Changing Times: A New Outlook on Mental Health Today

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It's no secret that Representative Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (D-Illinois) is being treated for bipolar disorder, but in Chicago's South Side, that's not the issue that seems to concern either his constituents or opponents most. What has folks talking the most is Jackson's strange "invisible man" campaign that has rendered him unseen in the public sphere since early June, reported a New York Times article.

Acknowledged as the race's front-runner, Jackson is waiting for his doctors' OK to resume stumping, according to his campaign advisers. Bipolar disorder is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks and is classified as a mental illness. But unlike the 1970s when an elected official who admitted to having a mental illness risked committing political suicide, Jackson's health problem hasn't stigmatized him among those who support or oppose his candidacy.

According to Laura Washington, a political analyst interviewed for the article, Jackson is likely to be re-elected without any problem. "He has no significant, known opposition. He's a long-term incumbent. And there's a lot of heartfelt sympathy for him," Washington said.

But despite Jackson's constituents sympathizing with his medical problems, some have lost patience with his decision to remain out of the public eye. What people want to know is what exactly is he going to do for the country, what is he doing for himself and just where the heck is he?

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