

**Testimony of
Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
before the
United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and Members of the Subcommittee, good morning and thank you for inviting me to provide testimony regarding H.R. 3894, the Pullman Historic Site National Park Service Study Act.

The Pullman Historic Site, located on the far Southeast Side of Chicago, is a national treasure -- rich in historical, cultural and architectural significance. It's already designated as a registered National Historic Landmark District, an Illinois State Landmark and a City of Chicago Landmark District. This resolution would authorize the National Park Service to determine the significance, suitability, and feasibility of the Pullman community becoming Chicago's first National Park.

Built by common laborers with a common cause, Pullman was conceived and founded by pioneering transportation industrialist, George Pullman. Unlike many of the industrial towns of its time, Pullman provided a model community with suitable living conditions for workers and their families. Manufacturing the Pullman Palace Sleeper Car, the dedicated factory workers produced "the finest sleeper car" of its time for more than a century.

Pullman is known nationally as the focal point of the early labor movement, and the struggle of the working class to achieve fair labor practices and safe working conditions. In a move that served as the catalyst for the first industry-wide strike in the United States, the Pullman factory strikers crippled the rail industry nationally, and demonstrated the ability of a small, committed group of Americans to change labor standards in favor of more just and humane practices and compensation.

The Pullman community also played an important role in African American and early Civil Rights history through the legacy of the Pullman Porters as well as the development of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first black union. The Porters became a cornerstone of development for a black middle-class passing along information, ideas and encouraging commerce through their travels.

Moreover, the struggles against discrimination led by union founder A. Philip Randolph and his workers laid the groundwork for the early Civil Rights Movement.

The site's stunning, unique and surprisingly well preserved architecture has served as a popular movie set over the years, playing host to Paul Newman and Tom Hanks for the filming of the "Road to Perdition," Robert DeNiro and Kevin Costner for scenes from "The Untouchables," and Harrison Ford in "The Fugitive," to name a few. Examples of the vintage, iconic structures within the factory-town stand today as they have for more than 100 years, including the Factory and Clocktower, the Market Square, the Fire Station, the Hotel Florence, the Green Stone Church as well as the mansions and row houses.

As proposed, Pullman would become just the second National Park in Illinois, joining the Abraham Lincoln homestead in Springfield. And as it turns out, there's a connection between the two. When George Pullman died in 1897, it was Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln, who took over as president of the railcar company.

I can go on and on, but you don't have to take my word for it. In a 1998 Department of Interior Study of the Calumet Region, which I am happy to provide to the Subcommittee, the document states that the cultural resources which included Pullman "are considered significant in that they represent the full scope of the workers' lives, ranging from plants where they worked, to company housing, labor sites, and large scale commercial districts." The study continues that "the fact that these resources and sites are still relatively intact within surrounding urban environment is a factor that is not represented in other National Park Service units related to industry."

I applaud the National Park Service for its commitment to better represent the cultural and ethnic richness of this great nation and its people leading up to its 2016 Centennial. I believe elevating Pullman to a National Park status will provide important preservation and conservation opportunities that will not only enhance the Park Service's inventory but will allow access to an important and often untold story in our goal of creating "a more perfect union." As the agency that binds together the stories and the special places that are uniquely American through a shared and diverse heritage, a Pullman National Park will also help connect currently underserved, urban Americans to the National Parks, and create opportunities for tourism, development, and job creation in Chicago's economically depressed South Side.

Finally, I must mention the numerous committed community-based organizations, individuals and elected officials -- including federal, state and local -- who have worked cooperatively and vigorously, for decades, to preserve this unique American neighborhood -- all of whom support this legislation and stand ready to serve as willing partners to continue the legacy of Pullman. Mr. Chairman, I also ask unanimous consent that several letters of support written by various organizations from my district and throughout the State of Illinois be included in the record.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and for including this legislation in today's proceedings.

I hope you will agree that the Pullman site is a unique American treasure that shares a uniquely American story and grant this bill the full Committee and floor debate it warrants.

Thank you.