrooms, pressuring executives to make America a more open and equitable society.

And when he declared, "I am Somebody," in a poem he often repeated, he sought to reach people of all colors. "I may be poor, but I am Somebody; I may be young; but I am Somebody; I may be on welfare, but I am Somebody," Jackson intoned.

It was a message he took literally and personally, having risen from obscurity in the segregated South to become America's best-known civil rights activist since King.

"Our father was a servant leader — not only to our family, but to the oppressed, the voiceless and the overlooked around the world," the Jackson family said in a statement posted online. "We shared him with the world, and in return, the world became part of our extended family."

Fellow civil rights activist the Rev. Al Sharpton said his mentor "was not simply a civil rights leader; he was a movement unto himself."

"He taught me that protest must have purpose, that faith must have feet and that justice is not seasonal, it is daily work," Sharpton wrote in a statement, adding that Jackson taught "trying is as important as triumph. That you do not wait for the dream to come true; you work to make it real."

Despite profound health challenges in his final years, including the disorder that affected his ability to move and speak, Jackson continued protesting against racial injustice into the era of Black Lives Matter. In 2024, he appeared at the Democratic National Con-

vention in Chicago and at a City Council meeting to show support for a resolution backing a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war.

"Even if we win," he told marchers in Minneapolis before the officer whose knee kept George Floyd from breathing was convicted of murder, "it's relief, not victory. They're still killing our people. Stop the violence, save the children. Keep hope alive."

Jackson's voice, infused with the stirring cadences and powerful insistence of the Black church, demanded attention. On the campaign trail and elsewhere, he used rhyming and slogans such as "Hope not dope" and "If my mind can conceive it and my heart can believe it, then I can achieve it," to deliver his messages.

Jackson had his share of critics, both within and outside of the Black community. Some considered him a grandstander, too eager to seek the spotlight. Looking back on his life and legacy, Jackson told the Associated Press in 2011 that he felt blessed to be able to continue the service of other leaders before him and to lay a foundation for those to come.

"A part of our life's work was to tear down walls and build bridges, and in a half century of work, we've basically torn down walls," Jackson said. "Sometimes when you tear down walls, you're scarred by falling debris, but your mission is to open up holes so others behind you can run through."

In his final months, as he received 24-hour care, he communicated with family and visitors by holding their hands and squeezing.

"I get very emotional knowing that these speeches belong to the ages now," his son, Jesse Jackson Jr., told the AP in October.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton awarded Jackson the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor.

In 2021, Jackson joined the parents of Ahmaud Arbery inside the Georgia courtroom where three white men were convicted of killing the young Black jogger. In 2022, he hand-delivered a letter to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago, calling for federal charges against former Chicago Police Officer Jason Van Dyke in the 2014 killing of Black teenager Laquan McDonald.

Jackson stepped down as president of Rainbow/PUSH in July 2023.

(A longer version of this article is at tinyurl.com/yn5yrf9t.)

News Brief

Calif. Man Headed to Prison After Pleading Guilty to Being Illegal PRC Agent

The Department of Justice announced that Yaoning "Mike" Sun, 65, of Chino Hills, Calif., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge R. Gary Klausner to four years in prison for acting as an unauthorized agent in service to the People's Republic of China. According to FBI documents, Sun had served as campaign adviser to an Arcadia, Calif., political candidate in 2022 — identified as Eileen Wang, who was sworn in as mayor Feb. 3 — who was elected to its city council. Sun also had been Wang's fiancé and served as her campaign consultant. In a similar incident, a mistrial was declared in late 2025 in the case of Linda Sun, a former aide to a former and the current New York governor, who had also been accused of serving as an unauthorized agent for China.

— P.C. Staff

MEMORIAM

(Note: Boldfaced names in the PDF version of this are active hyperlinks.)

Hamamoto, Fusako, 94. Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 21.

Aki, Robert H., 70. Barrington, Ill., Aug. 15, 2025.

Matsumura, Akio, 83. Forest Hills, NY, Feb. 10.

Ando, Helen Hanako, 91. Gardena, CA, Jan. 20.

McLemore, LaMonte, 90. Las Vegas, NV, Feb. 3.

Cruce, Shige (Yogi), 85. Syracuse, NY, Jan. 2.

Yogi, Loretta, 104. Kaneohe, HI, Jan. 7.

TRIBUTE

MARY ENOMOTO

Mary Hisako Enomoto was born Sept. 21, 1929, in Las Vegas, Nev., and died Jan. 21, 2026, in Los Angeles, Calif.

She was the third child and only daughter of Kintaro "Ben" Enomoto and Kimiko Shimojima Enomoto.

Mary graduated from Las Vegas High School and then spent many years teaching home economics among other subjects at Hollywood High School.

Mary was kind to animals and often adopted stray dogs and cats from her neighborhood.

She was generous to her nieces and nephews for birthdays and holidays. She had a strong faith in God and Jesus Christ, both blessings learned from her mother. Mary would often donate and volunteer at Centenary Church and other churches in the Los Angeles area.

She has returned to her eternal home and will be deeply missed.

Preceded in death by siblings Hidemi, Shinji Joseph Morita Enomoto, George Toshio Enomoto and John Yohane Enomoto.

Survived by nieces and nephews (Joseph) Jeffrey K. Enomoto and daughter Brilynn, Jon T. Enomoto, Kimmie (Enomoto) Matsuda, spouse Keith, children — Krystyna, Kaytlyn and Kyle, (George) Kiku Chablee Enomoto, (John) Tylana Enomoto and Ranei Enomoto-Lopez, and grandnephews Kuma Jacobson Enomoto and Desmond Lopez.

Graveside services were held on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier.

www.fukuimortuary.com
(213) 626-0441

PLACE A TRIBUTE

'In Memoriam' is a free listing that appears on a limited, space-available basis.

Tributes honor your loved ones with text and photos and appear in a timely manner at the rate of \$25/column inch.

CONTACT:

editorial@pacificcitizen.org or
call (213) 620-1767 ext. 104

FD-929

KUBOTA

Sharing. Community. Legacy.

久保田葬儀社

T 213-749-1449
F 213-749-0265

911 Venice Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90015
www.kubotamortuary.com

福井 FUKUI MORTUARY

Five Generations of Experience
FD #808

707 East Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Ph. 213/626-0441
Fax 213/617-2781

Gerald Fukui
President