

Jesse Jackson Jr. and Wife to Enter Guilty Pleas

Written by Freddie Allen

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The swift political and personal descent of former Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. has accelerated with criminal information documents being filed accusing him of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud, and making false statements in connection with allegations that he diverted approximately \$750,000 in campaign funds for personal use.

His attorney has said that the oldest son of civil rights icon Jesse Jackson has been cooperating with federal authorities and will plead guilty to the charges. No sentencing date has been set but Jackson could face up to five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and forfeiture of items he purchased illegally. Because of his cooperation, prosecutors are expected to recommend that Jackson serve between 46 and 57 months in prison and receive a fine in the range of id="mce_marker"0,000 to id="mce_marker"00,000.

Jackson recently resigned his seat in Congress, citing health issues as well as the ongoing federal probe. Jackson's wife Sandi, who recently gave up her seat as a Chicago alderman, was charged with one count of filing false tax returns and could face three years in prison and a id="mce_marker"00,000 fine.

In a statement issued through his attorney Friday, the former Congressman from Chicago said: "Over the course of my life I have come to realize that none of us are immune from our share of shortcomings.

and human frailties. Still I offer no excuses for my conduct and I fully accept my responsibility for the improper decisions and mistakes I have made. To that end I want to offer my sincerest apologies to my family, my friends and all of my supporters for my errors in judgment and while my journey is not yet complete, it is my hope that I am remembered for the things that I did

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right.”

Criminal information documents do not represent the initiation of formal charges, but are usually filed only with the consent of the defendant who essentially agrees with the information filed in federal court. The information papers filed Friday in Washington, D.C. allege that Jackson “used credit cards issued to the Campaign to make purchases for personal expenses and directed that funds from the Campaign be used to pay the credit card bills for these purchases.”

The items Jackson is believed to have purchased illegally range from \$9,587.64 in children’s furniture shipped from New Jersey to Jackson’s home in Washington to memorabilia associated with celebrities.

Between August 2007 and September 2008, Jackson spent id="mce_marker"0,105 on Bruce Lee memorabilia and more than id="mce_marker"1,000 acquiring items associated with slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 2009, Jackson Jr. turned his eye to the King of Pop, collecting more than \$26,000 in items owned by the “Smooth Criminal” singer, including \$4,600 on a Michael Jackson fedora in 2010.

He also paid \$5,000 for a football signed by American presidents and more than \$2,000 each on Malcolm X and Jimi Hendrix memorabilia. Jackson’s most lavish purchase was a \$43,000 gold-plated Rolex watch that he purchased for himself, according to the criminal information documents.

The documents also allege that Jackson blew \$5,000 in campaign funds on a shopping spree at Edwards Lowell Furrier and Fur Shop in Beverly Hills, Calif. on a mink cashmere cape, a black and red cashmere cape, a mink reversible parka and a black fox reversible coat.

After winning a re-election bid for his House seat with 71 percent of the vote in November 2012, Jackson resigned following months of speculation and on-again off-again treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. for mental and physical health issues. Jackson’s doctors revealed that he suffered from bipolar disorder.

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U.S. Representative Danny Davis (D-Ill.) raised Jackson's mental illness as a clue to Jackson's illegal spending spree.

"I think things probably just got out of hand for them and they got involved in making decisions that just didn't make a lot of good sense," Davis said in an interview with the Associated Press.

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH):

"People with bipolar disorder experience unusually intense emotional states that occur in distinct periods called 'mood episodes.' An overly joyful or overexcited state is called a manic episode, and an extremely sad or hopeless state is called a depressive episode. Sometimes, a mood episode includes symptoms of both mania and depression.

"Bipolar disorder is characterized by mood changes like feelings of euphoria and behavioral changes including restlessness, lack of sleep and "behaving impulsively and taking part in a lot of pleasurable, high-risk behaviors, such as spending sprees, impulsive sex, and impulsive business investments."

According to NIMH, "People who suffer depressive episodes associated with bipolar disorder may experience mood changes like feelings of emptiness and apathy towards pleasurable activities. Behavioral changes include: "feeling tired or 'slowed down,' having problems concentrating, remembering and making decisions and changes in eating, sleeping or other habits."

Congressman Davis said, "It's hard to rationalize it. Not all elected officials in Illinois are corrupt or building any kind of political dynasty or trying to develop political power. Most individuals elected to public office are citizens who want to make the most effective use of themselves and make this world a better place in which to live."

Jackson's fall from grace marks a tragic end to a political career that appeared to have no limits. His name was floated for every political office from of Chicago to the president of the United States. After he was investigated in a fundraising scheme involving incarcerated former Gov.

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Rod Blagojevich attempt to sell President Obama's old Senate seat in 2008, Jackson's star never recovered, though he was never charged with any related crimes.

Jesse Jackson became the second consecutive Congressman to resign while representing the Second District of Illinois, which covers parts of the South Side and south suburbs. In 1994, Mel Reynolds resigned and served time in prison for having sex with a 16-year-old campaign worker. Jackson won the special election in 1995 to replace him.

Jackson's father had planned to attend a speech by President Obama in Chicago on Friday, but skipped the event to be with his family and son in Washington when the criminal information was filed.

The elder Jackson said, "We express our love for him as a family."