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By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

The Rev. Jesse Jackson came to speak to Metrohealth hospital last week for Black History Month.Jackson spent time with a select group of employees and friends before speaking to a bigger audience in the Scott Auditorium.

Jackson took everybody down memory lane, speaking about the civil rights era and the great works of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Jackson was with Dr. King the day he was assassinated.

Jackson is a civil rights activist and Baptist minister . He was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988 and served as a shadow U.S. Senator for the District of Columbia from 1991 to 1997.

He is the founder of the organizations that merged to form Rainbow/PUSH .

Jackson shared how King Jr. was appointed pastor of theDexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama in 1954. While serving as pastor of the church, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. This occurred on December 1, 1955. By December 5, 1955, the Montgomery Bus Boycott had begun.

In 1955,Jacksontold the audience, King was unanimously elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association which led the Montgomery Bus Boycott. During this time, African Americans refused to ride the public bus system inMontgomery. King's home was bombed due to his involvement. Thankfully his wife and baby daughter, home at the time, were unharmed.

King was arrested in February on the charges of conspiracy.

The boycott lasted 382 days.

In the end, on December 21, 1956, the Supreme Court ruled racial segregation on public transportation illegal.

Through all of this, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was formed in 1957 and King was named its leader. Its goal was to provide leadership and organization in the fight

for civil rights. He used the ideas of civil disobedience and peaceful protests based on the writings of Thoreau and the actions of Mohandas Gandhi to lead the organization and the fight against segregation and discrimination.

Their demonstrations and activism helped lead to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Jackson has been known for commanding public attention since he first started working for Dr. King in 1965. Jacksonparticipated in the Selma to Montgomery marches organized by James Bevel , King, and other civil rights leaders inAlabama.

Impressed by Jackson's drive and organizational abilities, King soon positioned Jacksonin a role at SCLC, in spite of concerns about Jackson's apparent ambition and attention-seeking. When Jackson returned from Selma, he was charged with establishing a frontline office for the SCLC in Chicago.

In 1966, King and Bevel selected Jacksonto head the Chicagobranch of the SCLC's economic arm, Operation Breadbasket . He was promoted to national director in 1967. Operation Breadbasket was started by the Atlanta leadership of the SCLC as a job placement agency for Blacks.

UnderJackson's leadership, a key goal was to encourage massive boycotts by Black consumers as a means to pressure White-owned businesses to hire Blacks and to purchase goods and services from Black-owned firms.

Jackson pointed out that through the struggles of the civil rights leaders, we are a better country, but we still have a long way to go.