

Jackson, 13 others arrested at rally for Yale employees

1,000 marched in Labor Day event

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — The Rev. Jesse Jackson and 13 other people were arrested Monday after they blocked traffic on the Yale University campus in support of university service and clerical workers on strike.

Jackson led more than 1,000 people on a Labor Day march and rally in support of the striking workers before he was arrested.

"This is the site of national Labor Day outrage," Jackson said. "This is going to be for economic justice what Selma was for the right to vote."

The march began shortly after 9 a.m. at a community center on Dixwell Avenue and was to culminate in a rally at Yale's Beinecke Plaza and Woodbridge Hall, which houses university President Richard Levin's office.

Jackson has been in Connecticut since last week, when Yale service and clerical workers walked off the job in a dispute over wages and pension benefits.

Yale University negotiators and leaders of striking labor unions have agreed to return to the negotiating table with New Haven Mayor John DeStefano Jr. on Wednesday.

Locals 34 and 35 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International and 140 hospital workers went on strike last Wednesday over wages, job security

and pensions. The unions represent about 4,000 workers, but some of them have crossed the picket lines.

On Sunday, Jackson and union workers addressed the contract dispute during services at Varick Memorial AME Zion Church and other churches in New Haven.

"This city is our city," Jackson told churchgoers, "and Yale is our inheritance. Save the workers. Save the families. Keep hope alive."

Yale spokesman Tom Conroy replied in a prepared statement that "the Reverend Jackson could point to Yale as a model employer which provides job security, great benefits and free health care. Yale also practices affirmative action in its hiring practices and admissions."

Jackson later met with leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which supported his efforts.

Yale officials say their latest eight-year contract offer to the workers is generous, with pay raises of 3 percent to 5 percent, pension benefit increases and signing bonuses worth 50 percent of pay raises they would have received dating back to January 2002, when the last contract expired.

The unions want more substantial raises and larger pension benefits, as well as retroactive pay for the 20 months workers have stayed on the job without contracts.

Alderman called to action by trip to Mexico

BY MICHELLE JARBOE
FEATURES EDITOR

Plucking a grape from a bowl on his kitchen table, Carrboro Alderman John Herrera ruefully examined the fruit, saying that before this summer, he never truly understood its cost.

After spending more than six weeks in Mexico, Herrera returned to Carrboro on Aug. 13 with a change in perspective and a heightened commitment to the Mexican people.

"As an elected official, I feel that I have a responsibility to learn more about the people of Mexico and why they immigrate to Chapel Hill and Carrboro," he said. "I had heard a lot of stories, but I wanted to see for myself."

In October, Herrera was invited to apply for an Eisenhower Fellowship, a travel grant funded by corporate sponsorship, past fellows and various endowments. Each year, 10-15 fellows from the United States create unique travel plans that will enhance aspects of their careers.

Along with the Philadelphia area and New England, the Triangle annually yields many fellows. Criteria for the program include having five to 10 years of leadership, a project's potential for impact on society and a fellow's enthusiasm for continued education.

Herrera, the first Eisenhower Fellow to travel to Mexico, visited various economic, political and social figures and focused on an investigation of two issues he sees as pivotal to the Mexican community in Carrboro: economics and immigration.

"The idea was to get a perspective from folks on the right, center and left so I could form my own opinions," he said.

Arriving June 29, he began and ended each day with breakfast and dinner meetings. Herrera said that for six weeks he never went to bed before midnight.

He became an accredited international observer for the July 6 municipal and gubernatorial elections in Mexico City. Traveling between lavish haciendas and makeshift cardboard homes of migrant workers, Herrera documented the stories of the indige-

nous people he met. "I realized how big Mexico really is and how rich and diverse it is," he said. "It's a country of contrast and extremes."

Herrera was struck by the strength and poverty of the Mexican people as he toured farms and joined the border patrol rescue squads at Tijuana and Mexicali.

"I saw 12-year-old children prostituting themselves. They didn't even have a body yet, but they're full of makeup," he said. "People have to work, and that's what they do."

Those who tried to cross into the United States often became prey for coyotes and thieves. Herrera saw stripped bones strewn in the desert as testimonies to failed immigration attempts.

"I didn't know if I wanted to vomit or to cry or what," he said.

While documenting failed border crossings, he visited the El Buen Pastor shelter, where injured indigenous people nursed stumps of limbs and waited for the prosthetics that would enable them to attempt another immigration.

Many of these patients were crippled by falls from trains, while some of the women were raped and beaten while trying to hide or to cross.

"These people risk their lives just to come here and work," he said. "Forget about education and everything else — people just want to eat."

Many of the farming families lived in huts of plastic tarp, supporting themselves on salaries of less than \$7 per day. On some farms, child care was provided in the form of tiny, unventilated



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN HERRERA

Carrboro Alderman John Herrera (far left) visits with the director of El Buen Pastor (left), a patient and volunteers in Tapachula, Mexico.

spaces where children slept during the day. At other sites, Herrera said, there was no place for the children but the fields.

"Some farmers were telling me that the 6-, 7- and 8-year-old kids are some of the fastest pickers of tomatoes," he said.

"It just hurt my back watching them ... from sunup to sundown, bending over all day."

After seeing the living conditions of indigenous people in Mexico, Herrera returned home with the desire to focus on workers' conditions locally and to demonstrate

what he termed his emotional, spiritual and physical connection to the Mexican community.

He said he intends to further connections between Carrboro and its potential Mexican sister city, Juventino Rosas, and to work for the rights of undocumented immigrants and the standard of living in Mexico.

"I don't know how people there survive," he said, "but the fact that they do survive gives me hope."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

JUVENTINO

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work temporarily or participate in cultural exchange workshops.

Herrera said U.S. citizens who work with the immigrant community could benefit from learning how practices, from religious traditions to psychiatric treatment, are handled in Mexico.

Herrera said he wants to conduct financial management courses in Mexico to encourage more responsible use of the billions of dollars in remittances sent each year by Mexican immigrants to their families.

Herrera also said Carrboro can learn from the successes of Mexican cities. "Some places do so much with so little," Herrera said. "It's not a matter of having resources. It's a matter of having ideas."

Herrera said that overall, such a program would facilitate the integration of the growing Mexican population into the country. "It would help us appreciate each other and treat each other with respect and dignity," he said. "We need to learn, and it's a mutual process."

Lupe said she and her neighbors work to maintain their Mexican traditions in Carrboro, but she said she fears the next generation might

begin to lose the culture. "I don't like to see two people who speak Spanish speaking English to one another on the street," she said in Spanish. "I don't want our traditions to be lost, or our accents."

Lupe said the formation of a sister-city relationship would encourage Mexicans in Carrboro to share their cultures rather than replace them. "It's an opportunity to share our traditions and our language," Lupe said in Spanish. "Sometime in the future, (U.S.) culture will be mixed and improved."

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Hurricane Floyd.

This year, the department has pledged to aid students whose parents lost their jobs during layoffs at Pillowtex last month.

"If it wasn't this sudden need, it was Hurricane Floyd or overenrollment last year," Ort said. "There's always some need for additional money. I'm just glad we have it available."

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