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### Student Profiles: Charley Jackson, University of Detroit Mercy

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## Student Profile

# We Were Very Poor

By Brinn Phillips

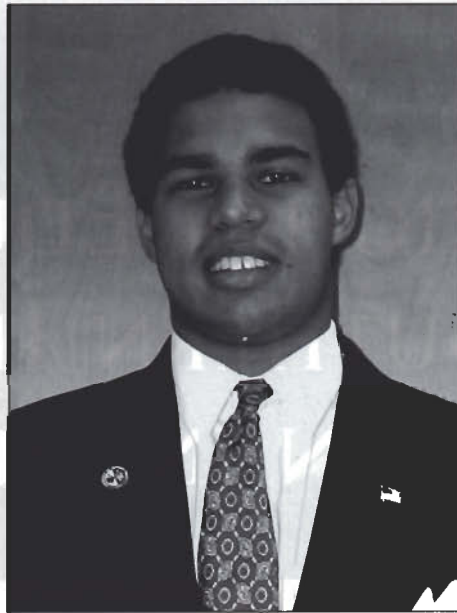
Summer for many fifth-grade boys is spent playing video games, watching TV, and visiting friends. When Charley G. Jackson, Jr. was that age, he remembers spending hot summer months reading biographies of great Americans and writing book reports.

Jackson is now a senior and an economics major at the University of Detroit Mercy and still finds time to read about many of those same leaders. But now he's meeting them, and hopes to be working with them soon.

Ever since his mother began working for the U.S. Army, he has always been fascinated with government and has had a desire to make America great. In just the past few years, Jackson has interned with former U.S. Congressman David E. Bonior (D-MI), worked as a page in the U.S. House of Representatives, laid a wreath on the tomb of the unknown soldier in Washington D.C. and was chosen to vote in the Electoral College—all before the age of twenty-one.

Born in Germany, Jackson and his siblings were raised by his single mother, Susan Jackson, in Eastpointe, a suburb of Detroit. She has been a major influence on him throughout his life. "My mother always encouraged me," said Jackson, "and to this day she has always pushed me in a positive direction. She has always believed in me and told me to go after my dreams."

Ever since Jackson was very young, his mother always worked to make things easier for others who were less fortunate. "As I was growing up, my mother constantly brought people in for dinner or even housed them until they found a place to live," he said. "She did this even though we were very poor. My mom always believed that God provided for us... so we should take care of others. Her values are so ingrained in me that service and social justice have become the bedrock of my values and personal views," Jackson added.



## Charley Jackson

### University of Detroit Mercy

Susan describes her son as energetic and a "go-getter." She said he began to show interest in community service and politics when he was in the fifth grade and he has always dreamt of one day running for President of the United States.

Even though he had a supportive mother, Jackson has had to overcome many obstacles. At one point, his family was homeless and he personally experienced racism from both blacks and whites. "I am of mixed heritage, and people always wanted me to choose.

I felt I shouldn't have to choose since I am equally black and equally white. The whole experience made me stronger to strive that much harder," said Jackson.

While he is still a student at UDM, Jackson is working in the university advancement division as the University's government and community relations

coordinator. "UDM has empowered me to work with people at a level beyond my expectations," said Jackson. In addition, he is a presidential ambassador representing UDM at local events and a resident advisor on the University's "Peace and Social Justice" floor.

Adrian Kerrigan, vice president of University Advancement, and Jackson's supervisor, said, "Charley has been an asset to the University. He has been a truly outstanding representative of our community and has facilitated many meetings with community leaders to help build a shared vision for our redevelopment initiatives."

In addition, Jackson continues to serve his community and school as an active member in several organizations. He is secretary of the Macomb County Democratic Party and a member of Eta Pi Chapter of Alpha Pi Omega, the national service fraternity.

While there seems to be little room in his life for regrets, Jackson does say he wishes he had attended more UDM basketball games and that he had taken the head resident assistant position in the dorms he was offered last fall. "I think I could have made some real changes in the dorms for the people who live there," said Jackson.

"My education at the University of Detroit Mercy has inspired me to lead and serve in my own community," he said. "Learning at a Jesuit and Mercy institution has taught me so much about life and how to treat others... and I know it will stay with me for the rest of my life.

"Since fifth-grade, I have always aspired to a career in politics, working with others to make the world a better place. I'm willing to work as hard as I can," he added.

*Brinn Phillips is a senior at the University of Detroit Mercy, majoring in communications.*