

Jesse Jackson Visits Phoenix Occupiers

Written by Angela Piazza | AZ Central
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The Rev. Jesse Jackson delivered a message of peace, unity and support for the Occupy Phoenix movement to protesters Thursday.

Around 5 p.m., about 200 protesters gathered in front of the Freeport-McMoRan Center in downtown Phoenix to hear the civil-rights leader and former presidential candidate speak. Police in riot gear lined the entrance of the building. "Police look at us as the enemy, but we are trying to save their jobs," Jackson said. Rambunctious protesters recited Jackson's speech word by word. He ended his talk by saying, "Looks like we march for democracy, looks like we should now march on, day after day, until there is justice, healing and love in the land. Keep hope alive. I love you." Energized by Jackson's words to "march on," the protesters proceeded to the nearby Arizona Republic and 12 News building and then to Cesar Chavez Plaza in front of City Hall, where Jackson repeated his speech and led a prayer.

Police reported no arrests or other incidents.

Occupiers, who are protesting economic inequality and what they term unfair corporate influence, said Jackson's appearance inspired them.

"Dude, he came up and grabbed on to me. That was amazing," said Angel Hartnell.

Hartnell moved to Phoenix two months ago from Missouri to search for work. She said she joined the Occupy movement in Phoenix after being arrested for holding up a sign on a street corner soliciting work.

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"The guy (Jackson) is famous and could do whatever he wants, but chooses to preach about love and peace at us." Hartnell said.

Jackson said he hopes the Occupy movement will help close the financial gap in America and put American's back to work.

"Too few have too much," he said.

Dan O'Neal of Progressive Democrats of America said that the movement is deep-rooted and that he believes Jackson's appearance will bring out more supporters.

Jackson's message to the protesters was "to remain persistent, non-violent, disciplined and focused." He said that "if they maintain this quest for economic security, they will ultimately prevail."

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