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# Media crush adds to confusion at rally

Tensions flare, but are quickly defused, as Jackson is led away in handcuffs

By KEN DICKSON

DECATUR — The crowd surged, arms flailed, and bodies pushed and shoved on two different occasions Tuesday as the Rev. Jesse Jackson arrived at Eisenhower High School.

Oddly, it was a media representative who caused the biggest scuffle, nearly knocking over a woman in a wheelchair. Members of the media, including the national television networks, cable news outlets, radio and newspaper people rushed Jackson as he walked out of the Lincoln Continental on Tuesday morning and again in the early afternoon in front of Eisenhower High School.

The morning, Jackson explained his reasons for maintaining his position. He said he expected the school board never did and should not be denied an education. He said the school board was wrong in "handcuffing" students and they should have dealt with the young men on a case-by-case basis." But when he announced there would be another meeting with school officials, he set another deadline and there was another wait.

#### Notes and quotes

"The question is, whose cameras hit them? I'm sure the cameras hit them after the press got wild and out of line," said, laughing, while outside the Macon County Law Enforcement Center after being asked how two Decatur police officers were assaulted.

"That lasted about two hours, but now I'm heading over to Shaw's."

Jackson said, smiling, after learning if he was on a hunger strike in protest of the expulsion of the students.

"I was asleep, I finally got me some sleep, and the bridge did it was a \$10,000 bridge, but I didn't have to put a nickel down, but I tried to stay in jail to get me some sleep."

Jackson said about his plans to remain jailed overnight.

"Don't do anything stupid. Do not come here and try to intimidate the police. Remember what they say you should do."

— The Rev. James T. Meeks to a crowd of onlookers outside the Macon County Law Enforcement Center on Tuesday, immediately following Jackson's arrest.

"That was the pastor in me. We're not enemies. We want the same things. We all want our children to be safe, to be educated and to make a decent living."

— Meeks, about giving a tired-looking Jackie Goetter a hug after addressing the school board in closed session.

"It's very difficult. The students might not see them, but they know what's going on and they're curious. It's interrupting teaching and it's interrupting learning."

— Decatur school board President Jackie Goetter on the impact of Rainbow PUSH events on the learning process.

After more than three hours in the packed school board meeting room at the Kell Building, audience members started pointing signs saying "please send us" and "feed us" in front of the public access television camera.

Reporters asked Illinois Gov. George E. Ryan and Jackson's involvement in the ongoing school dispute in Decatur. The questions and comments began Tuesday morning, before Jackson was arrested.

Ryan said he has not taken sides in the debate and won't. He said he and Jackson will to get the two sides together. He thought the initial compromise offered by the school board was a good one, but Jackson has the right to reject it.

"This was a cause for Jesse Jackson. He's had a lot of causes in his life, and this was just another one," Ryan said.

Before leaving, Jackson said the school board never did and within earshot that he was not going to force his way onto school property yet. He said if the meeting got out of hand, he would compromise and compromise, he would enter school property at "high noon."

After more than two hours behind closed doors in offices at the Millikin Court building in downtown Decatur, Jackson solemnly announced in the first floor lobby that the school district's position had not changed.

"I'm not even going to announce again in frustration that the board would not compromise."

Jackson then excused himself and announced he was going to the Church of the Living God, PGC, in St. Louis. About three hours later, he returned to the school and last week — to meet with the experts there and their families and make final arrangements to march onto school property.

The moon showed down a little late, almost 1 p.m. About three hours later, the crowd gathered in front of the school, parallel to 16th Street.

Jackson climbed out of his car, removed his concerns and frustrations, and slowly made his way up the east sidewalk in front of the school.

The media encircled him once again and slowly moved up the sidewalk. After several yards, the crowd of people, including a woman in a wheelchair, nearly knocking her over.

Alice Trosch, 57, struggled to move out of the way with her 7-year-old grandson on her lap.

"No, I want to go," she said, while watch out for me."

Mark Allen, field director for the national Rainbow/PUSH Coalition office in Chicago, was at the police line. Jackson stopped and grabbed the handles on the wheelchair and pushed.

"I'm not going to stop," he said. "I'm not going to stop." A few minutes later, Allen joined Jackson in crossing the police line and was loaded into the van in handcuffs.

The situation nearly boiled over shortly after Jackson's arrest. As police were handcuffing Jackson to the police line, a Jackson son supporter broke through and police wrestled with him for about 20 seconds until he was on the ground.

While no punches were thrown, the brief struggle caused many people to rush forward in what looked like an attempt at engaging officers who held their ground and were overpowered and outnumbered.

A Rainbow/PUSH representative at the front of the crowd frantically pleaded with the crowd.

"Please, please, please don't resist!" he repeatedly shouted.

It compiled and the situation quieted down. However, the police line was never effectively restored, with Jackson supporters and media representatives roaming around the police line and the transport vehicle parked in front of the school.

At that point, Cleo Willis, a mother from St. Louis, lay in front of the transport vehicle. Police arrested him, too.

Several Jackson supporters sat in a circle with their arms locked, but were not arrested.

As police tried to leave the scene with Jackson on foot escorting the transport, the situation again got tense.

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Many young people, apparently high school age, blocked the entrance to the transport vehicle. Police did not get out.

The chant, "Let him go," and when instructed to move, they chanted, "Hell no, we won't go."

Police officers on foot escorting the transport. They pushed the police vehicles to exit and the transport sped away.

Many of the young people ran for their nearby cars. The media, rushing for the Macon County Courts Facility, was not far behind.

— H&R staff writers Ron Ingram, Tom Collins and Brett Wilcoxson contributed to this report.



MASSIVE AUDIENCE: A crowd of several hundred supporters, including a large media contingent, greeted the Rev. Jesse Jackson when he arrived at Eisenhower High School Tuesday afternoon, where Jackson was later arrested.



WAITING GAME: Members of the television media wait outside law offices in Millikin Place under the security of Gerald Baker, center, as the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Decatur Board of Education President Jackie Goetter and board attorney Jeffrey Taylor discuss the expulsion of the seven Decatur high school students. After a 2-hour meeting, no agreement was reached.



BEDLAM: Members of the Decatur Police Department try to maintain order at Eisenhower High School as police transport the Rev. Jesse Jackson and others who were arrested to the Macon County Law Enforcement Center.



ACROSS THE LINE: "Save the children," announced the Rev. Jesse Jackson after he was arrested Tuesday afternoon at Eisenhower High School.



CURIOS: Students arriving at Eisenhower High School Tuesday morning discovered the Decatur Police transport vehicle sitting in the parking lot on the north side of the school.

## High schoolers find it hard to return to business as usual

Students say disturbances and debates make it hard to concentrate on schoolwork.

It was a crazy day at Eisenhower. She said her classroom faced the front of the building and she saw Jackson in handcuffs.

"Everybody was talking about Jackson," she said. "About half of them agreed with his stance."

Brian Burns, a junior at Eisenhower, said he saw the 30-year-old police officers who were outside the school in handcuffs.

"I left school after lunch," he said. "We got off the bus after lunch and there was a huge mob in front of the school."

"I'm gonna wait for my guy," he said, explaining that he believed the disputes are racially motivated.

One of his friends pointed out the line of police officers who stood vigil in front of the school.

"Close it out," he said, pointing. "It's a battlefield."

At Stephen Decatur, it was as normal a day as possible, said senior Jeffrey Taylor. The school was still locked and much of the conversation among students was about

hour so they wouldn't be in the hallways while the rain was going on.

Sophomore Tamarius Gray and

two friends stood across the street long after the first bell rang. Gray said they were waiting around to see Jackson.

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