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Jackson returns to Antioch with message of unity

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Contra Costa Times

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ANTIOCH — Rev. Jesse Jackson is becoming a regular here.

The famed political and civil rights activist visited Antioch for a second time in two months Tuesday night to advocate for lending reform and foreclosure relief for people on the brink of losing their homes.

Entering to a thundering chant of "si se puede," Jackson spoke to an enthusiastic crowd of 400 at Holy Rosary Catholic Church's Dominican Hall during a scheduled meeting of the Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization.

Jackson's message: Communities of all colors, faiths and backgrounds should band together to change the mortgage

system.

"We need to shift the racial battleground and false pride to economic common ground and moral high ground," he said.

According to a Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization bank accountability report summarized at the meeting, 1.5 million American families have lost their homes already to foreclosure, and another 13 million may face that fate in the next five years.

The Antioch chapter of the organization has shown its commitment to change in the past year with frequent town hall-style meetings and public demonstrations. In March, it bused 45 local homeowners to Washington, D.C., on the Recovery Express to plead for government intervention in the foreclosure crisis.

On Tuesday, the chapter announced its partnership with the newly formed Antioch chapter of Jackson's civil rights organization, the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

Nearly 70 percent of the local interfaith chapter's membership is Latino, said organizer Rosario Frisse, as she echoed

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Jackson's call for unity on the mortgage issue.

"Just the fact to have him here, and he is an African-American person, gives us more power to go hand-in-hand with everybody," Frisse said.

As the audience waved paper flags with slogans such as "Bank Accountability" and "Mantengan las familias in sus casas," organization leaders called for measures that included asking city and county governments to explore divesting from banks that fail to work with homeowners. They also called for Congress to enact strong consumer protection legislation.

"We can fix this," said Robin Rowell, an organizer with the interfaith group. "We just need the political will to make changes."

In September, Jackson spoke with local religious leaders at Antioch Church Family as part of a national tour promoting the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition's Save Our Homes campaign for mortgage relief for homeowners struggling against foreclosure.

During that appearance, Jackson announced the formation of the local

Rainbow/PUSH Coalition chapter, led by East Contra Costa residents Kay Trail and Roger Henry, that would help people advocate for themselves in various situations.

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