

Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson hospitalised with COVID-19

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American civil rights icon Jesse Jackson received his first COVID vaccination dose in January and urged Black people to get inoculated [File: AFP]

Chicago, August 22 (RHC)-- Civil rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson and his wife, Jacqueline, have been hospitalised after testing positive for COVID-19. Jackson, 79, is vaccinated against the virus and received his first dose in January during a publicised event as he urged others to receive the inoculation as soon as possible. He and his wife, 77, are being treated at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

“Doctors are currently monitoring the condition of both,” according to a Saturday statement from Jesse Jackson’s nonprofit, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. “There are no further updates at this time,” the statement added, noting anyone who was in the vicinity of the couple in recent days should follow public health guidance.

Jackson, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2017, has spent decades advocating for the rights of Black Americans and other minorities dating back to the turmoil of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, spearheaded by his mentor Martin Luther King. Jackson has remained active and has advocated for COVID-19 vaccines for Black people, who lag behind white people in the United States' vaccination drive.

"For understandable reasons ... African Americans harbor suspicions about scientists and vaccines," a statement in January said, adding, however, if they "decline to be vaccinated, all will remain at risk."

Earlier this month, he was arrested outside the U.S. Capitol during a demonstration calling for Congress to end the filibuster in order to support voting rights. COVID-19 vaccines are free and widely available in the United States, although only half of the total population is fully vaccinated.

The highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus is spreading rapidly worldwide and in the US, where the seven-day average of new cases has risen to 133,000 a day, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Hospitalisations in the US are averaging more than 11,000 per day and daily deaths from COVID-19 have risen to 641, according to the CDC.

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