

# THE REASON BEHIND THE JACKSONS' NARROW DENIALS?

I noted the other day that Jesse Jackson Jr's denial of involvement in Blago's pay-to-play games was very narrow: he denied being personally involved, and said that he had not authorized others to make offers to Blago for him.

I want to make this fact plain: I reject and denounce pay-to-play politics and have no involvement whatsoever in any wrongdoing. I did not initiate or authorize anyone, at any time, to promise anything to Governor Blagojevich on my behalf.

I never sent a message or an emissary to the governor to make an offer, to plead my case, or to propose a deal about a U.S. Senate seat, period.

Maybe this explains why those denials are so narrow. The Trib reports that Blago and Jackson-family fundraiser Raghuveer Nayak met on October 31—the day when Blago was recorded as talking about having been approached by an emissary from JJJ.

Blagojevich made an appearance at an Oct. 31 luncheon meeting at the India House restaurant in Schaumburg sponsored by Oak Brook businessman Raghuveer Nayak, a major Blagojevich supporter who also has fundraising and business ties to the Jackson family, according to several attendees and public records.

And Saturday, Nayak co-sponsored a fund-raiser for JJJ which was understood by some attendees to be tied to JJJ's bid to be appointed Senator.

That meeting led to a Blagojevich fundraiser Saturday in Elmhurst, co-sponsored by Nayak and attended by Jesse Jackson Jr.'s brother, Jonathan, as well as Blagojevich, according to several people who were there. Nayak and Jonathan Jackson go back years and the two even went into business together years ago as part of a land purchase on the South Side.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those close to JJJ are now repeating his narrow denials.

Jackson's congressional spokesman Rick Bryant said Thursday that Nayak is a "family friend and supporter" of the congressman as well as his well-known father, Rev. Jesse Jackson. The congressman and Nayak have spoken about Jackson's desire to succeed Obama.

"He has talked to [Nayak] about the Senate seat and he has mentioned his interest," Bryant said of his boss. "But he never asked him to do anything."

Jackson's newly retained attorney, James Montgomery, said Wednesday he could not rule out that such possibilities were discussed with Blagojevich by people who did not have his client's blessing.

They figured out pretty quickly that some folks might have been making deals on JJJ's behalf with Blago, huh?

This is a damned fine piece of reporting from the Trib, btw, though the editing doesn't make clear how close a match they've made to the details in the complaint. They have found someone with Jackson ties talking to Blago on the same day he described being approached. That person, plus two other people (Rajinder Bedi and Harish Bhatt), have talked about influencing Blago—and raising a million dollars—to appoint JJJ. And those three people held a fundraiser

over the weekend, between the day, Thursday, Blago returned to the idea of appointing JJJ in exchange for money, and the time, on Monday, when Blago and JJJ met.

I guess the Saturday fund-raiser begins to explain why Fitz got a warrant for Blago's arrest on Sunday, but didn't execute it until after JJJ and Blago met on Monday. I'd say the chances are even better that that meeting was taped on Monday.