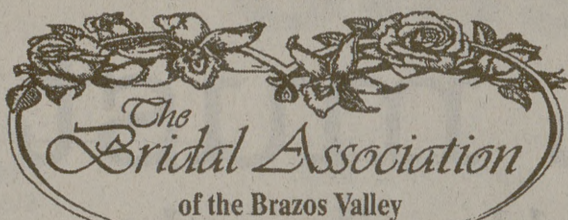


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Jesse Jackson admits to affair, asking public for forgiveness

CHICAGO (AP) — The Rev. Jesse Jackson withdrew from public view at a potentially critical hour for the civil rights movement Thursday after disclosing that he had an extramarital affair that resulted in the birth of a daughter a year and a half ago.

A steady stream of supporters — including Jackson's son, Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. — visited him at his Chicago home, some carrying Bibles. But the only word from Jackson was a statement issued in the early morning hours revealing the affair.

"I fully accept responsibility, and I am truly sorry for my actions," he said.

Spokesman John Scanlon said Jackson issued the statement to get out in front of anticipated tabloid reports. Scanlon said the child was the result of an affair Jackson had with a woman who worked in the Washington office of Jackson's civil rights group, the Rainbow-PUSH Coalition.

In his statement, Jackson said he would temporarily step aside from public life to spend time with his family.

The statement came amid the Senate confirmation hearings for John Ashcroft, President-elect Bush's nominee for attorney general — a choice denounced by Jackson and other civil rights leaders.

Jackson has demanded that Democratic senators vote against Ashcroft. Jackson's staff said he has not yet decided whether he will attend a rally Saturday in Florida to protest voting irregularities that he says disenfranchised blacks during the presidential election.

"I fully accept responsibility, and I am truly sorry for my actions."

— The Rev. Jesse Jackson
Civil rights leader

Jackson, a Baptist minister and one-time aide to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., said he has provided "emotional and financial support" since the baby's birth. "As her mother does, I love this child very much," he said.

"I was born of these circumstances, and I know the importance of growing up in a nurturing, supportive and protected environment," Jackson said. "So I am determined to give my daughter and her mother the privacy they both deserve."

He said he knows friends and sup-

porters will be disappointed in him and asked for their "forgiveness, understanding and prayers."

The Rev. Joseph Lowery, who was a close colleague of King and co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said he hopes Jackson participates in the Florida rally but would understand if he did not.

"We can't get bogged down. We can't let this interfere with his continued public service," said the 73-year-old Lowery, who plans to lead the rally. "The Bible says let the first stone be cast first. Instead of casting stones, he needs prayers and our support."

Jesse Jackson Jr. issued a statement appealing to the public to "understand and respect our privacy."

"Over the course of nearly 40 decades of marriage, my father and our family have survived dangers and endured many hardships, and with God's help, we hope to endure this one as well," the younger Jackson said.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley called it "a personal thing with his wife and his family" and would not comment.

That sentiment was echoed by many in the city that has become a base of operations for Jackson's civil rights work.

News in Brief

College students complain about financial aid site

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The U.S. Department of Education has asked a man who runs a financial aid Website for college students to stop using the acronym FAFSA, which stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

The Website, FAFSA.com, allows students to fill out financial aid forms online and over the phone for a fee ranging from \$49.99 to \$189.99.

FAFSA.com is part of El Macero, Calif.-based Student Financial Aid Services, founded by Michael Alexander.

The department claims that use of the FAFSA.com domain name is "calculated to and does in fact deceive consumers" by giving the false impression that it is a federal financial aid package that requires an application fee. Dan Berthiaume, an attorney for the department, said in a letter to Alexander on Jan. 12.

The department has received many phone calls from students and university administrators complaining about the service, spokeswoman Karen Freeman said. Some students might not know fees are unnecessary, she said.

ing the false impression that it is a federal financial aid package that requires an application fee. Dan Berthiaume, an attorney for the department, said in a letter to Alexander on Jan. 12.

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