

# SPECIAL REPORT

National Legal and Policy Center

## Mainstreaming Demagoguery: *Al Sharpton's Rise to Respectability*

Carl F. Horowitz

Al Sharpton, civil-rights activist, racial politician and ordained minister, is an angry man. And he's not going to "mellow" anytime soon. Anyone doubting as much need only have been around his home base of New York City on April 25, 2008. After a seven-week trial, a state Supreme Court Justice had just acquitted three police detectives, two of them black, on all counts related to the November 2006 shooting death of a young unarmed black man, Sean Bell, leaving his bachelor party. Sharpton quickly swung into action. "This verdict is one round down, but the fight is far from over," he announced. "What we saw in court today was not a miscarriage of justice. Justice didn't miscarry. This was an abortion of justice... We are going to close the city down in a nonviolent, effective way."



On May 7, less than two weeks later, he and his followers made good on the threat, blocking streets and entrances to the Triborough, Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges. More than 200 marchers, including Sharpton and Bell's parents, were arrested. Though the facts of the case were a good deal more complicated than Sharpton had led the public to believe (as this report later will explain), Bell's fate, he insisted, could have been that of any young black man in America. It was another command performance for Sharpton, who with several other defendants, were convicted for disorderly conduct.

Since the mid 1980s Reverend Al Sharpton, known to friends and allies as "the Rev," has been a fixture in American public life. His calling is "justice." Unfortunately, he defines the term in ways that defy common sense and moral integrity. As a preacher, politician and media manipulator, he stokes the fury of black audiences prone to viewing reality through a lens of black victimhood at the hands of white victimizers. Through his Harlem-based nonprofit organization, National Action Network (NAN), Sharpton relentlessly plays offense against any person or organization he believes has perpetrated, or turned a blind eye from, injustices against blacks.

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Though he won't say it, his actions underscore his belief that the ends justify the means. Thus, if he evades taxes (as the IRS and New York State and City officials now allege) or slanders the reputations of innocent persons (as he has done more than once), in his mind such actions are legitimate because his ulterior motives are noble.

Despite a not-unexpectedly poor showing in his 2004 Democratic Party presidential run, Sharpton's stock continues to rise. He leads marches, hosts a syndicated radio show, travels extensively, and meets with leading public figures. NAN, which began on a shoestring budget in the early Nineties, has become a major political voice. That raises an interesting question: Who's backing him? It takes serious money to keep someone like this in high gear. Much of the explanation can be found in the suites of our largest corporations. Here is a partial list of companies sponsoring National Action Network's 10th annual conference, held in Memphis in early April 2008 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King: Abbott Laboratories, Allstate, Anheuser-Busch, Citigroup, Colgate-Palmolive, Comcast, Continental Airlines, Daimler-Chrysler, FedEx, Ford, General Motors, Home Depot, Johnson & Johnson, Macy's, Pepsico, Pfizer and Wal-Mart. Colgate-Palmolive, singled out as "Corporation of the Year," admitted at its annual shareholders' meeting in New York several weeks later that it had donated \$50,000 to National Action Network.

It wasn't just major corporations who lent their imprimatur to the event. New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, whose agency manages roughly \$140 billion in public-employee pension funds,

announced early in 2008 his intent to earmark a large share of assets to causes supported by Sharpton. That commitment earned him a "Keeper of the Dream" award. Labor unions also made their presence felt. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), plus a few New York City-based unions, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Locals 1199 and 32BJ and the United Federation of Teachers (the local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers), were co-sponsors. Clergy included NAN Chairman Reverend W. Franklyn Richardson and Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, lead pastor of Harlem's Canaan Baptist Church and a co-recipient of a "Keeper of the Dream" award.

By attracting support from prominent individuals and organizations, Sharpton effectively has joined their ranks. His image refurbishment campaign, by any reasonable measure, has been a success. During the Eighties and much of the Nineties, he was the *enfant terrible* of the civil-rights movement, a public-relations agent's nightmare. But he's evolved into a media celebrity. He's published two autobiographies.<sup>1</sup> He served as guest host for the December 6, 2003 segment of NBC-TV's "Saturday Night Live," during which time he was an active candidate for U.S. president. During 2004-05, he hosted the Spike television network show, "I Hate My Job," a working stiff's version of Donald Trump's "The Apprentice." He's appeared as a guest in episodes of such popular television series as "New York Undercover," "My Wife and Kids," and "Boston Legal." For the last few years he's hosted a syndicated daily radio talk show, "Keepin' It Real with Al Sharpton," operating

out of the studios of WWRL-AM (New York City) and broadcast by the XM (satellite) and Radio One networks. In 2008 he appeared in a frequently-aired TV promotional spot alongside conservative televangelist Pat Robertson, part of former Vice President Al Gore's anti-global warming campaign, "We Can Solve It." This campaign for personal reinvention has helped make Al Sharpton arguably the nation's top civil-rights leader—even more prominent than his fellow publicity-seeking elder ally, Jesse Jackson.

Sharpton's base of operations is National Action Network, located at 106 West 145th Street in Harlem, N.Y. The group's motto is "No Justice, No Peace" and has dozens of active chapters around the nation. Through NAN, he goes into attack mode, tossing aside his made-over image. Today's Al Sharpton no more hesitates to inflict war upon a person or community supposedly guilty of injustice toward blacks than the Al Sharpton of 20 years ago. To "the Rev," what matters is maintaining the illusion that blacks are second-class citizens. Armed with moral

indignation, selective facts, and contempt for law, Sharpton relishes the opportunity to generate mass outrage over any incident appearing to confirm this view. His recent campaign to exploit tensions in a Louisiana town underscores why he can't be trusted.

On September 20, 2007, Reverend Sharpton and several other prominent activists led an estimated 20,000 marchers through Jena, Louisiana, population 3,000, to protest a supposed denial of justice.<sup>2</sup> The county prosecutor had filed attempted murder charges against a half-dozen local black high school students who, unprovoked, had severely beaten a fellow student, a white, on school grounds. The details of the incident, which occurred the previous December, were not in dispute. What had aroused Sharpton's fury was that the defendants were facing criminal charges, yet the prosecutor had declined to take similar action against three white students who in September 2006 had been suspended by their principal for hanging a pair of nooses from a tree on school grounds. This double standard, he stated after the rally-march, is a reminder of the oppression blacks face every day:<sup>3</sup>

You think we brought thousands to Jena. You wait 'til we go to D.C. and bring the whole country, because there's Jenas all over America. There's Jenas in New York. There's Jenas in Atlanta. There's Jenas in Florida. There's Jenas all over Texas.

Here was Reverend Sharpton doing what he does best—engaging in wild distortions of fact and context in the service of mass action. Quite aside from the absurdity of his conception of America as a vast cauldron of white-on-black oppression, there happened to be much more to the Jena story than he let on. First, some of the accused assailants had

a prior criminal record. Second, the students who hung the nooses were unaware of the racial connotations of their act—that is, of the numerous recorded incidents in Southern history of an accused black publicly hung by vigilante whites.<sup>4</sup> And third, there was no recent evidence of local denial of rights to blacks.

These and other details, however, hardly mattered to Sharpton. Indeed, he had every reason to ignore them. To have admitted they were pertinent would have been to doubt the black-as-victim narrative and thus his political importance. Sharpton didn't overtly condone the felonious assault of an innocent white teen by six black peers. But he did argue that the hanging of the nooses was at least as egregious as act, never mind that the white victim was not even among those who'd hung the noose. Indeed, given the preponderance of signs at the march that read, "Free the Jena Six" (as opposed to "Reduce the Charges Against the Jena Six") and Sharpton's lack of any concern for the welfare of the beaten white student, it's fair to say he saw the noose hangings as *much worse* offenses.

The Jena incident—actually a series of incidents occurring over several months—was vintage Al Sharpton: Take certain details of a supposedly incriminating (against whites) event out of context, recite them incessantly as evidence of how the deck is stacked against blacks, and demand immediate and unorthodox steps to obtain "justice." It speaks volumes about this nation's current political culture that Sharpton not only enjoys the support of many leading corporations, but has the Democratic Party's top tier virtually groveling for his endorsement. That is real power. But to understand how he got that power,

### **Corporate Sponsors of 2009 NAN National Convention:**

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Wal-Mart Stores

(source: 2009 National Action Network  
National Convention program)

it's necessary to understand who he is and what motivates him.

## Who Is Al Sharpton? An Overview

Al Sharpton is a distinct occupational type: the black civil-rights leader. Like past and present figures such as A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Martin Luther King, Jr., Whitney Young, Jesse Jackson and Julian Bond, Sharpton's job is to press grievances on behalf of his people. The inevitable frame of reference is black victimization at the hands of whites. This frame, in a contemporary context, is a distortion of reality. Systematic denial of rights to blacks, in the South or anywhere else in America, is a decades-old relic. Since the mid 1960s, blacks in no meaningful sense can claim they have been relegated to pariah status, a fact in large measure owing to generally tolerant white attitudes.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, white victimization at the hands of blacks is also real—and indeed much worse, using crime rates as a basis.<sup>6</sup>

Most black civil-rights leaders are fully aware of this. But they know that to retain their political credibility (especially to their black audiences), they either must downplay or deny it. From their view, when blacks commit crimes, they are responding, consciously or not, to accumulated generations of injustice. Such behavior thus becomes “understandable,” and requires whites to make special moral allowances. Oppression of blacks is as bad as it ever was, the argument goes. It's just now more subtle.

In a nutshell, this is how Reverend Sharpton sees the world. He explains:<sup>7</sup>

Martin Luther King, Jr., and others faced Jim Crow. We come to Jena to face James Crow, Jr., Esq. He's a little more educated, a little

more polished, but it's the same courthouse steps used to beat down our people. And just like our daddies beat Jim Crow, we will win the victory over James Crow, Jr.

Paradoxically, Sharpton is also an advocate of black self-help and moral responsibility. In the conclusion to his second autobiography, *Al on America*, he writes:<sup>8</sup>

We have to be just as aggressive, just as hard on ourselves as we are on others. In fact, the only way we can have the moral authority to challenge others is if we first challenge ourselves. We have to be just as vocal about those who use racism as an excuse for failure as we are about the individuals and system that use racism to knock us down. We must take responsibility for ourselves. In a lot of ways we have become our own worst enemy.

On the surface, this quote is at odds with the previous one. Yet in fact there is no contradiction. In the first statement, Sharpton is denouncing white America for its legacy of injustice. In the second statement, he is calling upon fellow blacks to do their best, lest they lend credibility to their white oppressors.<sup>9</sup> In each case, he operates on an assumption that white racism is ever-present.

*The two sensibilities—denunciation of white perfidy and exhortation to black excellence—go hand in hand.*

What makes Sharpton an especially incendiary figure is his confrontation-oriented narcissism. The man lives for stoking and avenging grievances. Even where a grievance is real, Sharpton makes sure to rub salt into wounds. A slight committed against a single black, intended or not, becomes a grievous crime “done” to all blacks. Should his activism produce troubling, even tragic consequences, he will portray himself a decent, misunderstood seeker of justice. And should an interviewer remind him of those consequences, he responds with aggressive evasion. Several years ago,

NBC's Tom Brokaw asked Sharpton if he would apologize for his role in the Tawana Brawley case, which centered upon the (false) accusation that several white men, including a police officer and a prosecutor, over several days back in 1987 repeatedly had assaulted and raped a black teenaged girl in upstate New York. Sharpton, despite an eventual defamation judgment against him, responded with obfuscation so pronounced that Brokaw dropped the subject.<sup>10</sup>

Sharpton knows that his ability to connect with his audiences depends on such choreographed denials. To admit responsibility for wrongdoing would undermine his credibility and discourage clients from coming to him. In his world, reputation is everything. His reputation is what enables him to bill himself as an “adviser” or “spokesman” for alleged victims and their family members. His reputation enables him to line up or provide counseling, financial support, media coverage and legal representation so he can make life miserable for the alleged perpetrator(s).

It sounds like a racial reparations racket. Indeed, that's what it is. Yet remember this: Al Sharpton does not care what anyone thinks of him. As he puts it, “You cannot be a true leader if you care about what people think or say about you.”<sup>11</sup> Even the prospect of assassination does not deter him. He received a glimpse of his own mortality early in 1991 when he was knifed by an angry spectator just prior to one of his marches through the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn, N.Y. Roughly a half-year later Sharpton recovered enough to fan the flames of a black riot in Brooklyn's Crown Heights



When he ran for President in 2004, Sharpton received the support of 2% of Democratic primary voters.

that resulted in property destruction, numerous assaults and a murder.

Sharpton's civil-rights career has included several quests for elective public office. In this, he has pursued a course similar to that of his boyhood hero-mentor, the late Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, D-N.Y. Sharpton ran for U.S. senator in 1992 and 1994, and mayor of New York City in 1997,<sup>12</sup> picking up a huge black vote in each case.<sup>13</sup> And in this decade, during February 2003-March 2004, he ran for U.S. president. Even in the Nineties, the thought of Al Sharpton as a presidential candidate might have been good for a laugh. Yet here he was, precisely that. Though his inability to secure the Democratic Party nomination for the highest public office in the land was a foregone conclusion, he managed to get 2 percent of the more than 16 million votes cast in the primaries, much of it *after* his withdrawal from the race in March 2004. He did especially well in Michigan (7 percent), New York (8 percent), South Carolina (10 percent) and the District of Columbia (20 percent), each with a high black population.

Al Sharpton is never going to be elected U.S. president. But he does wield extraordinary power as a party gatekeeper. All Democratic presidential candidates now solicit his support. In 2000, Bill Bradley and then the eventual nominee, Al Gore, practically genuflected before him at his Harlem headquarters. In 2004, Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry repaid Sharpton for his endorsement by giving him a prime-time speaking slot at the national party convention and opportunities to make stump speeches.<sup>14</sup> The 2008 election cycle was just as bad. On the eve of the party's Iowa caucuses, presidential candidates Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and John Edwards and/or high-ranking campaign managers repeatedly called Sharpton for an endorsement.<sup>15</sup>

There was nothing surprising here. All three had spoken at National Action Network's 9th annual convention in New York City in 2007, expressing open admiration for their host. Senator Obama, now the nation's 44th president, said this of Sharpton:<sup>16</sup>

Reverend Sharpton is a voice for the voiceless, and a voice for the dispossessed. What National Action Network has done is so important to change America, and it must be changed from the bottom up.

His main opponent, Senator Hillary Clinton, now Secretary of State, if anything, was even more forthright in her support:<sup>17</sup>

I have enjoyed a long and positive relationship with Reverend Al Sharpton and National Action Network, and I don't ever remember saying "no" to them and I intend to remain their partner in civil rights as I clean the dirt from under the carpet in the oval office when I am elected president.

Most Republicans have been unwilling to fawn over Sharpton, something he acknowledged when

he called upon black voters to punish any GOP candidate not showing up at presidential debate forums hosted by the National Urban League and the NAACP. ("We can only assume you weren't courting us.")<sup>18</sup> But even here are key exceptions. For starters, there is Roger Stone. A long-time Republican operative, Stone for whatever reason helped manage Sharpton's 2004 presidential campaign. Not only did he give advice, he also put together Sharpton's application for federal matching funds, raised private funds for the candidate in battleground states, and arranged six-figure loans to National Action Network.<sup>19</sup> Even more significantly, President George W. Bush on February 12, 2008 welcomed Sharpton as an honored White House guest, part of the administration's Black History Month celebration. Alluding to events in Jena, Louisiana, the President cautioned the American people: "The noose is not a symbol of prairie justice, but of gross injustice. Displaying one is not a harmless prank. Lynching is not a word to be mentioned in jest." Bush made no mention of the beating administered by at least a half-dozen black high school students in Jena of an innocent white classmate. Sharpton expressed his approval of the president's remarks.<sup>20</sup>

Al Sharpton indeed has come a long way. A street provocateur with a long history of financial impropriety, character assassination, and incitement to riot, his ability to corral high-level benefactors is uncanny, but in some measure could have been predicted. Media-generated hysteria has become a dominant style of political discourse. And reigning white elites, petrified of being tarred as "racists" or enemies of "diversity" (and subsequent exile to the margins of public life), too often yield



to their accusers. Sharpton, like Jesse Jackson, exploits this fear under the guise of “civil rights.” Calling him a rabble-rouser does no good, for he will reply that Jesus of Nazareth, Adam Clayton Powell and Martin Luther King, Jr. also were called rabble-rousers in their day. Numerous corporate, labor, philanthropic and other leaders, whether out of agreement or acquiescence, open their checkbooks.

Sharpton has taken King’s message and given it an extra dose of street theater. He shouldn’t be underestimated. To reach the pinnacle of power takes savvy, energy and an ability to size people up. And Sharpton, as his 2002 autobiographical campaign tract, *Al on America*,<sup>21</sup> attests, has these traits. Often, people who should know better come under his spell. *New York*

*Times* national political correspondent Adam Nagourney, reviewing Sharpton’s book, called its author “smart, articulate and eloquent...perceptive, funny and fearless.” He added: “As anyone who has heard him talk from a pulpit can testify, Sharpton is a man with a heart and firm ideological beliefs...He has a command of politics that rivals some of the great New York party bosses. No less significant, he has an understanding of the way the press works that rivals more than a few city editors in this town.”<sup>22</sup> Former New York City Mayor Edward Koch, who often feuded with Sharpton during his tenure, now says of him: “Al Sharpton is maligned by a lot of people, but I happen to like him. He is a bona fide black leader, and by leader I mean someone who can say, ‘I need people

to mobilize and to picket,’ and 5,000 people will come out.”<sup>23</sup>

When it comes to Al Sharpton, National Legal and Policy Center also believes in a need to mobilize—in opposition. In 2004, the center filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission against Sharpton and a major backer, La-Van Hawkins, a Detroit-based fast-food entrepreneur, citing fundraising and expenditure violations. The FEC eventually ordered Sharpton to return \$100,000 in matching funds and denied him access to another nearly \$80,000. With this report, the center is continuing its pressure. The goal is to identify, understand and challenge sources of institutional support for Al Sharpton. This support has not been good either for the donors or America



Adam Clayton Powell in 1966.

as a whole. But to build a case against it, one first must build a case against Sharpton himself. And that means dissecting his lengthy track record as a racial politician.

## A Legacy of Demagoguery: The Devil's in the Details

### Early Years

It's a manifestation of human nature's dark side: The most appalling and infamous of lives provoke fascination. Countless people who know Al Sharpton only through headlines and newsreels can't seem to get enough of him. Many have asked: "Why is Sharpton a public spectacle?" "Why can't he be a sensible civil-rights leader like Martin Luther King?" Actually, there are some very logical reasons for Sharpton's chosen path in life.

Alfred Charles "Al" Sharpton Jr. was born on October 3, 1954 in Brooklyn, New York to Alfred and Ada Sharpton. The father, a building contractor who in young Al's own words was a "slumlord," made enough money to move the family to a large home in the middle-class Queens neighborhood of Hollis. "At one point," Al Jr. writes, "my father was doing so well he bought two Cadillacs every year, one for my

mother, one for him."<sup>24</sup> Young Al wasn't poor, but he was rambunctious:<sup>25</sup>

I yelled when I was hungry. I yelled when I was wet. I yelled when all those little black bourgeois babies stayed dignified and quiet. I learned before I got out of the maternity ward that you've got to holler like hell sometimes to get what you want.

He would find an outlet for all that hollering early on. At age 4, he discovered he could preach. Encouraged by his parents, young Al was delivering sermons regularly at a local Pentecostal church, the Washington Temple of God in Christ. Dozens and even hundreds of worshippers would gather every Sunday to hear this "wonder-boy preacher" tell it like it is. By age 10, he was ordained as a minister by the church's pastor, Bishop Frederick Douglass Washington, himself a public figure with his own radio show. Sharpton already had been an opening act for gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, astonishing audiences with his Bible-thumping oratory. At Brooklyn's P.S. 134, Al would sign his school papers "the Reverend Al Sharpton," annoying his teachers to no end. Reverend Washington expressed a fervent hope that his prodigy one day would marry his daughter and become temple pastor. The job was for the asking.

It was not to be. And the main reason lay on the home front. Around the spring of 1964, Al Sharpton Sr. left his wife for a younger woman. The added kick was that the woman happened to be his own stepdaughter—that is, his wife's daughter from a previous marriage. Young Al was dumbstruck; his dad and half-sister, Tina, had run off together. They would have a child, Kenny.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, Mrs. Sharpton and her two children from her second marriage, Al Jr. and Cheryl, found themselves struggling. They

moved out of their Hollis home and into a cheap Brooklyn apartment. She worked as a maid, supplementing her income with public assistance. Young Al sought a father substitute. He soon would find one.

That leads to Sharpton's first major influence, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the charismatic Harlem clergyman and Democratic New York Congressman.<sup>27</sup> Powell, who was born in 1908 and died in 1972, was an enigma. He had extensive white ancestry on both sides of his family, so much so that at first glance it was easy to mistake him for Caucasian. Yet he trumpeted his blackness. He distrusted whites and positively loathed black "Uncle Toms" who took orders from them. Adam Clayton Powell never took orders. And for decades, black America rallied around him because of that.

Powell, who held a master's degree in theology from Columbia, became a public figure during the Depression. His father had been lead pastor at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church. Powell inherited the position in 1937. By then, he'd already acquired a reputation as the firebrand chairman of the Coordinating Committee for Employment, in a real sense a precursor to Sharpton's National Action Network and Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition. Through the committee, Powell organized mass meetings, rent strikes, and threats of boycotts against white employers who didn't hire enough blacks. The last activity proved especially effective against the management of the 1939 World's Fair in New York, the city's bus transit authority, and white owners of Harlem drug stores.

Politics was a logical next step. In 1941, Powell ran for New York City Council and won, becoming the first

black ever to hold a seat. In 1944, he ran for Congress, campaigning for a new seat encompassing Harlem. Again, he won. Almost as soon as he arrived, Powell proved a formidable legislator, applying his taste for brinkmanship to a wide range of issues. He was instrumental—far more than people today realize—in generating support for progressive legislation, especially after becoming chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee in 1961. Many of President Kennedy's New Frontier and President Johnson's Great Society initiatives might not have come to fruition without Powell's persistence.

Adam Clayton Powell, never one to duck combat on Capitol Hill, frequently came home to preach. At age 11, Al Sharpton became part of his audience. Having read a biography of Powell, he was determined to see him. He recalls the first encounter:<sup>28</sup>

I'll never forget to this day the first time I actually laid eyes on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. He walked out of the side door into the sanctuary in his robe, with that straight, long posture. He walked up those marble stairs to the semi-circular pulpit. I thought I had seen God.... He had this magnetism and this majestic air. He was very elegant, but at the same time defiant—a real man's man.

After the sermon, Sharpton screwed up the courage to seek a personal meeting. After persistent pleading with Powell's secretary, he met his idol face to face. And to Sharpton's own surprise, Powell recognized him, exclaiming, "Alfred Sharpton! Boy preacher from Brooklyn." The Congressman, it turned out, was a fan of F. D. Washington's radio program. It was the start of a long friendship.

But if Al Sharpton learned lessons from Adam Clayton Powell, they weren't necessarily the right ones. Powell enjoyed flaunting his

power, and the money that went with it, regularly shuttling between Washington and his island vacation home in Bimini, the Bahamas. The money for the good life came out of illegal withdrawals from committee funds—or so Powell's colleagues had determined following an investigation. The House Democratic Caucus in January 1967 stripped him of his chairmanship, and two months later, the full House of Representatives voted 307–116 to exclude him from their ranks. His seat now vacant, Powell campaigned the following month in a special election to get it back. He won. His House colleagues disallowed him from taking his seat. Powell promptly sued to rescind that decision, eventually winning in the Supreme Court in June 1969,<sup>29</sup> following his re-election the previous November. He emerged from self-imposed Bimini exile and returned to Congress, but minus his seniority. He ran for re-election in 1970, this time losing in the Democratic primary to Charles Rangel, who would go onto victory in the general election and retain the seat to this very day. Powell, meanwhile, died in April 1972 of acute prostatitis.

Sharpton defends Powell's legacy, despite the blemishes. He writes: "What I learned from Powell about leadership...is that you can't care what people think. Adam Clayton Powell did not care about being accepted by society." In a defining moment, he recalls advice Powell gave him sitting in a car:<sup>30</sup>

"Kid...Don't ever forget this: If you expose your own weaknesses, they can never use them against you. 'Cause can't nobody tell what everybody already knows. What might appear to be reckless behavior on my part is really defense. They can never threaten to expose me, because I expose myself.

Powell also inculcated in Sharpton a hatred of blacks who projected weakness.<sup>31</sup>

These yellow Uncle Toms are taking over the blacks in New York. Don't you stop fighting. If you want to do something for Adam, get rid of these Uncle Toms.

Nobody can doubt that Al Sharpton has taken these words to heart.

The second great influence on Sharpton was Martin Luther King, Jr. Around age 13, Sharpton got his initiation into the world of civil-rights activism, working as a youth minister in the Brooklyn, N.Y. office of King's Operation Breadbasket, a multi-city boycott of white businesses owners who allegedly refused to hire blacks or buy from black suppliers.<sup>32</sup> Sharpton on occasion did meet King, though the significance of the encounters wouldn't sink in until after the latter's assassination. He writes:<sup>33</sup>

I met Dr. King a couple of times. He knew me as "the boy preacher." When he would see me, he would say, "There goes that boy preacher!", and a big grin would break over his face. I felt good being a part of something he was involved in, and the loss (of his life) was definitely felt. But my mother's reaction—how hard she took it—confused me....

I understood her intellectually, but I didn't feel what she was saying until about a year later. I went to see a movie at the Loews Theater on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. They were showing "King: From Montgomery to Memphis," a documentary on his thirteen-year career. At the end of the movie, Nina Simone sang this song: "Why? The King of Love is Dead." "Turn down your TV set; love your neighbor was his plea," and she asked, "What we gonna do now that the king of love is dead?" That's when it hit me....

What we gonna do? We couldn't just act like, now that King was gone, everything he worked for would stop. As Nina Simone sang her song, they showed Dr. King's funeral procession. There were horses carrying his body, a horse-drawn wagon with his casket in a glass

case trotting through town. That image was all I could think about for days.

I sat there and made up my mind that there was something I had to do. I had to try and keep his legacy alive. I was only fourteen years old, but I knew I could do something, that I must do something. I went back to Breadbasket and asked if I could be youth director and began my journey to carry on Dr. King's legacy.

A brief revisionism is necessary here. Sharpton's liberal critics, such as journalist Juan Williams, commonly charge that he has "betrayed" King's vision. Where King was a selfless crusader who built bridges across humanity, goes the argument, Sharpton is a publicity-seeking buffoon tearing those bridges down.<sup>34</sup> This charge isn't entirely false. King steered clear of anti-Semitism;<sup>35</sup> Sharpton (though he vociferously denies it) more than once has encouraged it. King was modest in his tastes; Sharpton is flashy and stays in deluxe hotel suites.<sup>36</sup> And King, if mainly because of the era in which he lived, challenged real injustices. Sharpton, by contrast, invents or exaggerates them.

But there are similarities as well as contrasts, and all too often they are lost in our current time. For one thing, the surviving members of the King family long have been among Reverend Sharpton's staunchest allies. In 2001 King's now-deceased widow, Coretta Scott King, called Sharpton "a voice for the oppressed, a leader who has protested injustice with a passionate and unrelenting commitment to nonviolent action in the spirit and tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr." King's oldest son, Martin Luther King III,<sup>37</sup> marched alongside Sharpton in Jena and again, two months later, in Washington, D.C., at a rally encircling U.S. Justice Department headquarters. The younger King also co-hosted with

Sharpton National Action Network's "Keeping the Dream Alive" awards ceremony in Memphis.

Second, Sharpton's tactics aren't that different from those of Martin Luther King, Jr. King, after all, was Sharpton's first employer. Sharpton learned from King the importance of creating dramatic effect, especially in the television age. He also learned the value of networking, of building ties to labor, business, religious, philanthropic and other organizations not normally focused on race. King, through his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), fused moral-religious narrative, media savvy and political pressure. Sharpton added to that legacy.

King's eventual heir, Jesse Jackson, would be another defining influence on Sharpton. Jackson headed the Chicago office of Operation Breadbasket, on occasion visiting New York. It was through the group's Brooklyn office, headed by a Baptist minister, Reverend William Augustus Jones (eventually Sharpton's pastor until his death in 2006),<sup>38</sup> that Sharpton and Jackson met. "I met the Reverend Jesse Jackson for the first time when I was about twelve years old," Sharpton recalls. "I was still very much the boy preacher in Brooklyn."<sup>39</sup> Jackson, whom Sharpton calls "my teacher," seemed impressive because he wasn't concerned about respectability in any conventional sense.<sup>40</sup>

He was in his late twenties, and right away we identified with each other. Jesse was younger than the other preachers of that time. He wouldn't even wear a suit and tie. Jesse always used to wear a medallion like Adam. And he sported the buck vest and a big 'fro.

I later learned that he had been born out of wedlock and came from a broken home, like I did. He didn't come out of the seminary, wasn't one of those collegiate types. He wasn't

like that. Jesse was regular. . . . We just hit off. I became his protégé.

Jackson also provided Sharpton with a job, making him youth director of Operation Breadbasket in 1969. In 1971, near the end of that group's existence, Sharpton left to form another nonprofit group, National Youth Movement (NYM). He openly acknowledged his debt to Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson in pursuing projects such as: urging black children in Harlem to participate in the then-new Christmastime black holiday, Kwanzaa; organizing and getting arrested at a sit-in demonstration at City Hall to demand more summer jobs for black teenagers; getting arrested for sitting in front of the New York City Board of Education president during a protest; and leading a group of demonstrators along Wall Street who painted red "x" marks on office buildings which he claimed (without basis) were fronts for drug dealing. Sharpton stated NYM had 30,000 members in 16 cities and got drug dealers off the streets. But Victor Genecin, a New York State prosecutor and a now private-sector litigator, countered that the group was "never anything more than a one-room office in Brooklyn with a telephone and an ever-changing handful of staffers who took Al Sharpton's messages and ran his errands."<sup>41</sup>

Sharpton and Jackson would continue their friendship over the years. "Jesse Jackson is probably the smartest person I know," Sharpton writes. "There's no one I know who has a more brilliant, fertile mind."<sup>42</sup> While the two have had their disagreements—Sharpton, for example, is far more sympathetic than Jackson toward black nationalists—in the end they have reconciled. When

they first met, Jesse instructed Al, “All you got to do is choose your targets and kick ass.”<sup>43</sup> Sharpton has shown he’s adept at both.

Throughout his career, Sharpton has emulated Jackson, going so far as to assemble a videotape library of his performances.<sup>44</sup> What Sharpton learned is that a combination of media-friendly ambition, intimidation and charisma can go a long way in extracting concessions from whites and covering one’s past. For four decades, Jackson has built a reputation as a leader, telling blacks, and eventually many whites, things they *wanted* to hear, whether or not these things corresponded to reality.<sup>45</sup> As much as Adam Clayton Powell and Martin Luther King, Jackson has displayed a gift for mobilizing crowds into enthusiastic fervor, while keeping messy details of money and power in the background. This sounds like Al Sharpton, too, which is why a closer look at Jackson is in order.

Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr. was born in 1941 in Greenville, South Carolina. Like so many civil-rights leaders, from the beginning he has shown high fluency in the language of the street and the church. In the immediate aftermath of the King assassination in April 1968, Jackson, a newly self-anointed “Reverend,” saw an opportunity to put his skills into practice, though by unorthodox means. He enlisted the help of a violent Chicago gang, the Black Stone Rangers, to intimidate local business owners into making “contributions” to Operation Breadbasket. Under the guise of promoting social justice, Jesse Jackson and his cronies, especially Black Stone Ranger leader Jeff Fort, effectively ran a robbery and extortion racket. Kenneth Timmer-



Source: AP/Wide World

Mentor and protégé in 2006.

man, author of an exhaustive biography of Jackson, quotes a Chicago criminal justice official:<sup>46</sup>

Jeff Fort and the Jester would make the rounds of the small business owners, telling them that if they didn’t contribute, ‘We’ll burn you down,’ another official recalled. ‘It was a shakedown, pure and simple. They called themselves ‘community organizers.’ In those early days, Jackson boasted of his ties to the gangs. ‘I get a lot of them to go to church. I baptized Jeff Fort at Fellowship Baptist Church,’ he told one reporter.

The Black Stone Rangers would change their name to El Rukn (Arabic for “The Foundation”).<sup>47</sup> If this was part of an image makeover, it didn’t work. Its leaders, including Jeff Fort, eventually were arrested and successfully prosecuted for murder, extortion, drug dealing and racketeering. With the Fort-controlled faction in federal prison, a new crop of thugs took over the El Rukns. One of those thugs was Noah Robinson, Jr., Jesse Jackson’s half-brother. Robinson was an unusual character. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Finance, he came to Chicago in 1969 to become full-time director of Operation Breadbasket’s commercial division. His seemingly

respectable credentials ensured ample cover for El Rukn—and for Jesse Jackson, who now headed his own group, Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity).<sup>48</sup> “There was one very powerful reason why none of us spoke out more loudly against Jesse for all those years,” remarked one local black minister. “It was fear of the long arm of the black mafia that Jesse’s half-brother controlled.”<sup>49</sup> Years later, in 1988, Robinson was arrested in Greenville, S.C., and eventually received life in federal prison for arranging a pair of murders. Jackson, on the presidential campaign trail when the news of the arrest broke, proved the consummate actor, disavowing any connections to his half-brother.

If Jackson has been circumspect about his underworld ties, he’s been positively exhibitionistic in his friendships with present and former leaders of Third World dictatorships and terrorist movements, whom he sees as articulating legitimate grievances. Jackson at various points has drawn close to Fidel Castro (Cuba), Yasser Arafat (Palestine Liberation Organization), Charles Taylor (Liberia), Jose

Eduardo Dos Santos (Angola), Ibrahim Babangida (Nigeria) and Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe)—tyrants one and all—providing support for their causes and securing support for his own. Bill Clinton's election and subsequent re-election as U.S. president proved to be a boon to Jackson, who had grown close to the president. In October 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright appointed Jackson "Special Envoy for the President and Secretary of State for the Promotion of Democracy in Africa." For years, he would enjoy virtual carte blanche in building a power base among African leaders, on occasion applying face-to-face shakedown tactics he'd practiced on Chicago's mean streets. He demanded and got, for example, a share of assets privatized by the government of Zambia.<sup>50</sup>

Jackson's religion-themed hard-Left egalitarianism also would inform his views on domestic policy. No American welfare state, it seemed, was sufficiently large for him. Even the modest steps that Congress and the Republican White House took to curb federal spending were subterfuges for neglect. Looking back on the Eighties, Jackson noted: "The Reagan years were devastating to us all. For eight years the lights were turned off."<sup>51</sup> This was errant nonsense,<sup>52</sup> but his audiences loved it.

During the Nineties and this decade, Jesse Jackson has used his connections and financial backing to go on corporate treasure hunts. Texaco, Nike, Toyota and Anheuser-Busch have been among the companies who, following spurious accusations of racial "discrimination" by Jackson and his allies, have capitulated to exorbitant Justice Department-enforced settlements. Jackson also took on the nation's citadel of public trading, the

New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), through a new gambit, the Wall Street Project. Setting up shop rent-free in New York City's Trump Tower, Jackson coaxed large donations from such financial titans as First Boston, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley and the Travelers Group in preparation for the project's grand opening of January 14–16, 1998. President Bill Clinton, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, and Donald Trump paid their respects to Jackson at the January 15 gala fundraising event on the NYSE trading floor, timed to coincide with Martin Luther King's birthday. It was the first in a continuing series of extravaganzas.

Al Sharpton proved an apt pupil. Having observed Jackson sanitize his past by ingratiating himself with the pillars of American life, he figured he could succeed in this endeavor as well. Since "powerful" whites had shown themselves to be weak-kneed, Sharpton recognized that merely hurling an accusation of racism could reap big rewards; a company could make its problems go away by making a generous donation to National Action Network. The Memphis con-fab of April 2008 is a measure of that power.

If Jesse Jackson was Al Sharpton's teacher, then James Brown was his surrogate father. Brown, more than anyone, came to define Sharpton's personality and motives. As a child, Sharpton often would accompany his biological father (in front-row seats) to concerts by the late rhythm n' blues artist at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. He, like countless audiences, was entranced by Brown and his band's manic energy, precision playing and tight choreography. Brown was a Hollis local, too.

In 1973, about a year after graduation from Brooklyn's Tilden High School, Sharpton met Brown backstage at a concert in Newark, N.J. The two hit it off instantly, especially as one of Brown's sons, Teddy, was a member of National Youth Movement (tragically, the latter would die not long after in an auto accident). Sharpton took Brown up on an offer to work as a full-time tour manager.<sup>53</sup> Sharpton would make Brown's musical revue the focus of his social and professional life for the next decade, setting up NYM chapters around the country. Here he also would meet his future wife, Kathy Jordan, a backup singer with the band. Sharpton recalls the experience:<sup>54</sup>

(T)he person who had the greatest influence over me and is most responsible for the man I am today is James Brown. He had more impact on my life than any civil rights leader—maybe even more than my own mother. What I learned from him makes it possible for me to do the things I do today... (My) job was to carry his bag (of cash) around the country. But my real job was just to be his son. James Brown taught me about being a man. He gave me life skills that I never got from my own father. He taught me about self-respect, dignity, and self-definition.

What Sharpton won't admit, unfortunately, is that his mentor, who died of natural causes at age 73 in December 2006, was himself highly deficient in certain life skills. While it was hard to ignore Brown's prodigious musical talent, physical energy and business acumen, it was downright impossible to look past his sociopathic tendencies.

"Dissent" was not a word in James Brown's vocabulary—at least if someone else was dissenting from him. He would levy frequent fines on band members for being late, missing notes, violating his strict dress code, and engaging in back talk, eventually prompting a permanent walkout in 1969 of nearly all

members of his original band, the Famous Flames. “James was bossy and paranoid,” recalled former trombonist Fred Wesley. “I didn’t see why someone of his stature would be so defensive. I couldn’t understand the way he treated his band, why he was so evil.”<sup>55</sup> Brown’s bullying style also was manifest in his insistence upon an extreme formality of address. In *Al on America*, Sharpton favorably recalls a backstage incident on “The Tonight Show” in which Brown angrily ordered his band to pack up their gear and walk off rather than play; host Johnny Carson apparently had committed the cardinal sin of addressing the singer by his first name rather than as “Mr. Brown.”<sup>56</sup>

Brown’s behavior wasn’t simply controlling; on occasion it was criminal. During his teenage years in Augusta, Georgia, he’d done a stint in reform school for a series of car break-ins and burglaries. One might be tempted to overlook these transgressions in light of his youth and extreme poverty. Far less easily ignored were his frequent criminal acts well into adulthood, the best-known of which occurred on September 24, 1988, several years after Sharpton’s departure. High on PCP and armed with a shotgun, Brown led police on a high-speed motor vehicle chase through the streets of Augusta, Georgia and then on Interstate 20 in Georgia and South Carolina until the cops managed to shoot out three of his tires. He was convicted of carrying an unlicensed pistol and assaulting a police officer, plus various drug and driving offenses. He received concurrent six-year sentences from Georgia and South Carolina, serving 15 months in prison and another 10 months in a work release program.<sup>57</sup>



With singer James Brown in 1982.

Brown easily might have gone to prison for another 1988 offense. His then-publicist, Jacque Hollander, alleged that while riding with Brown in a van in South Carolina, the singer suddenly pulled her to the side of the road and raped her at gunpoint. Ms. Hollander, to her regret, did not file a criminal complaint until 2002. The judge dismissed the case on grounds

that the statute of limitations had expired. Three years later, Hollander filed a civil suit, but again statute-of-limitation requirements precluded introduction of DNA and other evidence.<sup>58</sup> James Brown lucked out.

Brown also generated an impressive domestic rap sheet from his Beech Island, South Carolina mansion, again emerging unscathed. His

third wife, Adrienne Rodriguez, had him arrested for assault four separate times, dropping charges in the first three instances and dying of natural causes (in 1996) before following through in the fourth.<sup>59</sup> Brown's old habits would die hard. His fourth wife, Tomi Raye Hynie, had him arrested in January 2004 after he'd pushed her to the floor during an argument. He pleaded no contest, but served no jail time. It wasn't just wives who had to be careful. On July 3, 2000, police were summoned to Brown's home after he brandished a steak knife at a South Carolina Electric & Gas repairman, Russell Eubanks, and held him against his will. Eubanks had come to the estate in response to a report of a power outage. An officer from the Aiken County Sheriff's Office questioned Brown for about two hours, but did not arrest him.<sup>60</sup>

Even putting the best face on all this—i.e., allowing for the possibility that some of his offenses were triggered by extenuating circumstances—the fact remains that Brown's pattern of criminal behavior was not out of line with his banana republic dictator personality. With James Brown, it was either his way or the highway. And since not doing his bidding was a mark of "disrespect," Brown would have an instant rationalization for exacting retaliation against the "offender." His accumulation of wealth, fame and power did not mitigate this pattern. Indeed, it likely reinforced it.

Brown's penchant for crime might not have rubbed off on Al Sharpton, but his narcissism did. Sharpton always has had enormous difficulty understanding the practical limitations of power. He cannot grasp that intimidating others in the pursuit of

justice *is itself* an injustice. Nor can he grasp that his mentor's legal problems were the result of real crimes. "James Brown in jail," Sharpton has said, "was the biggest cultural insult to a race that has ever happened."<sup>61</sup> Assault with a deadly weapon, rape, and reckless driving apparently don't qualify as insults.

What Sharpton grasped from observing Brown's life, in other words, is that a person can get away with illegal or outrageous acts if he is sufficiently famous, talented, intimidating, or supportive of the "right" causes. In 2003, the State of South Carolina granted James Brown a full pardon for prior convictions. That same year, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. honored him with a Lifetime Achievement Award. All was forgiven. He was, after all, James Brown.

Al Sharpton left the Brown entourage around 1983–84. It had been a long and productive apprenticeship. Now it was time to do his mentor proud. Through National Youth Movement, Sharpton was going to take "justice" to a new level and in a voice loud enough for the whole country to hear. An incident in a New York City subway car would give him that launching pad.

### *Bernhard Goetz: The Subway "Vigilante"*

By the mid Eighties, much of the New York City subway system had descended into disarray. Trains and infrastructure were aging; transit union demands were creating fiscal hardship; vandalism was rampant; and violent crime was on the rise. On average, nearly 40 reported crimes occurred daily on the subways. Every New Yorker knew the situation had gotten out of control. What's more,

they knew blacks and Hispanics were disproportionately driving it. Subway riders were taking all manner of precautions, save for one that in almost all cases was illegal: carrying a gun. One man, previously a subway crime victim, was unimpressed.

The afternoon of December 22, 1984 was unseasonably warm. An independent home-based electronics repairman, Bernhard Goetz, 37, boarded a southbound Manhattan Number 2 train at the 14th Street Station. Little did he know, he was about to make history.<sup>62</sup> Seated to his immediate right were four black youths—Barry Allen, 19; Troy Canty, 19; James Ramseur, 18; and Darrell Cabey, 19. Approximately ten seconds after Goetz had taken his seat Canty asked him, "How are you?" Goetz responded, "I'm fine." At that point the four men signaled to each other. They walked up to and menacingly surrounded the seemingly hapless passenger. Canty, acting as the group's spokesman, instructed Goetz: "Give me five dollars." Goetz asked, "What did you say?" Canty repeated his words: "Give me five dollars." Goetz's response this time wasn't in the script. He stood up, drew a five-shot, J-frame .38-caliber Smith & Wesson revolver from under his blue windbreaker, and began shooting. The bullets wounded all four youths, two of them critically.

Only two passengers—women who briefly fainted—remained in the subway car besides Goetz and the four youths. A conductor, having heard the high-decibel commotion, came over to ask the women if they had been injured. They were not. Then he asked Goetz to hand over his gun. Goetz refused, stating, "They tried to rob me." The conductor left. Goetz, anticipating an arrest, quickly exited

at the Chambers Street Station, rented a car, and drove to Bennington, Vermont where he buried his gun and windbreaker.

Word of the shootings and the physical appearance of the shooter quickly spread: Here was this quiet, unassuming white guy who stood up to a group of menacing blacks, daring to do in real life what only Charles Bronson had the guts to do a decade earlier in the movie, “Death Wish.” The mail pouring into Mayor Koch’s office was running 80-to-1 in favor of this “subway vigilante.” His anonymity would be short-lived. On December 31, 1984, Goetz, believing his discovery was imminent, turned himself into Concord, New Hampshire police.<sup>63</sup>

Upon his return to New York, the camera-shy Goetz received a hero’s welcome. Dozens of people, including comedienne Joan Rivers, offered to help pay his \$50,000 bail. The Guardian Angels, a heavily black and Hispanic red-bereted volunteer crime patrol, spoke in full support of Goetz. *New York Daily News* columnist Lars-Erik Nelson favorably compared Goetz’s volley to “the first shot fired at Lexington and Concord.”<sup>64</sup> The Chicago Tribune’s Mike Royko had some choice words of praise:<sup>65</sup>

As some of you recall, a few months ago a couple of young men, seeking to increase their net worth, put a gun to my nose. That wasn’t the first time I was robbed or mugged, but it was the closest I’ve come to croaking—either from a twitch of a trigger finger or my own fright.

So as a recent victim, I have a different perspective than that of a reporter...

It goes like this: To hell with the questions. I’m glad Goetz shot them. I don’t care what his motives were or whether he has all his marbles. The four punks looked for trouble and they found it. Case closed.

Further contradicting the notion that Goetz was motivated by “racism” were comments by sympathetic blacks:<sup>66</sup>

I’m black, and I was mugged twice by punks in Mt. Morris Park going to church services. What is a person to do when they can’t even go to church without getting assaulted? It’s time the decent citizens of all races stop this crime problem and give the police a helping hand.

Another letter read:<sup>67</sup>

I’m a black woman. I have been robbed twice, both times by blacks. I didn’t feel safe because they were black boys or the fact that I recognized one of them and thought maybe they wouldn’t hurt me...Bernhard Goetz didn’t see black boys. He saw the color of fear, the color of his life being at stake.

A prominent black civil rights leader, Roy Innis, head of the Congress of Racial Equality, also expressed support: “Bernhard Goetz was about to be mugged and we know it. If I was there I would have done the same thing, with the only possible difference—[the crooks] probably would have been dead.”<sup>68</sup> Innis’ anger was justified: A son of his had been murdered in a street crime; another nearly had met the same fate.

Some New York blacks, however, were not sympathetic. Among this group was Al Sharpton. With youthful followers in tow, he launched a full-court press against Goetz. He recalls:<sup>69</sup>

So I called a news conference on the steps of City Hall and denounced the situation... I went to his apartment house in (sic) 14th Street and immediately we started getting press coverage. We held prayer vigils; we went to all the court proceedings. I had learned those things from the civil rights movement, so to speak... We had never gone to white people’s houses or to their neighborhoods to picket and march. We created drama.”

The drama would prove crucial after a grand jury announced on January 25, 1985 that it would not

indict Goetz except for illegal gun possession. Sharpton continued to lead public demonstrations to railroad Goetz. Possibly swayed, the New York Court of Appeals (the state’s highest) reversed the action, concluding that a reasonable person in Goetz’s position would not have resorted to violence. A second grand jury then convened, this time indicting him for numerous felonies, including assault and attempted murder.

Let’s understand something about Goetz’s “innocent victims.” At the time of the shootings, his four tormentors *already* had amassed a combined nine criminal convictions. What’s more, they admitted their purpose for boarding the train that day was to rob a video arcade. Robbery wouldn’t have been too difficult either, given that at least two of the youths were packing sharpened screwdriver shanks. Moreover, the Goetz experience made little subsequent impression on the career paths of three of the youths. After his release from the hospital, James Ramseur raped, sodomized, beat and robbed a pregnant 19-year-old woman on a Bronx building rooftop, eventually receiving a prison sentence of between 100 months and 25 years. Barry Allen would go on to commit at least two muggings. Troy Canty continued his career as a petty thief. Only Darrell Cabey, paralyzed from the waist down, was out of commission.

At his criminal trial, Goetz confessed to the shooting, but argued that his action fell under New York State’s self-defense statute. It proved a sound strategy. In 1987, a jury, consisting of 10 whites and two blacks, convicted Goetz on a weapons charge but not on any of the more

serious charges. The jury believed the defendant acted reasonably, especially given that back in January 1981 he had been mugged and badly injured by three youths in a subway station. He applied for a gun permit not long after, but was denied. Al Sharpton was not a happy man.

Goetz received a sentence of six months in jail, a year of psychiatric treatment, five years probation, 2,000 hours of community service and a \$5,000 fine. The New York State Court of Appeals upheld the conviction the following year. Goetz wound up serving eight months. But peace and tranquility were not to be. Representing Darrell Cabey, radical lawyers William Kunstler and protégé Ron Kuby filed a civil suit in 1985, well before the criminal case had been decided, arguing that Goetz acted recklessly and inflicted emotional distress on Cabey, possessed racial motivations and was a drug user. Though evidence undercut such claims, a jury, after many delays, in 1996 awarded Cabey a princely \$43 million, almost as much as the \$50 million his lawyers originally sought. Goetz, unable to pay, declared bankruptcy.<sup>70</sup> He lived in relative obscurity until this decade, when he made a run for New York City mayor in 2001 and public advocate in 2005. A vegetarian and animal-rights advocate, the mild-mannered Goetz now sells and services electronics equipment through his company, Vigilante Electronics. The man even has a sense of humor.

Al Sharpton, by contrast, does not have much of a sense of humor—or a grip on reality. In *Al on America*, he calls Goetz a “vigilante who shot two blacks on the subway who were allegedly trying to rob him.”<sup>71</sup> Aside from the ironic undercount, Sharpton writes as if Goetz had boarded

the train for the sole purpose of shooting blacks. As for the word “allegedly,” Cabey at the civil trial admitted he and his friends had intended to rob Goetz, whom they saw as “easy bait.” Goetz’s action, by any reasonable standard, constituted self-defense, not a “hate crime.” To Al Sharpton, the two concepts were identical—as applied to whites.

### *A Death in Howard Beach*

Even before the Bernhard Goetz criminal verdict, Al Sharpton had moved onto his next project: justice for three young black men, one of whom had been fatally hit by a car while allegedly trying to flee a group of whites in the Queens neighborhood of Howard Beach. On the surface, Sharpton appeared to be in the right. Yet key details, especially those downplayed by major media, revealed him once more to be a racial demagogue.

Howard Beach is a stable, middle-class and mainly white community in southwest Queens located along Jamaica Bay. Though more provincial than Manhattan, it was hardly a haven for “hate crimes.” Any number of blacks lived here without incident. Woody Guthrie, the late folksinger, called the place home for many years.<sup>72</sup> Yet during the late Eighties, the neighborhood gained a national reputation as an incubator of white racist brutes. Al Sharpton, more than anyone else, shaped that reputation.

It was the wee hours of December 20, 1986. Three young black men had been riding through Howard Beach, when their car broke down in an isolated marsh-like area along Cross Bay Boulevard. Three occupants—Michael Griffith, 23; his stepfather, Cedric Sandiford, 36; and Timothy Grimes, 20—walked

toward a commercial area in hopes of finding personal help or a pay phone (a fourth occupant, Curtis Sylvester, 20, stayed behind to watch the car). The trio found an open restaurant, New Park Pizza, at 156-71 Cross Bay Boulevard. A counter employee told the men there was no phone available. They ordered few slices of pizza anyway and sat down to eat.

Shortly after, two police officers walked in, responding to a call of “three suspicious black males.” Convinced the call was unwarranted, they left. Just outside the pizzeria, however, lay a ticket to mayhem. A carload of white teens accosted the trio. One allegedly asked, “What are y’all doing in this neighborhood?” After a heated exchange, one of the whites attacked the blacks. Grimes escaped uninjured. But the white teens got out of the car and chased Griffith and Sandiford through residential streets all the way to 90th Street, whose dead end abutted the Belt Parkway. The teens split into two groups, one chasing Griffith and the other chasing Sandiford. One of the youths beat Sandiford with a metal bat. But Sandiford would fare better than Griffith, who in seeking refuge crawled through a three-foot hole in a fence and ran onto the parkway. It was a tragic move. An oncoming motorist traveling at about 55 MPH, unable to stop or swerve, struck Griffith, killing him instantly.

This, in a nutshell, was the official story. It gave weight to the view that white racism was well and alive even in the most cosmopolitan of American cities. Mayor Koch called the incident a “murder” and a “lynching.” Among New York blacks, the fires of outrage rapidly grew. Al Sharpton stood ready to supply the gasoline.

Sharpton first learned of the incident from a 3 A.M. call from a National Youth Movement worker, Derrick Geter.<sup>73</sup> Nicknamed “Sunshine,” Geter was a cousin of Griffith. “Reverend Al,” he said into the phone, “they just killed my cousin out in Queens. Will you come over to the house?” Sharpton wrote down the address and came over. After talking to Mrs. Griffith and Cedric Sandiford, he quickly concluded this was “clearly a racial killing.” New York, he insisted, was at least as bad as the old South.

Now Sharpton, as a matter of principle, always has refused to obey local laws requiring a permit to march. For him, marching in the street is a “human right.” He practiced what he preached on December 27, 1986, a week after Griffith’s death, leading a march through the heart of the neighborhood. “I was standing there at the head of the march of thousands,” he recalled, “... and I’m the one who has called the march. I had arrived as an activist.”<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, he had. Sharpton and an estimated 1,200 followers proceeded to inflict as much tension and shame as possible upon an entire community. It didn’t matter that the weight of public opinion overwhelmingly was with Michael Griffith anyway, and that the criminal justice system gave every indication that justice would be served. Police already had arrested more than a dozen teens, charging them with murder, manslaughter, assault and riot. Sharpton wasn’t satisfied. He wanted to put all of Howard Beach on trial, baiting them into acting like bigots before TV cameras. Aware of this heralded “Day of Outrage” ahead of time, many local residents lined the boulevard—and took the bait. Many

jeered and some even yelled the epithet, “Nigger!” Voila! Howard Beach suddenly became a metaphor for the racism afflicting all of America. Reverend Al had played these people like a fiddle. Many years later, he wrote that his actions were necessary to a healing process.<sup>75</sup>

In 1986, in New York City, a young black man was killed for being in the wrong neighborhood. In 1950 (sic), Emmitt Till was murdered, lynched, for being on the wrong sidewalk in Mississippi.

We haven’t come that far.

To many in America, racism is a thing of the past. It’s something that happened “back then.” To millions of blacks in this country, it is something we live every day. We know it exists—much to America’s detriment. We must begin to have an honest and open discussion about race in America.

Two people not interested in an open discussion—at least about the events of December 20—were Cedric Sandiford and Timothy Grimes. They had been persuaded by two close allies of Sharpton, black attorneys Alton H. Maddox and C. Vernon Mason, not to cooperate with the Queens district attorney. Because the criminal justice system supposedly was racist, only a special prosecutor would suffice.

After weeks of pressure, New York Governor Mario Cuomo agreed to appoint a special prosecutor armed with broad subpoena powers. That set the wheels in motion. About a year later, Jon Lester, 18, Jason Ladone, 17, and Scott Kern, 18, were convicted of manslaughter and assault, and received lengthy prison sentences. Three other defendants were sentenced to community service; three others were acquitted; another, Michael Pirone, 17, pressured into turning state witness, got six months in jail.

Yet somehow things didn’t add up. The conventional wisdom had Howard Beach standing as a metaphor for the sickness of white America. The widely-watched NBC movie docudrama, “Howard Beach: Making the Case for Murder,” airing initially on December 4, 1989, echoed this view (though without depicting Sharpton). A closer look reveals that even the guilty white kids had endured excessive punishment. Consider the following facts:<sup>76</sup>

- Michael Sandiford changed his original story to the police several times thanks to coaching by Maddox and Mason.
- The incident had its roots *before*, not after, the arrival by foot of Griffith, Sandiford and Grimes at the pizza parlor. It was they who had accosted the white occupants of the car, not the other way around. The car consisted of several white males, plus a female friend, Claudia Calogero, whom they were driving home. Griffith, Sandiford and Grimes walked in front of the car, prompting the white driver to yell, “What the hell. I almost hit you—get out of the way.” The remark had no racial overtones.
- The blacks at this point became highly agitated. Sandiford later admitted he said, “F\*\*\* you, honky.” Miss Calogero testified that he banged on the car and stuck his head inside a window. Another witness in the car, Jon Lester, testified that Sandiford spat in his face. Worse, one of the other blacks, either Griffith or Grimes, flashed a knife.
- The whites who chased after Michael Griffith did not pursue him all the way to the Belt Parkway; i.e., Griffith had other means of escape. Indeed, some of the pur-

suers didn't learn of his death *until hours later*.

- According to a toxicologist testifying for the defense, an autopsy showed Griffith had a “near-lethal level” of cocaine in his system. In other words, his spatial judgment was impaired to the point where he was unable to make sound decisions regarding his own safety.
- Sandiford's attackers received first-degree assault convictions, though the assault itself produced only minor injuries. The NBC docudrama depicted him as suffering a severe concussion and requiring 67 stitches, yet hospital records indicated he had no concussion and required only five stitches.
- Jon Lester, the white youth who received the harshest punishment—15 to 30 years—had a black girlfriend, Ernestine Washington, with whom he had broken up about a month before the incident. “Jon was railroaded,” she later said, “for two reasons: the pretrial publicity and the fact that the judge knew the prosecution had to win because they were afraid the city was going to blow up.”

That certain whites committed crimes was indisputable. And their behavior was all the more reprehensible by their use of baseball bats. Yet their actions must be understood as a response, however inappropriate, to a sense of being humiliated by the blacks' behavior. The notion that these whites were out-of-control “racists” on the prowl for blacks, any blacks, is ludicrous. But Sharpton did believe this, and worse yet, pointed a moral finger at all of Howard Beach. Residents understandably did not like their community publicly stigmatized. Fitting the facts to the conclusion rather than the other way around was

Sharpton's style. That style would fully bloom nearly a year later.

### *Tawana Brawley: The Girl Who Cried “Wolf”*

Of all the campaigns that have defined Al Sharpton, one still sticks out: his attempt to destroy the careers of several men, including a police officer and a county prosecutor, for their alleged 1987 abduction, beating and rape of a black teenage girl, Tawana Brawley. Ms. Brawley, Sharpton and legal advisers Alton Maddox and C. Vernon Mason, were virtually inseparable during the entire media campaign, demanding arrests and convictions. A grand jury, however, after months of reviewing evidence, refused to indict. And a decade later, a court slapped Sharpton, Maddox and Mason with a combined defamatory judgment of nearly \$350,000.

Sharpton has remained unrepentant. Asked in a 1999 interview if he ever regretted his involvement in the Brawley case, he responded: “No. I think if I had to do it again I'd do it in the same way. I probably wouldn't have gotten into such a personal pissing contest with [New York State Attorney General] Robert Abrams. But I would do the whole thing again.”<sup>77</sup> He later reiterated this view in his autobiography. “For me,” he wrote, “it (the Tawana Brawley case) defines my character, because I refuse to bend or bow—no matter the pressures. I took the word of a young girl, and if I had to do it over, I would do it again.”<sup>78</sup> And in an April 10, 2007 interview with guest host David Gregory on MSNBC's “Hardball,” Sharpton asserted, “I still don't apologize.”<sup>79</sup>

Reverend Sharpton and his followers are free to entertain their illusions, but the body of evidence overwhelm-

ingly leads to only one conclusion: Tawana Brawley made up her story. All her marks of physical abuse were self-induced. Nothing underscores Sharpton's lack of credibility more than his nonstop campaign to railroad the “assailants” into prison. The facts of the case, fully reconstructed, speak for themselves.<sup>80</sup>

It was Saturday morning, November 28, 1987 in the town of Wappingers, Dutchess County, N.Y., about an hour's drive north of the Bronx.<sup>81</sup> Local residents were waking up to a horrifying discovery in their midst: a 15-year-old black girl, lying in a garbage bag, smeared with feces, clothing torn and burned, and covered with racial insults drawn in charcoal.

Mrs. Joyce Lloray, a resident of the Pavillion Condominiums, by chance had observed outside her apartment's sliding glass door a black girl climbing into a big green plastic garbage bag and then lying still on the cold, muddy ground. Mrs. Lloray called the Dutchess County Sheriff's Department. When officers and paramedics arrived, they found her in what appeared to be a ravaged state. The girl was named Tawana Brawley. And she had a story to tell. Unfortunately, the key parts of the plot were pure fiction.

Four days earlier, Miss Brawley explained, she had skipped school to visit an ex-boyfriend, Todd Buxton, who was being held at the Orange County Jail in nearby Newburgh, N.Y. That evening she took a bus back to Wappingers, where she previously had lived with her mother, Glenda Brawley, in Apartment 19A at the Pavillion Condominiums complex; they now lived in the nearby Village of Wappingers Falls. According to Brawley, several white men, one of whom wore a badge, abducted her shortly after she

got off the bus on her return trip, took her to a remote wooded area, and continuously sexually abused her over several days. Her physical appearance, at least, suggested her story was plausible.

Following the initial encounter with Miss Brawley, a sheriff's detective took her to St. Francis Hospital in Poughkeepsie, and requested that a rape examination be performed. He later was joined by a detective lieutenant, a detective who specialized in juvenile cases, a uniformed lieutenant, and other uniformed personnel. Dutchess County law enforcement officials clearly were taking this case seriously. Unfortunately, neither Tawana Brawley nor her family had any intention of providing help.

During the early evening of November 28 in the hallway of the emergency room, the boyfriend of Brawley's mother, Ralph King, was causing a commotion. According to several eyewitnesses, he yelled at the younger Brawley: "Don't talk to those white fucking cops, they're not going to help us. We're going to hire a lawyer and get all those white cops in court and make them tell us what they done." Three law enforcement officers and the emergency room physician all later testified to a grand jury that Mr. King, a nasty-tempered ex-con who had done time for murder, reeked of alcohol.

Not long after, Sharpton became the Brawley family's "adviser." Quickly, he lined up Maddox and Mason to provide legal help, effectively snatching away representation of the girl from NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyers. This was a crime beyond all imagination, Sharpton and his friends declared to anyone within shouting distance. Worse yet, they said, the government was covering for the assailants who

included: Harry Crist, a part-time police officer in nearby Fishkill, N.Y.; Scott Patterson, a New York State Trooper; and Steven Pagones, a Dutchess County, N.Y. assistant prosecutor and a friend of Harry Crist.

Under enormous pressure from Sharpton and other "civil-rights" leaders, New York Governor Mario Cuomo appointed New York State Attorney General Robert Abrams as special prosecutor. Additionally, a Dutchess County grand jury convened to decide whether to recommend prosecution. Sharpton instructed Brawley to refuse to cooperate with authorities, most of all, Abrams. To cooperate with Abrams, said Sharpton, would be as if "to sit down with Mr. Hitler." Alton Maddox declared, "Robert Abrams, you are no longer going to masturbate looking at Tawana Brawley's picture."<sup>82</sup>

The grand jury would spend seven months combing through police and medical records, and hearing the testimony of 180 witnesses. Sharpton, Maddox and Mason used this period as an opportunity to stage the ultimate media circus. Sharpton and his friends bused in protestors to the county courthouse on an almost daily basis, leading them in chants outside demanding punishment of the "real" criminals. Television and newspaper coverage was strong even if the evidence wasn't.

One target, Harry Crist, Jr., already was gone from this world. Only three days after the announcement of the "hate crime," Crist, 28, reportedly despondent over the breakup with his girlfriend and the news of his ineligibility to become a New York State trooper, committed suicide by gunshot on December 1, 1987.<sup>83</sup> Al Sharpton announced to the world that Steven Pagones had murdered Harry Crist to keep his

crime against Miss Brawley a secret. What's more, Sharpton, Maddox and Mason accused Governor Cuomo of protecting Pagones through his allegedly close connections to organized crime and the Ku Klux Klan. "Mr. Pagones and his organized crime cronies are suspects," Sharpton ranted on ABC's "Geraldo Rivera Show." Very publicly, at a March 1988 news conference, he accused Pagones of participating in the "assault" on Miss Brawley and, with the help of another assistant prosecutor, William Grady, of covering up the crime. "If we're lying, sue us, so we can go into court with you and prove you did it. Sue us—sue us right now."<sup>84</sup> Sharpton also demanded that Governor Cuomo immediately arrest these two "suspects." When asked for evidence of a cover-up, Sharpton answered, evasively, that they would reveal the facts only when the time was right. Cuomo and other state officials had the good sense not to oblige him.

The grand jury also would be possessed of good sense. On October 6, 1988, the jury released a 170-page report stating, in forceful language, that the case was a complete fabrication. It summation read:

We the grand jury of the Supreme Court, State of New York, County of Dutchess impanelled on February 29, 1988, having conducted an investigation, and based on the preponderance of the credible and legally admissible evidence, conclude that the unsworn public allegations against Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Steven Pagones are false, have no basis in fact and that he committed no misconduct, non-feasance or neglect in office.

If actual events hadn't motivated Miss Brawley to come forth, what did? Since she chose to remain mum, nobody knew for sure. But based on the evidence, the most widely-accepted explanation was that, having



Steven Pagonos in 1998 after a jury awarded \$345,000 in a defamation lawsuit against Sharpton, Alton Maddox and C. Vernon Mason.

been grounded on the day she visited her former boyfriend, she feared a beating at the hands of her mother's boyfriend. She and her mother had staged an abduction and assault to keep domestic "peace."

Al Sharpton, to this day, insists the crime was real. Yet all evidence suggested this was a hoax. Consider the following facts:

- Brawley never backed up her initial allegations with an official statement—and even those allegations were sketchy and often self-contradictory.
- Unlike nearly 200 other persons, neither she nor her mother testified before the grand jury, which had subpoenaed the pair. Defying a subpoena happens to be a felony, which explains why they chose to relocate out of state (to Virginia), taking along \$300,000 raised by their "defense fund."<sup>85</sup>
- Forensic tests revealed no sexual assaults of any kind.
- Brawley exhibited no evidence of hypothermia, odd for someone supposedly held against her will outdoors for days during a time of year when temperatures regularly drop below freezing at night.
- Various witnesses swore they had seen her at parties in a nearby town

during the period when she was "missing."

- Miss Brawley's mother was seen at the same residential complex, and only shortly before, at which she (Tawana Brawley) was seen getting into a garbage bag.
- Damage to the younger Brawley's clothing occurred inside her apartment. The grand jury report stated: "The items and instrumentalities necessary to create the condition in which Tawana Brawley appeared on Saturday, November 28, were present inside of or in the immediate vicinity of Apartment 19A."
- Renowned forensic psychiatrist Park Dietz, an expert witness, concluded, "Tawana Brawley's physical appearance when she was found is consistent with self-infliction and false accusation."

The June 1988 statement of a former Sharpton aide, Perry McKinnon, ought to have erased any doubts that this case was a planned hoax by Brawley and her "advisers." A 39-year-old black Vietnam vet who had served as a police officer, private investigator and hospital security director, McKinnon made this astounding admission to federal investigators:<sup>86</sup>

Sharpton acknowledged to me early on that "The Brawley story do (sic) sound like bullshit, but it don't matter. We're building a movement. This is the perfect issue. Because you've got whites on blacks. That's an easy way to stir up all the deprived people, who would want to believe and who would believe—and all [you've] got to do is convince them—that all white people are bad. Then you've got a movement... It don't matter whether any whites did it or not. Something happened to her... even if Tawana don't (sic) it to herself."

The grand jury acquittal four months later would be a disaster for Sharpton, but he would not be deterred. At Pagonos' press conference immediately after the acquit-

tal, an uninvited Sharpton marched in, announcing, "Your accuser has arrived!" Apparently, he wouldn't leave either. For years, Sharpton continue to hound Pagonos, who remained the target of hate mail. Reeling financially, physically and personally, Pagonos eventually sued Sharpton, Maddox and Mason in 1997 for defamation of character. In July 1998, after an eight-month trial, a state jury—four whites and two blacks—ruled that Sharpton, Maddox and Mason had made a combined 10 defamatory statements<sup>87</sup> and ordered them to pay respective damages of \$65,000, \$95,000 and \$185,000.<sup>88</sup> Sharpton refused to pay his share. With accumulating interest and penalties, the judgment against him rose to \$87,000. Pagonos had managed to collect a portion of that money by garnisheeing his income. Finally, in 2001 a group of wealthy black men, including lawyer Johnnie Cochran, New York City broadcasting mogul Percy Sutton and *Black Enterprise* magazine publisher Earl Graves, paid off the debt.<sup>89</sup>

As for Tawana Brawley, Pagonos already had won a default judgment against her in 1991 after she repeatedly had ignored subpoenas. The presiding judge, however, waited until after the civil verdict to assess damages. In October 1998, New York State Supreme Court Justice S. Barrett Hickman ordered Brawley to pay Pagonos \$185,000. "It is probable that in the history of this state," wrote Justice Hickman, "never has a teenager turned the prosecutorial and judicial systems literally upside down with such false claims."<sup>90</sup>

Tawana Brawley wasn't about to pay up. But prior to the trial, she did come out of the woodwork to speak at Brooklyn's Bethany Baptist Church,

where Sharpton had organized a rally. She told the audience: “It happened to me, and I’m not a liar...What happened to me happens to hundreds of thousands of women every day.” She claimed, without any evidence, that law enforcement paid off certain people posing as witnesses to portray her as a liar.<sup>91</sup> Miss Brawley had grown older but not wiser—much like Al Sharpton.

The central players in this sordid drama eventually receded into the background. Alton Maddox was disbarred by the State of New York in 1990; he remains a radical activist today, contributing articles to black-oriented publications such as New York City’s *Amsterdam News*.<sup>92</sup> C. Vernon Mason was disbarred by the State of New York in 1995<sup>93</sup> and is now an ordained minister, serving as CEO of a nonprofit youth-mentoring group, UTH-TURN.<sup>94</sup> Steven Pagones became an assistant attorney general for the State of New York. Tawana Brawley converted to Islam and changed her name to Maryam Muhammad.

Al Sharpton, regrettably, did not recede into the background. In 1989 he would create what amounted to Tawana Brawley in reverse. Whereas in the Brawley case he falsely accused several white men of assaulting a black female, in this instance he would do everything possible to exonerate several black males accused—with real evidence—of severely beating and raping a white female.

### *Going Wild in Central Park*

Her name was Trisha Meili. It would be nearly a decade and a half after her near-fatal group beating before she could bring herself to announce her identity to the world as the “Central Park Jogger.” Al Sharpton was

not among those who had brutally assaulted her. But given his public demagoguery during the criminal justice process, he might as well have been.

First opened in 1859, the 843-acre Central Park is one of the world’s finest tracts of urban parkland, possessed by great natural beauty and man-made amenities. But it also long has been a staging ground for New York’s criminal class, possessed of an abundance of hiding places from which to prey upon unsuspecting victims. During the Eighties, the park became the focal point for a group crime known as “wilding.” Roving packs of adolescents, teenagers and young adults, mainly black, would go on hours-long assault and robbery sprees against random targets. In July 1983, at a Diana Ross concert, hundreds of black teenagers descended upon concert-goers and pedestrians, consummating an orgy of robbery, mugging and purse-snatching. In May 1985, black teenagers overran the Central Park March of Dimes Walkathon, attacking participants and stealing money, jewelry and other things of value. Sometimes individuals were the target, such as a man in 1988 bludgeoned to death. That latter year saw 622 of these pack attacks occurring throughout the city referred to family court.<sup>95</sup>

Trisha Meili, 28, was an attractive, athletic single white woman with a bright future. An investment banker with Salomon Brothers, she held two Master’s degrees from Yale. On April 19, 1989 her decision to jog along her usual nighttime path through Central Park nearly cost her life. Sometime between 9 and 10 PM, as she was running along a desolate traverse near 102nd Street adjacent to the North Meadow softball fields,

a group of at least a dozen youths accosted her and proceeded to rape, sodomize and beat her with a pipe. After getting their fill of pleasure, they then dragged her about 100 yards from the scene of the crime and left her for dead. For several hours she lay in a coma until being discovered by two pedestrians. She then was rushed to Metropolitan Hospital, which listed the patient as having two skull fractures, severe hypothermia, and loss of more than half her blood.

Apparently, she wasn’t the only person that night receiving a rude welcome. At least eight other people were attacked, though not as savagely, by members of a group that police said numbered between 32 and 41 members.<sup>96</sup> Solid police detective work soon led to arrests. Authorities charged six juvenile suspects with the attack against Meili: Steven Lopez, Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Raymond Santana, Yusef Salaam and Kharey Wise.<sup>97</sup> All the defendants save for Salaam made formal confessions, and with a level of detail that couldn’t have been faked or coerced. Yet within weeks they would retract their confessions, claiming they had been coerced. Another obstacle was that the DNA collected at the crime scene did not match that of any of the suspects. Prosecutors went ahead with the case anyway.

On the outside, intense pressure was growing for dismissal. Applying the pressure, more than anyone else, was Al Sharpton. Here was a woman, almost beaten to death, who was the very antithesis of Sharpton’s non-victim, Tawana Brawley. Yet Trisha Meili was white and her real—not imaginary—assailants were black, Hispanic or a mixture of the two.

And that made all the difference to Al Sharpton.

Reverend Sharpton and his followers heaped mounds of verbal abuse upon the woman throughout the proceedings. Sharpton's friend, the Reverend Calvin Butts of Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church (the late Adam Clayton Powell's church), declared, "There's no evidence to link them to the rape."<sup>98</sup> Ludicrously, Sharpton insisted that the victim's boyfriend was the sole culprit, leading crowds at courthouse rallies in the chant: "The boyfriend did it! The boyfriend did it!" In the spirit of compromise, Sharpton announced, "We're not endorsing the damage to the girl...if there was this damage." He also sought to have a psychiatrist examine the victim. "It doesn't even have to be a black psychiatrist," the Reverend added, unwilling to entertain the fact that following recovery from her coma, Miss Meili had no memory of the attack.<sup>99</sup> This didn't matter to the assembled black crowds, who screamed that she was "a whore," often mentioning her by name, somehow leaked to and published by local black newspapers. When she came forward to testify, the spectators shouted her name, branded her a liar and accused her of being in the park to buy drugs. Sharpton's rent-a-mob also treated the white prosecutor, Elizabeth Lederer, in a similar manner.<sup>100</sup> As a final touch, Sharpton escorted the one and only Tawana Brawley to the trial and introduced her to the defendants, whom she greeted warmly. All in all, this was a repulsive performance even by Sharpton's standards.

The defense team, which included William Kunstler and Ronald Kuby, wouldn't get its way. In two separate trials, racially mixed juries convicted

McCray, Richardson, Salaam, Santana and Wise of rape and various lesser charges, but not of attempted murder. The defendants wound up doing at least five years of prison time. The sixth defendant, Lopez, pleaded guilty in January 1991.<sup>101</sup> By early this decade, the case seemed to have disappeared down a memory hole. Then, in 2002, lightning struck. A convicted rapist and murderer, Matias Reyes, serving a life sentence for other crimes, publicly announced that he, acting alone, had assaulted the Central Park jogger. DNA and sperm samples confirmed his participation. This opened up the charge once more that the original confessions had been coerced. District Attorney Robert Morgenthau recommended that all convictions be overturned. On December 19, 2002, New York Supreme Court Justice Charles Tejada obliged him.

Anyone thinking this turn of events should have exonerated the six original defendants, however, should understand two things. First, these youths very likely had committed other crimes during their wilding spree that night. Second, New York City police detectives vociferously insisted that one or more of the defendants had been Reyes' accomplices that night. They also complained that Morgenthau's staff blocked their investigation by preventing them from interviewing prison inmates and refusing to provide forensic reports and prison records. Notwithstanding, no actions were taken against the D.A. staff.

True vindication would come outside the courts the following year when the jogger revealed her name and life story in the book, *I am the Central Park Jogger*.<sup>102</sup> It would launch her new career as an inspira-

tional speaker. Trisha Meili may be a victim, but she's also a victor, possessed of infinitely more character than Al Sharpton.

### *The Siege of Bensonhurst*

If Howard Beach was Al Sharpton's testing ground for bringing a taste of hell to a predominantly white neighborhood, Bensonhurst was its fulfillment. For well over a year, starting during the latter months of 1989, Sharpton and his followers besieged the heavily Italian-ethnic Brooklyn community with well over two dozen marches to protest a murder there of a black teenager, Yusuf Hawkins. As with Howard Beach, Sharpton, aided by lawyers Alton Maddox and C. Vernon Mason, stage-managed the situation, serving as "advisers" to the victim's family. In practice, that meant shielding the family from contact with police, prosecutors and white-owned media outlets. That way, Sharpton could descend upon a neighborhood holding the moral upper hand.

In Reverend Sharpton's recount of events, a predatory white mob murdered an innocent black kid:<sup>103</sup>

In 1989, Yusuf Hawkins, a sixteen-year-old, was in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, following up on an ad he had seen for a car. He got into an altercation with a gang of white boys, who accused him of talking to one of their women. They fought, and Yusuf Hawkins was shot to death.

There is a measure of truth to this. But the reality also was far more complicated. This was no updated version of the Emmett Till murder. Sharpton, eager to tar the reputation of an entire neighborhood for the sins of a few of its members, didn't care.

During the late summer evening, August 23, 1989, a large group of young Bensonhurst males had gath-

ered outdoors to discuss a problem with a local girl. She, like many of them, was an Italian ethnic, yet openly dated a black man.<sup>104</sup> Several males expressed their displeasure over her choice of boyfriends. She retorted that she would make sure her boyfriend and several of his friends would come to the neighborhood that evening to administer a beating. This woman clearly was taunting and threatening the group. If the males were in a state of high alert, they had every reason to be.

A few blocks away around the same time, Yusuf Hawkins and three black friends from Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood had gotten off a subway train. The four were in the area responding to a used car ad. They sensed they'd gotten off at the wrong stop. Unfamiliar with the area, they decided to walk toward their intended destination. It was a tragic decision. Around the intersection of Bay Ridge and 20th Avenues, the white crowd caught sight of Hawkins and his friends, believing them to be the black men of whom the neighborhood girl had spoke. The crowd approached the blacks, threatened them, and gave chase. Several had baseball bats and began swinging. One of the whites reportedly yelled, "To hell with beating them up, forget the bats, I'm going to shoot the nigger." He then pulled out a gun and fired off several rounds, two of which struck Hawkins in the heart, killing him almost instantly. Police on the scene eventually recovered four emptied .32 caliber shells and seven baseball bats.

No doubt this was a case of murder. But who committed it? And should the entire group of white men, let alone all of Bensonhurst, be implicated? Al Sharpton believed the

whole neighborhood had blood on its hands. The facts said otherwise.

The incident was frequently reported as if this were a case of a white racist mob looking for any black to attack. But, again, the group had been on the lookout for *a specific group of blacks* tight with a proverbial "tough white chick." According to eyewitness accounts, several of the whites asked each other, "Are these the guys?" before anyone had attacked. Further undercutting the case for this being a "hate crime" was the fact that one of the young men who helped round up the bats for the group was himself black, a Bensonhurst resident named Russell Gibbons.<sup>105</sup> At the last moment, most of the whites realized they had surrounded the wrong men. When the shooter, Joseph Fama, pulled out his gun, several whites in the group shouted at him not to use it. The warnings came too late.

Al Sharpton and his cadres, however, were convinced this was an unspeakable hate crime. And they used this assumption as a pretext for engaging in seemingly endless anti-white provocations, in and out of Bensonhurst. In nearly 30 instances, Sharpton's army of demonstrators, chanting and waving signs, marched through the neighborhood. These demonstrations were just this side of rioting, especially since Sharpton had refused to secure a city permit to march.<sup>106</sup> As with Howard Beach, he fulfilled his own prophecy. Local white residents taunted the demonstrators, on occasion throwing watermelons.

In one incident, demonstrations did turn into rioting. Marchers blocked traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge, chanting, "What's coming? War!" Police at that point tried to keep the bridge open, whereupon marchers attacked, injuring some

two dozen officers. A local black revolutionary, Viola Plummer, gave an incendiary speech, vowing, "From this day forward, for every black child that we bury, we are going to bury five of theirs."<sup>107</sup> Sharpton also stoked the fires of rage on local talk radio, especially the black-owned WLIB-AM.<sup>108</sup> He also enlisted Yusuf Hawkins' father, Moses Stewart, as a team player, securing his permission to exert full control over family communications with the outside world.

On January 12, 1991, Sharpton's provocations nearly spelled his own doom. It was a typical demonstration day. Minutes before the march was to begin, he got out of his car to talk to some of the several hundred protesters assembled in the police-enforced staging area. As Sharpton turned to talk to Moses Stewart, he suddenly felt something. That something was a knife plunged into his chest. He removed the knife and fell to the ground. People screamed. The Reverend's security detail grabbed and held the assailant, Michael Riccardi, and turned him over to police. Officers quickly put Sharpton in a detective car and rushed him to Coney Island Hospital. Despite the blood loss, he survived. When word of the stabbing got out, Sharpton's minions reacted with vengeance. Marchers appeared at the hospital, chanting, "Let's burn down Bensonhurst! Let's burn down New York!" Several black youths beat up an innocent white person on the train, exclaiming, "This is for Sharpton."<sup>109</sup> The Fruit of Islam, Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam paramilitary guard, stood watch over Sharpton in his hospital bed. New York City's black mayor, David Dinkins, elected in 1989 in part because of the Bensonhurst shooting, paid a visit. So did Jesse Jackson.

On the outside, law and order prevailed anyway. Police made several arrests, charging the suspects with assault, rioting, civil rights violations, menacing, aggravated harassment and criminal possession of a weapon. Joey Fama was convicted of murder and received a sentence of 32 years and eight months to life. The “ringleader” of the group, Keith Mondello, was cleared of murder, but received a sentence of between 64 months and 16 years. Two other young men, John Vento and Joseph Serrano, were convicted and sentenced on lesser charges. Three other whites were acquitted, prompting a recuperating Sharpton in February 1991 to declare, “The verdict in this case is an insult to all citizens of the nation, in particular the Hawkins family.”<sup>110</sup> As for Michael Riccardi, he was convicted of first-degree assault in March 1992 and received a prison sentence of five to 15 years.<sup>111</sup>

Sharpton expressed ambitious plans following his release from the hospital. He founded National Action Network, a nonprofit group that he intended to supersede National Youth Movement. NAN would provide voter education, economic empowerment and other black-oriented programs. Was this the dawn of a new Al Sharpton? His friends said it was. Events a half-year later would prove this to be an illusion.

### *Riot in Crown Heights*

From outward appearances, Crown Heights, Brooklyn seemed a highly unlikely place for a riot. The middle-income neighborhood has hundreds of well-preserved neoclassical town homes. Its main thoroughfare, Eastern Parkway, was modeled after the Champs-Élysées in Paris. The

community long had been home to sizable Jewish and Italian ethnic populations. But starting roughly during the 1950s and accelerating thereafter, blacks, especially from the Caribbean, moved in. By the early Nineties, the area was at least 80 percent black. The remaining Jews, mostly members of the ultra-Orthodox Lubavitch sect, during the Seventies and Eighties lived in constant fear of crime, a fear justified in the face of numerous beatings and robberies at the hands of blacks. And for four days during August 1991 the crime would occur in fast-forward mode. Acting on rumor and factual exaggeration, thousands of blacks went on a rampage against local Jews, resulting in a murder, dozens of assaults, sporadic property destruction, and at least 129 arrests. Al Sharpton insists he had nothing to do with the riot. The evidence says otherwise.<sup>112</sup>

It was approximately 8:20 P.M. on August 19, 1991. The leader of the Crown Heights Jewish Lubavitcher community, Grand Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, was returning home in a three-car motorcade from his weekly visit to the graves of his wife and father-in-law, headed for the sect’s headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway. An unmarked police car with two officers inside and a rooftop light flashing headed the motorcade; Rabbi Schneerson’s car was in the middle; and a Mercury Grand Marquis station wagon driven by Yosef Lifsh, accompanied by three passengers, was in the rear. The vehicles were traveling at an average city speed. So far, everything appeared normal.

The situation suddenly changed when the motorcade, traveling east on President Street, headed toward the intersection at Utica Avenue. A Chevrolet Malibu traveling north

on Utica also was headed toward the intersection. In response, Lifsh, 22, whose car had fallen behind the first two, ran either a red or yellow light (eyewitness accounts differed) in order to catch up. He swerved to avoid hitting the Chevy, but ran into another car. The impact caused Lifsh’s Grand Marquis to careen off the road, jump the curb onto the sidewalk, knock down a stone building pillar down, hit a wall, and strike a pair of black children. The victims were two seven-year-old Guyanese cousins, Angela and Gavin Cato, playing in front of their house. The girl and boy were injured, pinned beneath the car.

A bleeding Lifsh and his passengers exited the car and tried to lift their vehicle off the children. Quite obviously, this was no hit-and-run accident, let alone a premeditated act. Unfortunately, a group of black males sitting nearby didn’t see things that way. Incapable of distinguishing between an accident and an act of aggression, the group suddenly turned on the Jewish Good Samaritans. A Lubavitcher passenger tried to call for emergency help on his cell phone, but he was physically assaulted and robbed before he could complete his call.

The situation was getting ugly—and fast. The police in the motorcade’s unmarked lead car managed to dispatch other officers and an ambulance to the scene. At the same time, Hatzolah Ambulance Service, a privately-funded Hasidic operation, sent one of its own cars to the site. The Hatzolah and city ambulances arrived at roughly the same time. The angry crowd at this point had grown to about 150 to 250 persons, mostly black teenagers shouting “Jews! Jews! Jews!”

Police ordered the city ambulance crew to remove the Hasidic men for their own safety. A second Hatzolah driver, his vehicle equipped with specialized trauma equipment, also arrived to help the crew working on Angela Cato. A city ambulance rushed Gavin Cato to Kings County Hospital, but it was too late. He died shortly after arrival.

Immediately, rumors circulated among blacks that “the Jews” had avoided justice. They asserted that the first Hatzolah crew whisked Lifsh off to safety and ignored the Angela and Gavin Cato because they were black; that Lifsh was drunk, lacked a valid driver’s license and was talking on a cell-phone; and that Gavin Cato’s father was beaten by police for interfering with the rescue. Each of these statements was false, most crucially, the first: *Police had ordered the private ambulance away for the owners’ safety.* No matter—large numbers of blacks saw an opportunity to do what they’d been fantasizing about, especially given the relative absence of police in the area. They threw debris, shattered windows, set fires and looted stores. Black radio stations spread the word: It was party time. Soon enough, blacks from other neighborhoods arrived by subway in Crown Heights to join in. Many ran through the streets shouting, “Heil, Hitler!,” beating and robbing Jews at random. One of the rioters later arrested, Charles Price, a heroin addict and convicted thief, exhorted a crowd to “take” Kingston Avenue because of its proliferation of Jewish-owned businesses.

Anyone not seeing a parallel between this and the Nazi government-instigated *Kristallnacht* against Germany’s Jewish population on the night of November 9–10,



Sharpton at the funeral of seven-year-old Gavin Cato, killed in a car accident in Crown Heights, New York. The incident sparked anti-Semitic violence, encouraged by Sharpton.

1938 simply wasn’t being honest. Many older local Jews, themselves Holocaust survivors, saw the parallel in a hurry. And the situation soon was about to get worse.

At 11:20 PM, a roving gang of about 15 to 20 blacks accosted a visiting Hasidic scholar from Australia in his late 20s, Yankel Rosenbaum. Screaming “Get the Jew,” the mob swarmed over him; one of its members knifed him four times. Somehow police found Rosenbaum and rushed him to Kings County Hospital. Before being taken to the hospital, however, Mr. Rosenbaum positively identified Lemrick Nelson, 16, as his attacker from a lineup of five suspects. Nelson subsequently admitted that he did stab Rosenbaum. But it would be little comfort for Rosenbaum. He died hours later.

When the dust from the pogrom settled, numerous businesses and cars had been burned and nearly 200 persons had been assaulted and injured. Even after, the area was hardly safe. A couple weeks later, several blocks from the Rosenbaum stabbing, a black mob shot to death a 67-year-old Italian-American motorist, Anthony Graziosi, his full beard

and dark clothing marking him to his assailant(s) as Jewish. No suspects ever were apprehended. In another instance, someone fired gunshots into a local synagogue. On February 6, 1992, Phyllis Lapine, a Jewish mother of four, was repeatedly stabbed to death by a black assailant while she’d been carrying groceries to her apartment. On the same day, a Lubavitch couple was beaten and robbed by two black men yelling, “Jew, give me your money.” Two weeks later, two black teenagers threw rocks and bricks at a school bus with Jewish children inside.

The criminal element, then, didn’t go away. But even during those four riotous days of August 19–22, 1991, New York City’s black leadership downplayed the urgency of the situation. Police Chief Lee Brown acted, but belatedly. Mayor David Dinkins also put the riot on the back burner, and even called the criminals “demonstrators.” He spent much of the time at the U.S. Open tennis tournament in Forest Hills, Queens. A 1993 report on the riot commissioned by New York Governor Mario Cuomo cited Dinkins and Brown for insuffi-

cient action against “the aggression of one group against another.”

The black press was even worse, describing the riot as though predators and prey were equally to blame simply because some Jews chose to fight back. Black columnist E. R. Shipp described the mayhem in the *New York Daily News* as “disturbances that pitted some Jews and some blacks against each other.” Wilbert Tatum, publisher of the black weekly, *The Amsterdam News*, went her one better, running the headline, “Many Blacks, No Jews Arrested in Crown Heights,” during the rioting.

Then there was Al Sharpton, as always in a class by himself. He became involved when, while eating at a Harlem restaurant (with Alton Maddox), he received a call from Gavin Cato’s father who wanted him as his adviser. This was the second day of the riot. Yankel Rosenbaum already had been dead for some 15 hours. But that hardly made Sharpton a misunderstood innocent. For one thing, he continuously has downplayed black wrongdoing, straining facts beyond credulity. In *Go and Tell Pharaoh*, he recalled, “Gangs of young Jews and young blacks were skirmishing throughout the neighborhood, and the Jews are getting the better of it because the blacks were not expecting the attacks.”<sup>113</sup> In *Al on America*, he wrote:<sup>114</sup>

Crown Heights happened when two kids were in front of their house playing in Brooklyn. A car jumps the curb and kills one of the kids. A private Jewish ambulance comes to take care of the driver of the car and leaves the two little children. The little boy dies and the driver flees the country. Violence breaks out. That night, Yankel Rosenbaum, a Jew, is killed... Violence erupted in Crown Heights, with Hasidic Jews on one side of Eastern Parkway throwing rocks and bottles, and

those from the West Indian community on the other side throwing rocks and bottles.

Sharpton’s words almost sound noble compared to his actions. He led marchers along Eastern Parkway up to Lubavitcher headquarters on the Jewish Sabbath, leading a chant, “Whose Streets? Our Streets,” and “No Justice, No Peace.” He also spoke at the emotionally-charged funeral of Gavin Cato, attended by roughly 3,000 blacks, where he called Jews “diamond merchants.” Sharpton added, “If the Jews want to get it on, tell them to pin their yarmulkes back and come over to my house.”<sup>115</sup>

After the riot ended, Sharpton wasn’t through. In October 1991 a grand jury charged Lemrick Nelson with the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum. The evidence against him was overwhelming. The victim identified Nelson as the attacker. And Nelson had confessed to police and was in possession of the murder weapon with the victim’s blood. The grand jury, which consisted of 10 blacks, eight whites and five Hispanics, also declined to indict Yosef Lifsh, citing no credible evidence. Ironically, it was Sharpton who was his own worst enemy here. As a Cato family “adviser,” he and attorney Colin Moore persuaded the family not to cooperate so as to create the appearance of racial bias.

Once the grand jury’s report came out, Sharpton and Moore talked the Cato family into filing a civil damage suit against Lifsh, who had fled to Israel for his own safety. Sharpton, vowing to serve him with papers in person, booked \$8,000 worth of tickets on El Al Airlines to Tel Aviv on Yom Kippur weekend. The Israelis were prepared for the arrival of the Reverend and his entourage. After going through Ben-Gurion Airport

customs, Sharpton recalled being greeted by what “seems like the entire Israeli press corps.” He related, “Then a woman... runs up to me and yells, ‘Go to hell, Sharpton, go to hell.’ He responded: ‘I am in hell.’”<sup>116</sup> The trip bore no fruit.

Neither did the state’s case against Lemrick Nelson—at least for a while. In 1992, a predominantly black 12-member trial jury, against all reasonable evidence, found Nelson not guilty. Afterward, several black jurors celebrated with Nelson and his lawyers at a local restaurant. The Rosenbaum family, disgusted at this racially-charged jury nullification, persuaded U.S. Attorney Zachary W. Carter of the Eastern District of New York to indict Nelson in August 1994 for violating Yankel Rosenbaum’s civil rights. Nelson’s main defense was that he should be tried as a juvenile since he was likely to be rehabilitated.<sup>117</sup> Initially, U.S. District Judge David Trager ruled in Nelson’s favor, but an appeals court overturned him in October 1995. At the retrial, court transcripts revealed that Nelson, according to prosecutor Alan Vinegard, “perceives himself to be the victim, and not the perpetrator.” Nelson replied, “Damn right.” In 1997, he received a 19-and-a-half-year sentence for civil-rights violations.

But the case wasn’t over. Nelson’s attorney won a new trial in 2002, arguing that his client, unlike before, was prepared to admit in court that he stabbed Rosenbaum, but with a new angle: He was drunk at the time and thus unaware of his actions. He presented no evidence to substantiate the claim.<sup>118</sup> In 2003, Nelson received a 10-year prison sentence. Credited for time served, he was released to a halfway house in June 2004.

Charles Price, the other prize street crazy, was charged with inciting a riot. A witness said that Price at one point shouted to the crowd, "I'm going up to the Jew neighborhood! Who's with me?" Another witness, a police officer, testified he heard him shouting, "Let's get a Jew." Price received a sentence of 21 years and 10 months.

Al Sharpton would continue his hear-no-evil, see-no-evil dance. With David Dinkins losing his 1993 mayoral re-election bid to Rudy Giuliani, the man he'd defeated four years earlier, the Reverend knew he would have few friends at City Hall. But his rage still burned. In 1995 that rage would fuel even deadlier consequences.

### *Funeral Pyre at Freddy's Fashion Mart*

Landlord-tenant disputes always have had an extra edge when race comes into the picture. This is perhaps nowhere true more than in Harlem, the unofficial capital of black America. The deadly riot there in July 1964, which spread to Brooklyn and kicked off several consecutive "long hot summers" in the nation's cities, to an extent was an outgrowth of a black-organized rent strike.<sup>119</sup> The memories of those days would come back with a vengeance during the latter months of 1995, culminating in a mass murder at a clothing store, Freddy's Fashion Mart. And contrary to his own denials, Al Sharpton had more than a little to do with this.

Freddy's Fashion Mart was located in the heart of Harlem, on 125th Street across from the Apollo Theater. It was a successful business. The store's owner was a white Jew named Fred Harari, who leased space from the landlord, a black Pentecostal

church known as the United House of Prayer for All People. He also subleased a portion of his space to The Record Shack, a longtime business headed by a black man, Sikhulu Shange. Sometime in 1995, Harari informed Shange that he wanted to expand his clothing store, and accordingly, he would terminate the sublease agreement at the end of the year. Shange refused to leave. This was purely a business decision. The idea that Freddy was kicking him out because of his race was absurd. The Record Shack had been at that location for around 20 years. What's more, Fred Harari was not the landlord, and as such, had no legal authority to evict anyone. Anyone with street smarts could size up the situation: The black church was using Harari to do its dirty work.

It was almost inevitable Al Sharpton would come on the scene. A black business owner was about to be evicted by a white exploiter—in his own Harlem! Sharpton organized picketers in front of Freddy's, leaving day-to-day logistics thereafter in the hands of a neighborhood street vendor, Morris Powell, who headed National Action Network's "Buy Black Committee."<sup>120</sup> Many picketers wanted a sequel to the Crown Heights riot, shouting phrases such as "Jew bastards" and "the blood-sucking Jews." Powell did nothing to discourage them, issuing such warnings as "This street will burn," and "A cracker is a cracker is a cracker."

The duo would make similar threats during numerous appearances on black-owned AM radio stations WWRL and WLIB.<sup>121</sup> "We gonna see that this cracker suffer," Powell said into an open microphone on WWRL on August 19, 1995, adding, "We had made

contact with these crackers, and we ain't expecting much out of 'em, and we gonna let 'em know they really haven't seen how we feel about anything yet, but we gonna show 'em."<sup>122</sup> Sharpton proved every bit the rabble-rouser. On the air on WWRL on September 9, 1995, he menacingly intoned:<sup>123</sup>

We will not stand by and allow them to move this brother, so that some white interloper can expand his business on 125th Street. And we're asking the Buy Black Committee to do down there, and I'm gonna go down there, and do what is necessary to let them know that we are not turnin' 125th Street back over to outsiders as it was done in the early part of this century.

The protests would continue well into the fall. Violence was in the air. And then it became real. On December 8, one of Sharpton's picketers forced his way into Freddy's, shouting, "I will be back to burn the Jew store down." Another demonstrator, a black-nationalist ex-con and part-time street peddler named Roland J. Smith, aka Abubunde Mulocko,<sup>124</sup> beat him to it. He burst into the store with a loaded .38 revolver, ordering all blacks out. The handwriting was on the wall: White people were going to die. Smith/Mulocko then shot four people, torched a back room, and killed himself with his gun. In all, eight persons, including Smith, died from gunshots or the fire.

As with Crown Heights, Sharpton disingenuously downplayed his role:<sup>125</sup>

I wasn't even at the scene...when that guy burned down Freddy's. No one in the community connected me to the fire. They knew what happened. None of the family members of the victims of the fire implicated me. They sued Freddy and the city. They didn't sue me. Because they knew I had nothing to do with it. My only role was in fighting for justice in the same non-violent manner I have my entire career.

This is almost like saying Josef Stalin had nothing to do with Soviet labor camp deaths because he wasn't personally there. The undeniable reality is that Sharpton, far from being a misunderstood innocent, was an instigator, escalating tension among people eager to have their own primitive hatreds validated. To publicly threaten an "interloper," whether in person or over the airwaves, constitutes an incitement. Incitement to riot is a crime for a good reason: Words, and the way they are spoken, really can inflame. In the case of Freddy's Fashion Mart, the flames were literal as well as figurative—and they killed innocent people.

### *Amadou Diallo: Police Brutality Victim?*

From the day Rudy Giuliani took office as New York City mayor, Al Sharpton had it in for him. The new mayor, after all, had defeated a black incumbent, David Dinkins, to whom he'd lost four years earlier. Moreover, Giuliani made clear early on that Sharpton's services weren't needed. Worse, he was effective, especially when it came to crime. He understood, as his predecessor apparently had not, that for a city to be great, it had to be livable—and that nothing destroys livability more than crime.

It was a fact: New York's criminal underclass was overwhelmingly black and Hispanic. Sharpton was one of many activists who saw "racism" lurking beneath the new anti-crime regime. Indeed, he was so incensed that he ran for mayor in 1997. He came within an eyelash of forcing a primary runoff with the eventual Democratic nominee, Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, who in turn would be soundly defeated by Giuliani in the general

election. Defeat only stoked Sharpton's anger. In *Al on America*, he wrote: "There are those who will say that Giuliani brought back a quality of life to New York City. They will say that he was concerned with people and helped drive down crime to make their lives more comfortable. No, Rudy Giuliani used his policies to help make the city more business-friendly."<sup>126</sup> He also would declare: "So Giuliani doesn't like me? Good—I don't like him, either. He doesn't want to talk to me? Good—I don't want to talk to him, either."<sup>127</sup> Sharpton was a man obsessed. Convinced the mayor was sanctioning police brutality against blacks under the guise of promoting public safety, he ached to find a smoking gun. He would find it following a fatal Bronx police shooting.

Reverend Sharpton was sitting in his office on the afternoon of February 5, 1999 when the representative of an African ethnic association arrived with a story that hadn't yet even made it to the press. The previous night, the visitor recounted, police officers fired more than 40 shots at an unarmed 22-year-old black street vendor from the Republic of Guinea, Amadou Diallo. Close to half those bullets struck him; he was killed almost instantly. Officers mistakenly had believed Diallo had a gun and was about to shoot them. Sharpton concluded this was murder, not self-defense. Moreover, it was the inevitable result of Giuliani's racial profiling policy. Surely the cops wouldn't have engaged in such overkill had the suspect been white.

On the surface, Sharpton had a plausible case. The previous night, Amadou Diallo was coming home from work. Entering the vestibule of his apartment building in the Bronx

neighborhood of Soundview, he was accosted by four white plainclothes officers from the NYPD Special Street Crimes Unit. The police believed that he fit the description of a black serial rapist reportedly spotted in the neighborhood. They asked for identification. Diallo reached into his jacket to get his wallet. That's when the cops opened fire. They let off a combined 41 shots, 19 of which struck him. Diallo was killed instantly. Sharpton described the incident this way:<sup>128</sup>

It was a slaughter. Amadou Diallo would not have faced forty-one bullets even if he were standing before a firing squad!... (F)or many of us it underscored the lack of value placed on the lives of black men in Rudy Giuliani's New York City. It put the issue of racial profiling at the center of our consciousness, and it was a wake-up call to all of black America. Amadou Diallo's only crime that night was being black. It could have been any one of us, any one of our children.

By the middle of the month, a grand jury began hearing evidence in the case. Sharpton wanted to help things along, organizing and leading large demonstrations in front of downtown police headquarters to demand that the four officers—Kenneth Boss, Sean Carroll, Edward McMellon and Richard Murphy—be indicted. Over the next several weeks, nearly 1,200 persons were arrested for disorderly conduct. Arrestees included Jesse Jackson, NAACP President Kwesi Mfume, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Susan Sarandon, former Mayor David Dinkins, Congressman Charles Rangel, Chloe Breyer (daughter of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer) and prominent clergy and labor leaders. Former Mayor Ed Koch wanted to be arrested, but couldn't make it in time.

On March 31, 1999, the grand jury came back with indictments

of all four officers. The accused pleaded not guilty in New York State Supreme Court in the Bronx. That December, a state appeals court ruled the trial should be moved to Albany, citing pretrial publicity. Sharpton and his allies anticipated convictions. But after a three-week trial in February 2000, a jury of seven white men, one white woman and four black women acquitted the officers on all charges. Almost a year later, in January 2001, the U.S. Justice Department announced it would not press civil-rights charges.

Al Sharpton, other civil rights leaders and major media (particularly the *New York Times*), were outraged at what they insisted was a gross miscarriage of justice. But was it? Aside from the fact that four of the jurors were black, evidence indicates this was not a case of murder by police.<sup>129</sup> The cops on the scene were there for one reason: to track down an armed rapist believed to be responsible for as many as 51 assaults, 10 in Soundview alone. Almost *any* suspicious-looking behavior by a black might well mark that person as a culprit.

Four cops in an unmarked car were cruising in the neighborhood when they spotted a man nervously pacing in the doorway and peering into the windows of 1157 Wheeler Avenue, a small brick apartment building. Officers Carroll and McMellon got out of the car, identified themselves as police officers, and asked the man, Amadou Diallo, to stop. Diallo, however, refused to heed them. He continued through the poorly-lit vestibule and toward the inner door. Officers Carroll and McMellon at that point ordered Diallo to come out with his hands up. Turning away, he suddenly reached into the pocket of his baggy jacket and quickly pulled out what

Carroll thought was a gun. “Gun!” Carroll shouted. “He’s got a gun!” McMellon, believing his life was in danger, shot at Diallo three times before accidentally falling backward, falling off the steps, and breaking his tailbone. Carroll, seeing his partner down, understandably thought he’d just been shot. He opened fire at Diallo. Bullets ricocheted into the street. Officers Boss and Murphy, thinking a full-scale firefight was underway, jumped out of the car and began shooting at Diallo who had been shot already, but wasn’t prone. Two of the officers searched Diallo’s body to retrieve his gun, but found instead only a wallet and a shattered pocket beeper.

It was a terrible case of mistaken identity, exacerbated by Amadou Diallo’s status as an illegal immigrant. He’d recently entered the U.S. claiming political asylum; he told our authorities that he was orphaned by a massacre and that he’d been tortured by police in Mauritania. In fact, his homeland was Guinea (a French-speaking West African nation not to be confused with either Equatorial Guinea or Guinea-Bissau), and his parents were well and alive. His reluctance to deal with New York cops was driven primarily, if not entirely, by his legal status. New York City under Mayor Koch a decade earlier had declared itself a “sanctuary city,” effectively imposing a gag rule on police asking about a suspect’s immigration status. With a sensible immigration policy in place, in other words, Amadou Diallo likely still would be alive—though probably not in America.

Heather Mac Donald, writing in the Manhattan Institute quarterly, *City Journal*, put the incident in perspective:<sup>130</sup>

The killing of Amadou Diallo was an unmitigated tragedy, demanding close investigation into police training procedures, to see if any feasible safeguards could have prevented it. But nothing in the police department’s recent history suggests that it was part of a pattern of excessive force. Nothing that is known of the case to date suggests that the shooting was anything but a tragic mistake; the officers acted in the good-faith, though horribly mistaken, belief that they were under deadly threat.

Missing from Sharpton’s blinkered view that Giuliani had declared open season on blacks was context. Blacks were disproportionately perpetrators and victims of crime (the serial rapist’s victims were black). And under Giuliani, the city was safer—much safer—than under Dinkins.<sup>131</sup> In 1993, Dinkins’ last year in office, there were more than 2,200 homicides, a figure that dropped to 633 in 1998, the last calendar year prior to the Diallo killing. The NYPD’s Street Crime Unit’s policy of seeking out and confiscating illegally-owned guns was perhaps the biggest reason; gun-related homicides plummeted by 75 percent. Also in steep decline was the use of deadly force by police force. Police killed 23 civilians in the line of duty in 1993, a figure that fell to 19 in 1998, even though the number of arrests rose from about 266,000 to more than 400,000. Black residents, for the most part, had little quarrel with such trends. According to a Justice Department survey released in June 1999, 77 percent of New York City blacks were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with local police.<sup>132</sup>

In a real sense, Al Sharpton’s crusade against Giuliani-era policing was motivated less by concern for public safety than by the City’s success in promoting it. He dressed up an extraordinary exception—Amadou

Diallo—as the everyday norm in order to more effectively peddle the view of Giuliani as a political gargoyle. His campaign exhibited little or no understanding of the high stress that police face when making arrests, even supposedly “routine” arrests. The fact that charges of NYPD overkill/brutality are sometimes justified, as in the cases of Patrick Dorismond<sup>133</sup> and Abner Louima,<sup>134</sup> doesn’t alter the fact that Sharpton had been selectively fitting facts to preordained conclusions.

### *The Burger King Boycott*

Al Sharpton always has looked upon Jesse Jackson as a wise teacher. And as Jackson remains a master of exacting “contributions” from corporations after charging them with racial injustice, Sharpton early this decade also would get into the act. His principal target was Burger King, the world’s second-largest fast-food chain. He was partly successful. Ironically, the pursuit of that success caused a rift with Jackson.

The campaign began when Sharpton came to believe that the Miami-based Burger King had wronged an ambitious black franchisee from Detroit named La-Van Hawkins.<sup>135</sup> Hawkins later would turn up as a central figure in a federal probe of Sharpton’s presidential campaign fundraising. But the backdrop here was a business deal gone sour. Hawkins had accused Burger King of renegeing on a commitment to open 225 outlets over five years. The company denied it had made this promise, and countersued, seeking more than \$6.5 million it claimed Hawkins owed on a 1998 loan. On December 15, 2000, a federal judge ruled Burger King had not breached its promise and hence was not liable for damages. The company then sought to revoke his existing

franchises. Hawkins, loaded for bear, in 2001 filed a civil suit against Burger King, demanding \$1.9 billion in damages. He refused several settlement offers. Eventually, under pressure from Al Sharpton and Johnnie Cochran, the company settled for \$31 million.

The case was significant because it was, for all intents and purposes, Sharpton’s debut as a corporate shakedown artist. Though the shakedown was a success, ironically, the experience nearly created a permanent breach between him and Jesse Jackson, master of the art form. Jackson had sided with Burger King, arguing that by working with the company, he could create more franchise and upper-level management opportunities for blacks. He also had another, albeit less altruistic and publicized motive: Burger King had been bankrolling his Rainbow/PUSH organization for nearly 20 years. The corporation estimated at the time that its cumulative donations to Jackson amounted to about \$500,000, though Jackson put the figure at only \$125,000.<sup>136</sup>

Whatever Jackson’s actual motives, Sharpton saw betrayal. He wrote:<sup>137</sup>

Our split became public when a young man named La-Van Hawkins came to me looking for help. He was promised 225 Burger King franchises. He built half of them and it got backed up, and there was some litigation that ended with Burger King pulling the deal.

Burger King said Mr. Hawkins had done some things that they didn’t agree with. And I said, “But you made a commitment to the black community to build these stores. Even if you don’t do it with Mr. Hawkins, you can fulfill your commitment with somebody else.”

They said no. And I led a boycott of Burger King in New York. Jesse publicly disagreed with the boycott, and that’s when we started having public disagreements.

I couldn’t believe that he, who taught me in my youth about fighting these corporations

and making them accountable, would publicly come out against my doing the very thing he’d taught me how to do.

Sharpton and Jackson at this point were barely, if at all, on speaking terms. The feud was something akin to the sporadic war between “East Coast” and “West Coast” rappers. Sharpton always had been friendlier with black nationalists than Jackson, and enlisted their support for Hawkins. Eventually, Sharpton and Jackson reconciled. What united them—the presumed necessity of affirmative-action shakedowns—was still far more powerful than any strategic disagreements that divided them.

### *Sony’s “Persecution” of Michael Jackson*

It was 2002, and Michael Jackson, the King of Pop, had a problem: He wasn’t selling records—not like he used to anyway. It had been two decades since the release of *Thriller*, the highest-selling album of all time. The singer, normally projecting a cool persona, looked positively cold at a July 6 press conference at Al Sharpton’s Harlem office. He was there to enlist the Reverend as a partner in fighting racism in the record industry. Jackson was convinced that Sony Music Entertainment (Epic Records), was refusing to promote his new album, *Invincible*, because he was black. Never mind that Jackson’s innumerable surgical alterations by now had made him look whiter than most whites. Never mind either that Sony had spent a staggering \$30 million producing the album and another \$25 million promoting it. Michael Jackson believed himself to be a victim of racial injustice. And Al Sharpton was the man to see.

At heart, this was a battle over money. Sony, which had bought CBS

Records back in 1988, recently had loaned Jackson \$200 million against future earnings. Sony thus had every incentive to promote the record. And Jackson needed the money, possessed of a pathological incapacity for distinguishing between whim and need, whether in professional or personal life.<sup>138</sup> The situation wasn't helped by a January 1994 out-of-court settlement in which Jackson agreed to pay \$22 million to the family of a boy he allegedly molested at his Neverland ranch near Santa Barbara, California.<sup>139</sup> *Invincible*, released in the fall of 2001, already had sold some six million copies worldwide. Though most musical acts would kill for that kind of sales volume, it wasn't enough to pay off the advance.

Jackson pointed his finger at Sony/CBS and its CEO, Tommy Mottola, long one of the industry's hottest executives. Having already denounced Mottola as a "devil" in London three weeks earlier at a fan club meeting, this time he was going all out. Standing before a packed crowd at NAN headquarters, the King of Pop announced:<sup>140</sup>

The recording companies really, really do conspire against the artists. They steal, they cheat, they do everything they can, especially [against] black artists. . . . People from James Brown to Sammy Davis Jr., some of the real pioneers that inspired me to be an entertainer, these artists are always on tour, because if they stop touring, they would go hungry. If you fight for me, you're fighting for all black people, dead or alive.

If that harangue weren't enough, Jackson held up a picture of Tommy Mottola with a drawing of devil's horns superimposed over it, calling Mottola "very, very, very devilish." Even Sharpton was caught off guard. "I have known Tommy for 15 or 20 years, and never once have I known him to say or do anything that would

be considered racist," he said. Sharpton, however, shouldn't be let off the hook so easily. He had a reason for indulging Jackson. The Reverend recently had formed a coalition with lawyer Johnnie Cochran (who had represented Jackson in that 1993–94 child molestation suit) to investigate record industry exploitation of black artists. While Sharpton saw Mottola as innocent of "racism," he clearly believed otherwise about the record industry as a whole. He could smell a payday coming.

But Jackson's case was anything but convincing. Just prior to the release of *Invincible*, Jackson had informed Tommy Mottola that he was not going to renew his contract with Sony, soon set to expire. In retaliation, Mottola indefinitely postponed single releases, video shoots, promotions and advances. It's hard to deny that Mottola came off like a vindictive S.O.B. But that hardly was evidence of "racism." Aside from Michael Jackson's lack of evidence, Mottola previously had been married to American superstar pop singer Mariah Carey, she partly of black descent, and now was wedded to Mexican pop singer Thalía.

Though the episode revealed much about Sharpton's character, thankfully little came of it. Michael Jackson's *Invincible* went on to sell 10 million copies worldwide, nowhere near the territory of *Thriller* (at least 45 million) or its follow-up, *Bad* (25 million), but enough to keep creditors from banging on his door. Jackson again would prove himself a high-risk client a couple years later when Santa Barbara County prosecutors charged him with criminal child molestation. After a trial that dominated headlines during the winter and spring of 2005, a jury found him not guilty on

all charges.<sup>141</sup> Jackson, eager to avoid the spotlight—and income taxes—resettled in Bahrain, though his financial troubles would worsen.<sup>142</sup> In 2008 he reportedly converted to Islam and changed his first name to "Mikaeel."<sup>143</sup> Johnnie Cochran would die of a brain tumor in March 2005. Tommy Mottola was fired by Sony in January 2003 following its music division's \$132 million loss over the previous six months. He bounced back quickly, signing a five-year, \$40 million deal with the Universal Music Group to start his own label. Al Sharpton would run for president. After a few years of affecting statesmanlike behavior, he would return to action.

### *The Troubles in Jena, Louisiana*

Jena, Louisiana doesn't appear at first glance to be a place that would generate intense national attention over racial injustice. Even during the Jim Crow era, there had been no documented hangings of blacks in this community of 3,000 persons, located in LaSalle Parish. Local relations between whites and blacks had been for the most part amicable over the past decade. Yet for several months, beginning in September 2006, civil-rights leaders and their allies focused their rage on the town as though it were some lingering stone-age backwater coming back to haunt the whole country. The catalyst was the growing tension and occasional violence between white and black high school students. Yet in fact the violence had been perpetrated by blacks against whites. That many blacks throughout the country perceived the situation to be the opposite owed largely to Al Sharpton.

As the standard script had it, there was a large outdoor shade tree on the Jena High School campus under which only whites were allowed to sit. On August 30, 2006, a black student nervously asked if he was allowed to sit there. The principal gave his approval. A trio of whites, bent on scaring blacks away, soon hung a pair of nooses from the tree discovered the following morning. The culprits were caught, but received only a suspension. Local blacks expressed outrage at this slap on the wrist in the face of KKK-style terror. Tensions at the school mounted palpably over the next few months, culminating in a black-white schoolyard fight. Yet the six blacks involved in the scuffle were charged with attempted murder rather than suspended. Americans, outraged over this apparent double standard, demanded the “Jena 6” be freed. On September 20, 2007, Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and other public figures led roughly 20,000 marchers in a rally through the streets of Jena. Until the Jena 6 get justice, they proclaimed, no black anywhere in America is safe.

This, in a nutshell, was the story Al Sharpton and other “civil-rights” leaders had been pushing nonstop to gullible audiences. He would amplify his “Jenas all over America” statement with the following testimony before a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee on October 16:<sup>144</sup>

What I would beseech this committee to look into the fact that Jena is all over this country. It's hangman nooses at Columbia University in New York. It's even a hangman noose at the site of 9/11. It's in North Carolina. It's in California. All kinds of reports.

And what has been most troubling is the silence of the federal government... What has happened in Jena and what has happened all over this country while we're watching nooses

on the news every night, while we're watching hate crimes.

This denunciation, and others like it, bore no relation to the context. Honest sources, especially *Jena Times* reporter Craig Franklin, knew the real story, with facts that Sharpton and his allies conveniently left out.

**There was never any “whites-only” tree on the Jena High School campus.** The tree in question had been planted in 1986 and only recently had grown tall enough to provide shade. The school administration had put tables under it to facilitate socializing. Anyone, white or black, was allowed to sit there. Yes, students at Jena, like at many other multi-racial high schools, tended to self-segregate on the basis of race. But this had nothing to do with official policy. The idea that Jena High School administrators were promoting “segregation” is as absurd as saying that schools all across the nation have established “white lunch tables” because blacks generally prefer eating among themselves at tables of their choosing. Moreover, the black student who asked if he could sit at the “white” tree intended it as a joke, one of several such questions asked at a boys-only orientation assembly.

**The students who hung the nooses were unaware of the potential racial connotations of their act.** During the early morning hours of August 31, two black nylon nooses were discovered hanging from the tree. They were not even proper nooses, but crudely tied loops. Proper or not, the school administration soon took them down, so soon, in fact, that almost no students even saw them. The administration eventually learned the identities of the pranksters. The three youths responsible, all white, explained they recently had seen the “Lonesome

Dove” TV mini-series which at one point depicted Texas Rangers hanging several (white) cattle rustlers. The nooses were hung in school colors aimed at a rival school football team with a Western-themed nickname.<sup>145</sup> None of the students had any idea that their act could be perceived as symbols of lynching. “They didn’t have a clue what nooses mean to blacks,” noted Franklin. *The ropes were nothing more than a prank.*

**The students who hung the nooses were punished—and severely.** Given that no wrongdoing occurred, no punishment should have occurred at all. But for the record, the school administration did mete out discipline, and of a harshness far exceeding the “crime.” The perpetrators, if that is the right word, had to attend an off-campus disciplinary school for nine days, serve two weeks of in-school suspension and several Saturday detentions, subject themselves to a school discipline court, pass a psychological evaluation to determine that they were not threats to others, and undergo monitoring under a family-crisis intervention program. If that were not enough, local police, the FBI and federal prosecutors each grilled them. It was “political correctness’ at its most repellent.

Why did the administration go to this extreme? School Superintendent Roy Breithaupt explained:

Even though we’d determined their true motivation had nothing to do with racial hate, we had to acknowledge that to the black community it would be perceived in that manner. Therefore, severe action was taken regarding the students and the hanging of the nooses.

The admission was breathtaking. Here was the head of a local school system stating that it is better to railroad innocent whites rather than risk being falsely charged with “racism” by

blacks. Making the discipline all the more inexplicable was that the investigation, by state law, had to be kept entirely confidential. In other words, had the students not been punished, nobody would have been the wiser.

**Tension over the nooses likely would not have occurred had the results of the investigation been made public.** On September 6, 2006, a white student was hit in the head from behind and went to the emergency room for stitches after witnessing a nasty fight between a white girl and a black girl. Police were assigned to the school on September 7. The next day, a student reportedly had brought a gun to school. The school authorities kept students in classes for three hours while police searched students and school grounds. Had the results of the noose probe been made public, tensions would not likely have mounted. As it was, for nearly three months thereafter, no racial incidents occurred either on or off campus.

**Blacks inflicted violence against whites, not the other way around.** By early December 2006, the noose incident appeared to have receded from memory. A pair of off-campus fights between black students and white townspeople—neither instigated by the latter—raised tensions anew. Then, on December 4, an on-campus incident changed everything. A black player on the high school football team, Mychal Bell, walked up to a white student named Justin Barker, who was not one of the three noose-hangers, and sucker-punched him to the ground from behind. Suddenly, at least five other black youths, and as many as ten, started kicking him. According to court documents, Barker probably was unconscious before he hit the ground, where

attackers stomped his “lifeless” body. When Assistant Principal Gawan Burgess arrived at the scene, he genuinely thought Barker was dead. He was rushed to the hospital and underwent emergency surgery, running up a bill of \$5,467. LaSalle Parish District Attorney Reed Walters was properly outraged over the details. This was no “fight” or “rumble” between even-matched parties. This was a vicious, unprovoked attack that came close to a killing.<sup>146</sup> He charged six of the attackers with attempted murder.

**The original charges against the six black offenders, as opposed to the three white “offenders,” were entirely justified.** The black offenders—Mychal Bell, Robert Bailey, Carwin Jones, Bryant Purvis, Jesse Ray Beard and Theo Shaw—in short collectively came to be known as the “Jena 6.” And they had plenty of supporters, all bitterly denouncing what they saw as a miscarriage of justice. To them, it was a travesty that half a dozen blacks were indicted for attempted murder in a schoolyard “fight,” while three “racist” whites weren’t being charged for hanging nooses. They especially were exercised that District Attorney Walters decided to try the first defendant, Mychal Bell, as an adult. Yet in fact, he had every reason to do so. Bell, only 16 at the time of the assault, had been on probation for an unrelated assault and battery he’d committed on Christmas Day 2005. And since that incident, he had been found guilty under the juvenile system of three more crimes—two assaults and a property offense. In mid 2007, on the eve of his trial for the beating of Mr. Barker, the prosecution reduced the charges to aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy. On June 28, 2007, after less than three

hours of deliberation, a jury of five women and one man found Bell guilty. A student testified at the trial that just before Bell attacked Barker she heard a black say, “There’s that white motherfucker that was running his mouth.”

Evidence apparently didn’t matter. To his supporters, Bell was a victim, not a victimizer. Suddenly, the world spotlight was on Jena. Here was proof of the permanence of the Old South at its worst. Critics denounced the verdict because the jury was all-white. But in point of fact none of the blacks summoned for jury duty that day actually showed up. The big guns of black radicalism now came to town. Al Sharpton showed up on August 5 with a message: “You cannot have some boys assault and charged with nothing, some boys hanging nooses and finish the school year, and other boys charged with attempted murder and conspiracy. That’s two levels of justice, and two levels of justice is an injustice.” A little over a month later, on September 10, Jesse Jackson arrived in Jena, demanding that Bell’s conviction be tossed out and that the charges against the remaining five defendants be reduced to misdemeanors. He warned that in absence of such action, the town could expect a “major demonstration.” Clearly, the animosity between Sharpton and Jackson during the La-Van Hawkins affair was behind them.

Politicians also were getting in their licks. Senator Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., told the NAACP, “This case reminds us that the scales of justice are seriously out of balance when it comes to charging, sentencing, and punishing African-Americans.” Senator Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., said the verdict proved that this nation still is afflicted with “de facto seg-

regation.” The Congressional Black Caucus called the events in Jena “an unbelievable example” of “separate and unequal justice.” The media weighed in, too. A *New York Times* editorial opined, “It’s impossible to examine the case of the so-called Jena Six without concluding that these black teens have been the victims of a miscarriage of justice, with a clearly racial double standard at work.”<sup>147</sup>

The pressure must have gotten to Louisiana State Judge J. P. Mauffray, Jr. On September 14, he vacated Mychal Bell’s conviction as an adult and ordered a retrial in juvenile court. District Attorney Walters, however, was made of sterner stuff and vowed to try all of the defendants on adult felony charges. On September 20, the date of Mychal Bell’s original sentencing, roughly 20,000 persons, virtually all black and heavily bused in from other cities, came to Jena for a day of protest. Moral indignation ruled the day. The six defendants now were celebrity victims. Two of them, Carwin Jones and Bryant Purvis, took the stage on October 13 at the Black Entertainment Awards ceremony in Atlanta to present rapper Kanye West with the Video of the Year award for his hit single “Stronger.” The show’s host, black comedian Katt Williams, declared: “By no means are we condoning a six-on-one beatdown... But the injustice perpetrated on these young men is straight criminal.”<sup>148</sup> Actually, what was “straight criminal” was the fact that six or more people nearly beat Justin Barker to death. Bell eventually pleaded guilty to a juvenile charge of second-degree battery. As of the end of 2008, he remained the only member of the “Jena Six” to be tried.

**The Jena Six have continued in their criminal ways.** Mychal Bell

was merely the worst of the bunch. For one thing, the accused blacks and their respective families have embezzled from the “defense fund” that the NAACP had set up for them. The fund reportedly generated about \$400,000 in contributions before lawyers took up the case *pro bono*. What happened to all that money? Much of it went toward enriching car dealers. Mychal Bell’s mother purchased a Jaguar, while Robert Bailey’s mother took possession of a BMW. Robert Bailey, in a supreme moment of audacity, posted Internet photos of himself and another defendant virtually swimming in \$100 bills. No prosecutions subsequently occurred.

It wasn’t as if the defendants, and Bell’s parents, had forsaken conventional crime.<sup>149</sup>

- Bryant Purvis was arrested in February 2008 for an assault causing bodily injury against a fellow high school student in Texas, where he since had moved.
- Corwin Jones was arrested in LaSalle Parish in May 2008 on misdemeanor battery. The charge very easily could have been a felony. He allegedly struck a man from behind as several people, including Jones, had approached the man. His friends were carrying baseball bats. Jones claimed he was not at fault since the incident was triggered by a fight the previous day in which he was not involved.
- Jesse Ray Beard was arrested, and then convicted, for battery and vandalism. He received a suspended sentence and was placed under house arrest. He since enrolled in the Canterbury School in Connecticut, with half of the nearly \$40,000 annual tuition paid out of the Jena Six defense fund.

- Mychal Bell, having since moved to Monroe, Louisiana, was stopped in Oklahoma while on a weekend pass for speeding and not having proper vehicle insurance. By being out of Monroe, he was violating the terms of the pass. Given the behavior of Bell’s parents, it wasn’t too hard to see why Bell turned out the way he did. After the Louisiana High School Athletic Association had turned down Bell’s request for an extra year of eligibility on the Jena football team, his father, Marcus Jones, blamed his son’s attorney, Carol Powell-Lexing. After the hearing, Jones allegedly spat at Ms. Powell-Lexing and pushed her to the floor. In a separate incident, Bell’s mother, Melissa Bell, was arrested on October 11, 2008 on two counts of aggravated battery for hitting two women with a shovel. Were that not enough, Mychal Bell, that December shot himself in the chest days after his arrest on a shoplifting charge.<sup>150</sup> The wound was not life-threatening.

It is a testament to both the mendacity and effectiveness of “civil-rights” leaders like Al Sharpton that they’ve succeeded in convincing many of our nation’s top political, corporate and religious leaders that such criminals are victims and that three white students who innocently threw a pair of ropes around a tree branch are oppressors. Such are the consequences of fear of speaking out. Of course, when whites do speak out, even in jest, Sharpton will be all over them. A prominent radio talk show host soon would find out the hard way.

### *Holy War on Don Imus*

Of all prominent radio personalities in America, Don Imus ranks as



Shock Jock Don Imus on Sharpton's radio show in the wake of the Rutgers controversy.

among the most witty, iconoclastic and combative. He's been on the airwaves for some 40 years, and is an author and philanthropist as well. His daily talk show, "Imus in the Morning," has been nationally syndicated since 1993. To a large extent, his popularity stems from his willingness to offend canons of good taste, often in the form of racial and ethnic comments. In his "shock jock" profession, giving offense is part of the territory, with the ever-present risk of going too far. The main purpose of comedy in any medium, including radio, is getting audiences to laugh at life's foibles and absurdities. Most people, even the targets, grudgingly accept that.

In the spring of 2007, Imus may have gone too far. Sharpton pounced, and gave Imus a choice: publicly grovel or lose his career. At the time Imus' show had been syn-

dicated by the CBS Radio Network and simulcast by MSNBC-TV. That arrangement would not last long.

On Wednesday, April 4, 2007, Imus and his executive producer, Bernard McGuirk, were on the air discussing the previous night's NCAA Women's Basketball championship game in which the University of Tennessee had defeated Rutgers University. Imus, referring to visible tattoos on several Rutgers players, called the women "rough girls." McGuirk amplified the remark, calling the women "hardcore hoers." Imus then described the players as "nappy-headed hoers." McGuirk then pointed out that the two teams looked like "the Jigaboos versus the Wannabees," a reference to the 1988 Spike Lee movie, *School Daze*, based largely on the (black) director's own student years at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

This banter was crude—and accurate. Dark-skinned and light-skinned blacks at Morehouse (as at other black colleges) really did live in separate social circles. And as life imitated art, a fight broke out on the set between the two factions of actors; Lee, recognizing a moment in time, ordered cameras to roll. The problem, quite obviously, was that Imus and McGuirk had violated an unwritten rule barring whites from saying "offensive" things that blacks themselves say to each other, and often less tactfully. The transcript, released to the press that evening by the George Soros-funded Left-leaning watchdog group, Media Matters for America (MMA), reveals a poor choice of words, yet nothing genuinely sinister:

IMUS: That's some rough girls from Rutgers. Man, they got tattoos and...

McGUIRK: Some hard-core hoers.

IMUS: That's some nappy-headed hoes. I'm gonna tell you that now, man, that's some—woo. And the girls from Tennessee, they all look cute, you know, so, like—kinda like—I don't know.

McGUIRK: A Spike Lee thing.

IMUS: Yeah.

McGUIRK: The Jigaboos vs. the Wannabees—that movie he had.

This brief stretch of dialogue was no “hate crime.” Indeed, it was a good deal tamer than the lyrics found on many black hip-hop records.<sup>151</sup> Notwithstanding, several listeners called to vent their outrage. Thanks to MMA, word of Imus and his partner's *faux pas* spread quickly. Imus, taken aback, first dismissed the exchange as “some idiot comment meant to be amusing.” When the brouhaha didn't die, he issued a formal apology.<sup>152</sup>

I want to take a moment to apologize for an insensitive and ill-conceived remark we made the other morning regarding the Rutgers women's basketball team, which lost to Tennessee in the NCAA championship game on Tuesday. It was completely inappropriate and we can understand why people were offended. Our characterization was thoughtless and stupid, and we are sorry.

Imus' enemies, predictably, were unimpressed. Indeed, they saw this as a signal to close in for the kill. Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson, the National Association of Black Journalists and other activists demanded that CBS and MSNBC-TV drop Imus' show. The Rutgers women's basketball team leaped into the feeding frenzy, holding a news conference to express “our team's great hurt, anger and disgust toward the words of Mr. Don Imus,” with Coach C. Vivian Stringer practically beatifying her players.<sup>153</sup> Executives at NBC, petrified of bad publicity and a possible boycott, refused to stand by Imus. “We take

this matter very seriously,” said Allison Gollust, NBC's senior vice president for news communications. “We find the comments to be deplorable, and we are continuing to review the situation.” Apparently, it was a short review. By the close of Friday, April 6, the network announced a two-week suspension of MSNBC simulcasts.

Imus' future in broadcasting was now in jeopardy. He decided upon emergency damage control: Appear live on Sharpton's own radio show, “Keepin' It Real.” It was a mark of Sharpton's power that Imus came to him. On April 9, the pair had a lengthy on-air exchange. And while Imus did not grovel, this was still Sharpton's turf. There was little Imus could do to come out on top. With censorious bombast, Sharpton told his guest on the air: “I'm going to say what you said was racist. I'm going to say what you said was abominable. I'm going to say you should be fired for saying it.” Imus retorted, “That's fine,” whereupon Sharpton called for a commercial break.<sup>154</sup>

The networks were more scared than ever. Eight companies—American Express, Bigelow Tea, General Motors, GlaxoSmithKline, PetMed Express, Procter & Gamble, Sprint Nextel, and Staples—by now had pulled ads from Imus' show. On April 11, NBC capitulated. Network President Steve Capus announced that MSNBC no longer would simulcast “Imus in the Morning,” effective immediately. Seeing that the coast was clear, CBS Radio the next day canceled its syndication agreement. CBS President Les Moonves rationalized the move as changing “a culture that permits a certain level of objectionable expression that hurts and demeans a wide range

of people.”<sup>155</sup> Moonves choice of words might have been related to his private meeting with Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson shortly before the announcement.<sup>156</sup>

All things considered, it was not the end of Imus' career. In early May 2007, Imus filed a wrongful termination suit against CBS for the remaining \$40 million on his five-year contract. He was on strong legal ground. The contract contained a clause acknowledging CBS had hired and supported Imus on the basis of his “irreverent” and “controversial” stances. Unfortunately, irreverence and controversy have limits when Sharpton and Jackson set them. Imus and CBS settled that August. On November 1, 2007, following negotiations, Citadel Broadcasting announced it had agreed to a multiyear contract with Imus. The new “Imus in the Morning” program would be syndicated nationally by ABC Radio Networks and would operate out of the Citadel-owned WABC in New York City. A couple weeks later, the *New York Times* reported that Imus and the video cable network RFD-TV had come to terms on a simulcast agreement.<sup>157</sup> That December 3, he returned to the airwaves.

Al Sharpton wasn't happy about this, but he made clear that his antennae would be out. “We'll monitor him,” he said. “I'm not saying I'm going to throw a banquet for him and say welcome home. He has the right to make a living, but because he has such a consistent pattern with this we are going to monitor him to make sure he doesn't do it again.”<sup>158</sup> Once more, the Reverend was true to the age-old principle of despots everywhere: Free speech for me, but not for thee.

## *The Sean Bell Shooting and Verdict*

Al Sharpton's career always has gotten a boost when he's been able to make a convincing case for excessive use of police force. And many people of all races were saying as much in the wake of a November 2006 incident in Queens, N.Y. Al Sharpton parlayed this incident into a massive campaign, making a selective use of facts to mobilize public rage following the fatal police shooting of Sean Bell and the wounding of two of his friends, Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield, at Bell's bachelor party. His anger would burn even hotter when all three police officers were found not guilty a year and a half later.

Sean Bell was a 23-year-old man with a future. The part-time electrician from Queens was looking forward to marrying his girlfriend, Nicole Paultre, with whom he had two daughters. The wedding would not happen. The wee morning hours of November 25, 2006 would be his last.

It was the evening of November 24. Bell, Guzman, 31, and Benefield, 23, wanted to celebrate Bell's last night as a single man at Club Kalua, a strip joint in the Jamaica section of Queens. Upon their arrival they met up with some friends. The place had a rough reputation. Undercover police officers had been investigating the club for weeks in response to complaints by patrons and local residents about on-premises guns, drug sales and prostitution. Police recently had made eight arrests. They were out in force that night, too.

According to sources at the scene, the trouble began inside. Guzman had been involved in an argument over the services of a hooker.<sup>159</sup> Five cops observed a man put a stripper's hand on his belt to reassure her that he would protect her from an aggressive

customer. The altercation then spilled to the sidewalk. The cops witnessed a heated exchange between Bell's friends and a pimp. Apparently, one of the pimp's hookers agreed to have sex, but with no more than two members of the eight-member Bell entourage. During the altercation, the pimp kept his hand inside his jacket, as if he were holding a gun. Bell then reportedly said, in reference to the pimp, "Let's f\*\*\* him up." His companion, Joseph Guzman, responded, "Yo, go get my gun." Officer Gescard Isnora, himself black, reported this exchange over his cell phone to other cops.

Fearing things were getting out of control, Isnora went to his unmarked car to get his service revolver. When he returned to the scene, Bell, Guzman and Benefield had gotten into their car and appeared ready to drive away. Believing the trio were about to commit a drive-by shooting against the pimp, Detective Isnora, standing on the passenger side of the vehicle, moved toward the car to question the occupants. He identified himself as a police officer, displayed his badge, and told the driver, Bell, to stop. Bell responded by driving forward, striking both Isnora and a police minivan. He then backed up, and slammed into the minivan once more. At this point, Isnora, by his own account, saw Guzman reach for his waistband. Perceiving a deadly threat, he opened fire. Four other undercover detectives reflexively began shooting as well, killing Bell and wounding Guzman and Benefield. In all, the cops fired off 50 shots, 26 of them striking the three young men inside the car. A search of the car afterward turned up no gun. Benefield would be released from the hospital on December 5; the more critically wounded Guzman was released the following January 25.

Of the five officers who fired their weapons, two were white, two were black, and the other was a black-Hispanic mix. On that basis alone, it was hard to make a case for this being a racially motivated killing. But the victims were of a black and Hispanic mix. So it wasn't surprising that Al Sharpton entered the picture. Within days, he and Jesse Jackson led elected officials, clergy, community members and victims' relatives on a weekend walk to the site of the shootings. He actually sounded conciliatory. "We appeal to people: Don't do anything disruptive or in any way contrary to the memory of Sean Bell," Sharpton said to the crowd. "We do not want the world to see him as anything other than what he was. He was not violent. He was not a thug. He was not in the street. Don't use your anger to distort who he was."<sup>160</sup> But then, without any objection from Sharpton, Jesse Jackson announced: "This is a symbol, not an aberration. Our criminal justice system has broken down for black Americans and the young black males."<sup>161</sup> Soon enough, the Bell family designated Sharpton as their "advisor."

Protests continued into the following week. Public officials, though reluctant to condemn the shootings as racially motivated, were less than supportive of the police officers. Police Commissioner Ray Kelly put all five officers on paid administrative leave and stripped them of their weapons. "It sounds to me like excessive force was used," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg, calling the fact of 50 shots fired "inexplicable" and "unacceptable."<sup>162</sup> Governor George Pataki likewise stated, "Obviously, 50 bullets fired into or at an unarmed individual in New York is excessive force, but the appropriate response to that is something that I think the

investigation of the mayor and the police commissioner will reveal.”<sup>163</sup>

But the three young men lionized by Reverend Sharpton had excesses of their own. The late Sean Bell had been arrested three times, twice for drug dealing and once for a firearms possession, in each case released on his own recognizance.<sup>164</sup> Only three months before his death, he'd sold crack cocaine to an undercover cop. Even more damaging, the *New York Daily News* quoted an unnamed drug dealer from Queens who alleged being shot by Bell on July 13, 2006 over a drug turf dispute, an account police sources called credible.<sup>165</sup> The other two shooting victims were cut from the same cloth. Joseph Guzman had been arrested nine times, at least once for firearms possession and armed robbery. Trent Benefield had three prior arrests at the time of the shootings, at least one of them for illegal firearms possession. Following his release from the hospital, he resumed his lawbreaking. In December 2006, he was picked up at a Harlem gambling raid. And in September 2007, he was arrested for slugging his girlfriend in the face; the couple already had a child together.<sup>166</sup>

Benefield in particular had acquired an unusual benefactor: Al Sharpton. In his statement to the police following the latter incident, he indicated that he didn't have to work because he gets all his money from National Action Network. “Every month they give me whatever I need,” he said. Apparently, his needs reached \$3,000 a month. One of his lawyers, Sanford Rubenstein, a longtime Sharpton ally, confirmed Benefield was being supported by a special NAN fund.<sup>167</sup> That was pocket change compared to what Benefield and Guzman were seek-

ing in a civil suit. Aided by Rubenstein and another Sharpton lawyer, Michael Hardy, the pair on July 24, 2007 filed a \$50 million judgment against the City of New York, a case that remains in force.

The criminal case, meanwhile, took center stage during 2007 and the early months of 2008. Sharpton and other activists called for a special prosecutor. The new governor, Eliot Spitzer, however, did not see a need for it. Attorney General Andrew Cuomo promised to keep an eye on the proceedings. The Queens District Attorney's Office interviewed over 100 witnesses and presented more than 500 exhibits to a grand jury. On March 16, the grand jury indicted three of the five undercover officers—Giscard Isnora, Marc Cooper (also black) and Michael Oliver. They pleaded not guilty at their arraignment three days later and were released on bail on their own recognizance. They also chose to submit themselves to a bench rather than a jury trial. After hearing testimony from about 50 witnesses, State Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Cooperman on April 25, 2008 issued his ruling: not guilty on all counts. Black demonstrators outside the courthouse were outraged. Sharpton told them to stay calm. It was a delay tactic. He had other plans: the highly coordinated city shutdown described at the start of this report.

The main reason for the verdict was that Guzman and Benefield proved their own worst enemies on the witness stand. Guzman, who'd already done five years in prison, was downright combative. At one point during cross-examination by Detective Isnora's lawyer, Anthony Ricco, Guzman shot back: “You know what needs to happen? This

(i.e., being shot) needs to happen to your family.” Guzman also had a faulty memory, describing, for example, Isnora's black gun as silver.<sup>168</sup> Benefield also harmed the prosecution's credibility.<sup>169</sup> He didn't claim to have seen Isnora because as Ricco put it, “he doesn't know what he looks like.” In response to a question about his physical condition that fateful night after drinking three Long Island iced teas and smoking marijuana, Benefield responded that he was “intoxicated, not drunk.” Benefield swore Bell never drove his Nissan Altima forward and then in reverse, yet on an audiotape recorded 90 minutes after the shooting, Benefield told police that Bell did precisely that. “I wasn't telling the truth,” said Benefield of his original statement. Benefield swore in court he never drank any Hennessy brandy that night, yet on the audiotape he told the cops he was the last to leave the nightclub because he had to “finish my Hennessy.” None of the accused officers took the witness stand in their own defense, preferring to allow Judge Cooperman to hear transcripts of their grand jury testimony.

The Sean Bell case didn't pan out for Sharpton for the simple reason that the evidence wasn't there. Bell's death, tragic as it was, was not evidence of systematic racial oppression. But Sharpton will never be convinced of that. For him and his allies, evidence is secondary to the need to sustain the narrative of black suffering and redemption. That's why the Queens shootings merely were one more chapter in a battle to redefine racial politics. There will be other cases for Sharpton to exploit for political and personal gain. It's only a matter of when.

## Al Sharpton: A Pattern of Financial Corruption

Thus far, this report has focused upon Al Sharpton's attempts to mobilize mass discontent and action. But there is another aspect of his career that should not pass unnoticed: his mismanagement of funds for his battles. Sharpton long has been accused of hiding or falsifying funds by impartial observers. The Center for Public Integrity, a Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan investigative journalism project, described Mr. Sharpton this way in the 2004 edition of its *The Buying of the President* monograph series:<sup>170</sup>

Sharpton has built, with the aid of a core of wealthy contributors, a small empire of tax-exempt and for-profit companies and mingles their finances to confuse creditors and tax collectors alike. When called to account, he conflates his personal travails with his civil rights crusading, turning his own questionable practices into a vehicle for self-promotion and raising his political clout.

That's damning stuff. And indeed, evidence suggests a pattern of corruption going back to Sharpton's National Youth Movement days. He dodged a bullet in his first brush with the criminal justice system. In July 1990, a trial jury, after deliberating for less than six hours, acquitted Sharpton of 67 counts of fraud and larceny charges brought forth by the New York State Attorney General's Office.<sup>171</sup> He'd been accused of looting about \$250,000 from National Youth Movement over the years, raising funds for the group and then diverting them to his own purposes. If this wasn't jury nullification, it certainly looked like it. Sharpton's attorney, Alton Maddox Jr., called no witnesses to the stand during the entire trial; the prosecution called more than 80. Not even the best defense in the world could have yielded a not-guilty verdict with-

out juror prejudice in favor of the defendant already in place. Maddox, recently disbarred, claimed without evidence that Attorney General Robert Abrams' was trying to get back at Sharpton for having defended Tawana Brawley.

Sharpton's run for the presidency during 2003–04 was loaded with shady fundraising practices, shady enough at any rate to prompt an FBI criminal probe.<sup>172</sup> The investigation was based on allegations made by National Legal and Policy Center in a February 2, 2004 complaint filed with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Much of the incriminating evidence had been acquired by wiretap of La-Van Hawkins, the previously discussed Detroit-based restaurant franchisee. This was a separate case, a massive FBI probe into corruption in Philadelphia under its black mayor, John F. Street.

Hawkins, along with a local attorney and Democratic fundraiser, Ronald A. White, had a phone conversation during which Hawkins expressed alarm that Sharpton's campaign fundraising might get people close to them into trouble. Hawkins told White that Sharpton had reported to the FEC only around \$50,000 of the more than \$140,000 they'd raised during the previous quarter for the campaign. "He's a train wreck—a plane crash waiting to happen," Hawkins said of Sharpton. It wasn't just talk. Sharpton had been secretly videotaped pocketing campaign donations from Hawkins and White in a New York City hotel room.

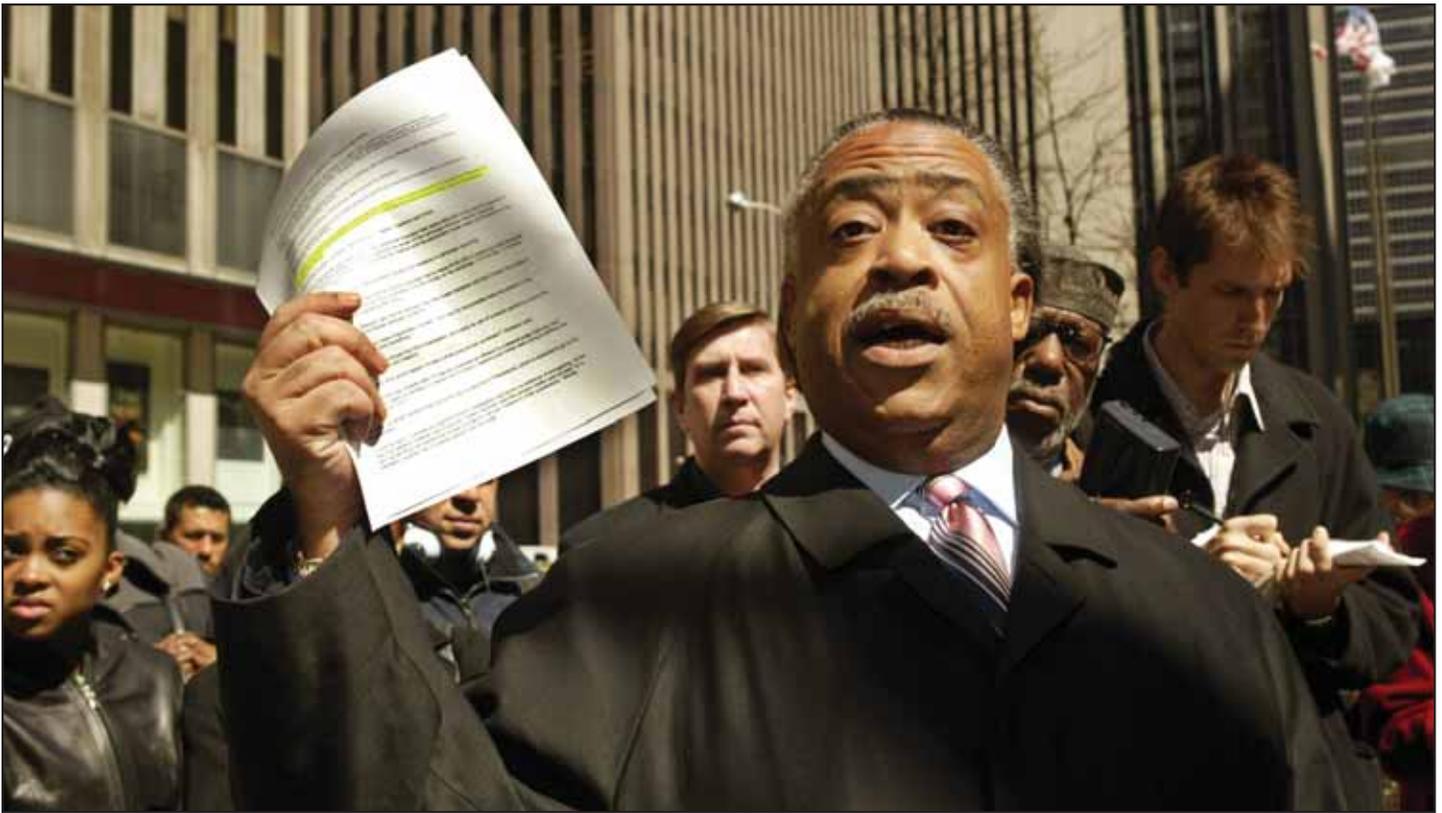
This wasn't the only instance of Sharpton's lack of compliance with election law. He failed to report in-kind contributions from a spare-no-expense Atlanta fundraising event hosted by Hawkins in early 2003. *Ebony* magazine reported that Sharp-

ton received free transportation to the event in the Hawkins Food & Entertainment Group private jet, along with Hawkins' personal chef. The article noted: "Hawkins worked the crowd, at times talking business and world politics with guests, at other times, seeming to 'shake down' guests for donations."<sup>173</sup> All told, the expenditures for 100 or more cities during the Sharpton campaign were not reflected in FEC filings.

The NLPC complaint also cited a "consulting fee" of \$25,000 paid by Hawkins' company directly to Sharpton. Records of this transaction and other income and honoraria "disappeared" in a fire. According to the complaint:<sup>174</sup>

While Al Sharpton has been described in many ways, 'business consultant' is not the term that typically is used. This payment by an individual who subsequently became a major donor and then some to Sharpton's campaign is all the more questionable given the statement by the Sharpton campaign that records for some of his 'consulting' work were destroyed in a fire which also destroyed other records about honoraria and income earned by Sharpton.

Apparently, this wasn't the first time a fire of mysterious origin had destroyed Sharpton's records immediately following a promise to make NAN records public. Back in 1997, he claimed a fire had destroyed records. The Federal Election Commission, for one, had a problem with this version of events. In May 2004, about two months after he'd dropped out of the race, the FEC ruled that his campaign had to return \$100,000 in federal matching funds and forgo another \$79,709 for which he purportedly had qualified. In January of that year, the FEC already had fined Sharpton \$5,500 as the result of an NLPC complaint over the candidate's failure to file a statement of candi-



In 2005, Sharpton denies “pocketing campaign donations” during 2004 campaign.

dacy and financial disclosure reports on time.

The FEC notified NLPC on April 9, 2009 that it had found reason to believe that Sharpton, his 2004 presidential campaign, and NAN all violated federal election law. As part of conciliation agreements, Sharpton and the other entities agreed to pay \$285,000 in civil penalties, among other sanctions.

A criminal investigation would also happen, though at deliberate speed. In the early morning hours of December 12, 2007, teams of federal agents handed as many as 10 employees and associates of Sharpton subpoenas to appear in front of a Brooklyn grand jury reportedly investigating various financial improprieties occurring during 2001–07, including his presidential campaign. “It was like a sting or a raid,” said Carl Redding, Sharpton’s chief of staff for most of the Nineties. “They converged on everybody.”<sup>175</sup> Hawk-

ins in May 2005 was convicted of perjury and wire fraud in the Philadelphia influence-peddling scandal. His associate, Ronald White, faced an indictment in that case, but died of cancer beforehand.<sup>176</sup>

If Sharpton has a blind spot for the strictures of campaign finance law, his adherence to tax law isn’t any more scrupulous. During the early Nineties, he was lucky. Charged with three counts of \$35,000 worth of state tax fraud, he eventually pleaded guilty in 1993 to a minor charge of failure to file a tax return for 1986. It was a victory all but in name. The experience apparently emboldened him. But the ride eventually ended. In May 2008, the Associated Press reported that Sharpton and his business entities owed nearly \$1.5 million in back taxes and associated penalties.<sup>177</sup> The IRS in 2007 had obtained a \$931,397 lien against him for unpaid personal income taxes, while the City of New

York claimed he owed \$365,558 and the State of New York was seeking \$175,962 from his for-profit company, Rev. Al Communications. Sharpton declared the actions as nothing more than attacks on him and his beliefs. “Whatever retaliation they do on me, we never stop... that is why they try to intimidate us,” he said.<sup>178</sup> Yet in July 2008 he worked out a reported deal with federal prosecutors in Brooklyn that would cut his overall tax bill in half and keep him out of prison. According to the *New York Post*, Sharpton agreed to pay back \$1 million, including \$500,000 upfront, out of the at least \$1.8 million he owed in back taxes for years going back to 2002.<sup>179</sup> These numbers do not include the \$884,669 the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance says he owes. In tax evasion as in many others things, lawbreaking can be rationalized as a quest for justice.

## Conclusion: The Larger Meaning of Al Sharpton's Success

To understand Al Sharpton, one has to see him as part of the black American experience, a mix of church and street. That is how he defines himself and that is how his audiences in turn see him. The black church was his world from the start and it will remain so until the end. "Everything I've tried to do," he writes, "has been a Christian walk, an effort to live the gospel, to live the sermons I preached when I was young, the feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, comfort the afflicted." But unlike other black clergy, he's an unrelenting street hustler with a taste for publicity and aggression, especially against anyone crossing him the wrong way. This is a potent combination because he's playing for God, lighting a holy fire underneath his audiences.<sup>180</sup>

Those people, blacks, are my people. I set out to serve them when I started preaching at the age of four, and that is all that I've ever wanted to do. Those people, the lower class, the power part of the middle-income class, trust me. I was their child prodigy; those working black folks, the maids and janitors, cooks and doormen, watched me grow up. They know me; I carry many of their aspirations. Those people chart my progress and treat me like a grandson. They're there every Saturday at my rallies, every Sunday at the churches. That's why they give me their money, which doesn't come easy, because they believe in me and the things I stand for.

It's precisely because Sharpton *is* popular that he should be treated far more seriously than some garden-variety blowhard. He has a demonstrated capacity to create mayhem in the streets.

For centuries, crowds, as opposed to individuals or small groups, have served as a natural feeding range for demagogues. Crowds enable a hustler

to substitute subconscious for conscious action, to generate panic over "enemies" onto which great grievances, real or imagined, can be projected. Though first published more than a century ago, French social philosopher Gustav Le Bon's classic tract, *The Crowd*, speaks to present-day America. Defining a crowd as "a servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master," he explains why its leaders connect so well:<sup>181</sup>

The leader has most often started as one of the led. He has himself been hypnotized by the idea, whose apostle he has since become. . . . The leaders we speak of are more frequently men of action than thinkers. They are not gifted with keen foresight, nor could they be, as this quality generally conduces to doubt or inactivity. They are especially recruited from the ranks of those morbidly nervous, excitable, half-deranged persons who are bordering on madness. However absurd may be the idea they uphold or the goal they pursue, their convictions are so strong that all reasoning is lost upon them. Contempt and persecution do not affect them, or only serve to excite them the more. They sacrifice their personal interest, their family—everything. The very instinct of self-preservation is entirely obliterated in them, and so much so that often the only recompense is martyrdom. The intensity of their faith gives great power of suggestion to their words.

Could any words more perfectly describe Al Sharpton? Here is a man of no particular skill, save for preaching to large crowds. But that skill, relentlessly applied, has been enough to make him a leader. For in his world, there is no shortage of blacks who will cling to the modern civil-rights narrative of "white oppressor, black victim." For them, suspicion equals proof and rumors suffice as facts. It doesn't matter that Tawana Brawley's claim to being "assaulted" was preposterous and unsubstantiated. She is black, *and for that reason alone*, must be believed. An orator like Al Sharpton tells his audiences exactly what they want to hear. By plugging into their

fears, insecurities and resentments, he transforms them into a force of nature. Sometimes these audiences do really bad things—like assault, vandalize and kill.

Sharpton, meanwhile, takes the high road, demanding reparations, welfare state expansion, affirmative action, special prosecutions of ordinary or non-existent crimes—and with no accountability if the beneficiaries are black. Whites "owe" blacks for their manifold sins, and Sharpton knows how to turn on the shame and phony appeals to "healing" if whites don't feel the same way. He's explicit in that view:<sup>182</sup>

Let's start there with reparations. Let's start with the fact that there is a debt owed. Then we negotiate how we can repair it. What's fair? We can start with creating an even playing field. But we can't even get there until we recognize that there is a problem. We cannot bring up the discussion of how we will repair this, or what brings us up to par, because America still will not recognize officially or even unofficially that the dead are owed. . . . America must admit its sins in Africa and its sins against people of African descent. It's the first step toward healing.

The idea that America needs a "national conversation" on race in order to "heal," as Sharpton frequently counsels, is both misleading and despotic. Our nation has been having precisely such a conversation for decades. And the script has been unchanging and one-sided from the start. Blacks accuse and demand; whites listen, apologize and acquiesce. Some Americans, thankfully, *do* have a problem with this.

Al Sharpton is not going to change his beliefs, or his tactics, for a second. To the very end of his life, he will hold firm to his conviction that blacks are still second-class citizens and that he is a servant of God. A more pertinent issue is his support from the pillars of American society. Corporations, labor unions, philan-

thropies, churches, media outlets, employee pension funds and both major political parties subsidize his coffers. In the process, they facilitate his power-seeking.

It wasn't always like this. For years, virtually all his revenues came from black supporters of modest means.<sup>183</sup> But that was before Sharpton sought an aura of respectability crucial to wielding influence. As with Jesse Jackson, it has been a successful gambit. Company officials readily give him money. It's a relatively inexpensive way of buying their way out of bad publicity while proclaiming to be champions of Diversity—a real twofer. Moreover, various corporate leaders respect and even admire the man. Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott, speaking at the 2007 annual conference of the National Council of La Raza (!), praised Sharpton as a “dynamic leader... someone you can sit down with, talk with and build a relationship with.” It may well be that Sharpton positively radiates charm. But that doesn't exempt him from public scrutiny. As the late Left-leaning New York journalist, Jack Newfield, cautioned several years earlier, Sharpton is “dangerous because he is so likable.”<sup>184</sup>

Al Sharpton's image as a dynamic and noble visionary inevitably runs up against his track record. Well-meaning institutional supporters want to believe the best about him. But self-delusion has come at a high price. The laudatory speeches and dollars are bad for the benefactors—and even worse for our country. It is way overdue for the celebration, and the subsidies, to end.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Reverend Al Sharpton (with Anthony Walton), *Go and Tell Pharaoh: The*

*Autobiography of the Reverend Al Sharpton*, New York: Doubleday, 1996; Reverend Al Sharpton (with Karen Hunter) *Al on America*, New York: Dafina Books (Kensington Publishing Corp.), 2002. For a wealth of information on Sharpton from a highly critical perspective, see Thomas Clough, “The Saga of Al Sharpton,” *Weird Republic*, 2002, <http://www.weirdrepublic.com/episode35.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Allen, “Jena: The Case of the Amazing Disappearing Hate Crime,” *The Weekly Standard*, January 21, 2008, pp. 21–31, especially p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> See transcript of phone interview, “Rev. Al Sharpton: Jena Rally Marks ‘Beginning of a 21st Century Rights Movement,’” *Democracy NOW!*, September 21, 2007. “Democracy NOW!” is a progressive-Left daily syndicated radio and TV news program.

<sup>4</sup> See Marcus Epstein, “Media Manufactured Noose Mania,” *Vdare.com*, April 8, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997; Karlyn Bowman, “Racial Progress: Black and White Attitudes Towards Racial Discrimination,” *The American Enterprise*, Vol. 12, No. 5, July/August 2001. Even as early as 1963, survey data had shown white attitudes toward blacks, especially on integration, had grown a good deal more favorable over the previous two decades. See Paul B. Sheatsley, “White Attitudes Toward the Negro,” in *The Negro American*, Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark, eds., Boston: Beacon Press, 1966, pp. 303–24.

<sup>6</sup> Ample evidence can be found in Caroline Wolf Harlow, Ph.D., *Hate Crime Reported by Victims and Police*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report NCJ 209911, November 2005. The study combined data

from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports and the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The author estimated that an annual average of 210,000 “hate crimes” occurred during July 2000–December 2003 based on information provided by the victim. The annual rate of hate-related victimizations per 1,000 persons was 0.9 for whites and 0.7 for blacks; for violent acts, the respective figures were 0.8 and 0.5. Even more telling, in crimes in which the victim cited “hate” as a factor (typically committed with a verbal threat indicating disgust over race or other observable status), a black or group of blacks had been the offender in 38.8 percent of all cases, even though blacks are only around 12 percent of the U.S. population as a whole.

Recent NCVS data show that black-on-white felonies are far more common than vice versa. In 2005, 17.2 percent of the estimated (and reported) 3,201,320 single-offender crimes of violence involving a white victim were perpetrated by blacks. By contrast, 10.4 percent of the 507,210 single-offender crimes involving a black victim were perpetrated by whites. In other words, whites committed roughly 53,000 crimes of violence against blacks, while blacks committed around 550,000 crimes of violence against whites—slightly more than ten times the white interracial sum. See *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2005*, Report NCJ 215244, Table 42, “Personal Crimes of Violence, 2005,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2006, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

<sup>7</sup> See “Rev. Al Sharpton: Jena Rally Marks ‘Beginning of a 21st Century Rights Movement.’”

<sup>8</sup> *Al on America*, p. 266.

<sup>9</sup> Even Sharpton's urging of blacks to avoid using “racism” as an all-purpose excuse for failure has an undercurrent of anti-white sentiment. He writes in *Al*

on America (p. 265): “We have internalized the decadence that was imposed on us. We have taken that inferior marker that was placed on us throughout slavery and Jim Crow, and we keep it around our neck as if it actually belongs to us. It’s like a security blanket. A convenient excuse just in case things don’t work out.” In other words, Sharpton is saying that it’s white racism that explains unjustified complaints about white racism.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Lowry, “Sharpton’s Victory,” *National Review Online*, December 3, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> *Al on America*, p. 186.

<sup>12</sup> In that mayoral campaign, Sharpton came close to forcing a Democratic Party primary runoff. Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, received 39 percent of the vote to Sharpton’s 32 percent. New York State law requires that a candidate in a mayoral primary must get 40 percent of the vote. As it turned out, a recount showed Messinger just over the threshold. Sharpton went to court to force a runoff, but later relented, and endorsed Messinger, though more than anything else out of disdain for the Republican opponent and incumbent, Rudolph Giuliani. In the general election Giuliani defeated Messinger by 59–41 percent.

<sup>13</sup> In the 1992 and 1994 New York Democratic primaries for U.S. senator, Sharpton, on a near-shoestring campaign budget, picked up a respective 66 percent and 87 percent of the black vote. See *Go and Tell Pharoah*, p. 255.

<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Gray, “Where’s Al amid the Obamania?” *New York Magazine*, June 22, 2008. Sharpton endorsed Kerry in March 2004, the month that the Reverend withdrew from the race.

<sup>15</sup> Janny Scott, “Iowa Caucus Results Put Pressure on Black Leaders for Endorsements,” *New York Times*, January 7, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> See [www.nationalactionnetwork.net/html/press\\_releases.html](http://www.nationalactionnetwork.net/html/press_releases.html).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> “Al Sharpton: Black Voters Should Punish GOP,” *NewsMax*, July 26, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Wayne Barrett, Adam Hutton and Christine Lagorio, “Sleeping with the GOP: A Bush Covert Operative Takes over Al Sharpton’s Campaign,” *Village Voice*, January 27, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Deb Riechmann, “Bush: Noose Displays ‘Deeply Offensive,’” Associated Press/ABC News, February 12, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Sharpton, *Al on America*.

<sup>22</sup> Adam Nagourney, “Say It Loud,” review of *Al on America*, *New York Times*, December 1, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in American Legend Interviews, “Ed Koch On: Rudy Giuliani,” <http://www.americanlegends.com/Interviews/ed-koch.html>. The interview was held in conjunction with the release of Koch’s new book, *Giuliani: Nasty Man*, New York: Barricade Books, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> *Go and Tell Pharoah*, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Jay Nordlinger, “Power Dem,” *National Review Online*, March 20, 2000, [www.nationalreview.com](http://www.nationalreview.com).

<sup>26</sup> Kenny Sharpton thus at once was Al Sharpton, Jr.’s half-brother and nephew.

<sup>27</sup> Due to post-Census redistricting, Powell represented three districts in the U.S. House of Representatives during 1945–71. The seat Rangel holds, New York’s 18th congressional district, belonged to Powell during the last eight years of that period.

<sup>28</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 183–84.

<sup>29</sup> *Powell v. McCormack*, 395 U.S. 486 (1969). The defendant in this case was House Speaker John William McCormack. At issue was the authority of Congress to add qualifications for its membership on top of those indicated in the U.S. Constitution (i.e., age, length of citizenship and state resi-

dency). The court held by a 7-to-1 margin that Congress, in this context, was not justified in excluding Powell.

<sup>30</sup> *Al on America*, p. 187.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Nordlinger, “Power Dem.”

<sup>32</sup> Operation Breadbasket actually originated in the early Sixties with a Philadelphia black Baptist minister, Reverend Leon Sullivan. King soon adopted this program for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and expanded it nationwide. Rather than distance themselves from Sullivan, corporations actually courted him; General Motors placed him on its board of directors. The “Sullivan principles,” a voluntary code of conduct for investment in apartheid-era South Africa, also were a legacy of Sullivan, who died in 2001.

<sup>33</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 179–81.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*, New York: Harper-Collins, 1990; Juan Williams, *Enough: The Phony Leaders, Dead-End Movements, and Culture of Failure That Are Undermining Black America—and What We Can Do About It*, New York: Three Rivers Press (Crown), 2007; Michael Meyers and Juan Williams, “How Al Sharpton Struck Out,” *New York Daily News*, July 14, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Clarence B. Jones, “King and the Jews,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 30, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Lowry, “Sharpton’s Victory.” Sharpton’s visit to the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles managed to soak up five percent of the cash donations NAN raised during the third quarter of 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Luther King III heads the Atlanta-based civil-rights organization his father headed, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

<sup>38</sup> Sharpton began as a Pentecostal minister, but eventually converted to the Baptist faith.

<sup>39</sup> *Al on America*, p. 191. Sharpton states here that he and Jackson first met when he was 12. Yet in *Go and Tell Pharoah* (pp. 47–48), he described their first meeting as occurring in 1969. Sharpton would have to have been at least 14. The account in *Go and Tell Pharoah* being more detailed, that account would appear to be accurate.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>41</sup> Howard Kurtz, “State Calls Sharp-ton Group a Façade,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 1990. Genecin’s comment was part of an opening statement for the prosecution in a New York State court that Sharpton had used National Youth Movement as a front to embezzle more than \$250,000 (he wound up not guilty). This and other examples of Sharpton’s shady financial dealings will be discussed later in this report.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>43</sup> *Go and Tell Pharoah*, p. 48.

<sup>44</sup> See Clough, “The Saga of Al Sharp-ton.”

<sup>45</sup> See Ernest R. House, *Jesse Jackson & the Politics of Charisma: The Rise and Fall of the PUSH/Excel Program*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Shakedown: Exposing the Real Jesse Jackson*, Wash- ington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2002, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> Timmerman’s *Shakedown* (p. 428) provides a chart showing the formal structure of the El Rukn organization.

<sup>48</sup> Operation PUSH originated in late 1971 when Jackson had a falling out with Ralph Abernathy, Martin Luther King’s successor at the SCLC helm. Its founding goals were similar to those of Operation Breadbasket.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>52</sup> See Edwin S. Rubenstein, ed., *The Right Data: The Conservative Guidebook*

*to Busting Liberal Economic Myths*, New York: National Review Press, 1994.

<sup>53</sup> After high school, Sharpton attended Brooklyn College, but dropped out after two years. Touring with James Brown was a full-time occupation.

<sup>54</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 204–05.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Cynthia Rose, *Living in America: The Soul Saga of James Brown*, London: Serpent’s Tail, 1991.

<sup>56</sup> *Al on America*, p. 206.

<sup>57</sup> Accounts may differ as to what trig- gered Brown’s rampage or how police reacted, but this much is accepted across the board: The singer, high on PCP (“angel dust”), burst into an insur- ance seminar held next to his office in Augusta, Ga. Toting a shotgun, he expressed outrage that one or more attendees apparently had been using his private bathroom. Soon after, someone called the police. Upon their arrival, Brown fled in a truck, leading law enforcement officers in hot pursuit onto I-20 in a chase extending into South Carolina, where police managed to shoot out his tires. Brown then circled back toward Augusta, eventually driving his vehicle into a ditch. Police quickly arrested him and administered a sobri- ety test. They stated Brown was incoher- ent and attempted to sing and dance during the test. The singer countered that police had used excessive force, pointing to nearly two dozen bullet holes in his truck. Less known is that Brown, out on bail, *the very next day* was pulled over and arrested for driving under the influence of PCP.

<sup>58</sup> The reason for the long elapse may have been Hollander’s deteriorating condition. She claimed that stress from the assault had caused her to contract Grave’s Disease, a thyroid disorder.

<sup>59</sup> Her official cause of death was a PCP overdose while on prescription med- icine—and in the aftermath of facial cosmetic surgery.

<sup>60</sup> Brown stated that he thought Eubanks was an intruder. But based on the evidence, Brown’s perception was not only erroneous, but likely demented as well. Eubanks rang the doorbell upon arrival, whereupon Brown greeted him and told him to wait. When Brown returned, he had a suit on a hanger and told the electrician that he (Brown) was a government agent and could incarcerate him for trespassing. At that point, Eubanks stated, Brown brandished a steak knife and moved toward him. Making this tantrum all the more inexplicable was the fact that South Carolina Electric & Gas had received no reports from anyone else in the area at that time concerning power outages. A company spokesman could not determine who called from Brown’s estate. See “Really Randoms,” *Rolling Stone Online*, July 18, 2000, [www.rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com); [www.zoominfo.com/people/Eubanks\\_Russell\\_14158650.aspx](http://www.zoominfo.com/people/Eubanks_Russell_14158650.aspx).

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Spectropop Remembers, “James Brown (1933–2006): The Godfather of Soul,” <http://www.spectropop.com/remembers/JamesBrown.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> The primary sources for this section are Mark Lesly, *Subway Gunman: A Juror’s Account of the Bernhard Goetz Trial*, Latham, N.Y.: British American Publishing, 1988; William Tucker, *Vigilante: The Backlash against Crime in America*, New York: Stein and Day, 1985, pp. 19–35; Jason Manning, “The Subway Vigilante,” in *The Eighties Club: The Politics and Pop Culture of the 1980s*, 2000, <http://eightiesclub.tripod.com/id311.htm>.

<sup>63</sup> It turned out to be a good guess, too. Police already had tried to contact Goetz at his Greenwich Village apartment.

<sup>64</sup> Lars-Erik Nelson, “Goetz in Light of Jefferson and Lincoln,” *New York Daily News*, January 16, 1985.

<sup>65</sup> Mike Royko, "They Deserved It, Sure as Shooting," reprinted in *New York Daily News*, January 16, 1985.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Tucker, *Vigilante*, p. 23.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in "Self-Defense Bill Needed More than Ever," *The Gun Owners*, June 1996, [www.gunowners.org/news/news9606.htm](http://www.gunowners.org/news/news9606.htm).

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Thomas Clough, *The Saga of Al Sharpton*.

<sup>70</sup> In 2004, Goetz stated in an interview on CNN's "Larry King Live" that he hadn't paid any of the money.

<sup>71</sup> *Al on America*, p. 268.

<sup>72</sup> Indeed, his musician son, Arlo Guthrie, frequently has copyrighted his own songs as "Howard Beach Music, Inc."

<sup>73</sup> For Sharpton's account, see *Al on America*, pp. 92-95. Derrick Geter should not be confused with New York Yankees baseball star Derek Jeter.

<sup>74</sup> Clough, "The Saga of Al Sharpton."

<sup>75</sup> *Al on America*, p. 93. Sharpton is faulty with his facts. The infamous murder of a black adolescent boy, Emmett Till, in a small Mississippi town occurred in 1955, not 1950.

<sup>76</sup> See Lorrin Anderson, "Race, Lies, and Video Tape—TV Docudrama 'Howard Beach': Making the Case for Murder," *National Review*, January 22, 1990; Jared Taylor, *Paved with Good Intentions: The Failure of Race Relations in Contemporary America*, New York: Carroll & Graf, 1992, pp. 85-86.

<sup>77</sup> Dwight Garner, "Al Sharpton's Second Act," *The Salon Interview*, 1999, <http://www.salon.com/weekly/sharpton1.html>.

<sup>78</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 229-30.

<sup>79</sup> The context of the interview was Sharpton's apparent double standard in condemning anti-black comments made by radio talk-show host Don Imus while refusing to apologize for his own role in the Tawana Brawley affair. David Greg-

ory, a substitute host for Chris Matthews, was persistent in the exchange. Sharpton insisted Imus' "crime" was far worse than anything Brawley had done. Imus, he argued, castigated "an entire race," whereas Brawley merely made a statement "about an individual." But this was patently absurd. Imus hadn't leveled *any* accusation, much less a false one, at blacks as a whole in his remark about the Rutgers University women's basketball team. The worst that could be said of him (see later discussion) is that he was gratuitously crude. Miss Brawley, on the other hand, *did* make a fraudulent accusation, and against more than one individual. More crucially, her deception, under less favorable circumstances, could have inflicted lengthy prison sentences and ruined the careers of many innocent persons. As it was, Brawley and her allies cost New York taxpayers at least \$1 million and poisoned race relations.

<sup>80</sup> This section relies on various sources, most importantly, *Report of the Grand Jury Concerning the Tawana Brawley Investigation*, which can be found in complete form on the Web at <http://www.courtvt.com/archive/legaldocs/newsmakers/tawana/part4.html>; Robert D. McFadden, et al., *Outrage: The Story Behind the Tawana Brawley Hoax*, New York: Bantam Books, 1990.

<sup>81</sup> The Town of Wappingers and the Village of Wappingers Falls are two distinct entities, though occasionally confused with one another.

<sup>82</sup> For the Sharpton and Maddox quotes, see Nordlinger, "Power Dem."

<sup>83</sup> Various persons testifying before the grand jury indicated that Crist was despondent over matters unrelated to the Tawana Brawley case. Still, that fact alone should not exonerate her. All of us inevitably at some point experience frustration in love and in work. It is too much of a coincidence that Crist happened to commit suicide practically as soon as he was identified as an

"assailant." Sharpton and his supporters insisted either that his self-inflicted death was a de facto admission of guilt or that he really had been murdered before he could testify. But since the case was a hoax from the start, it is reasonable to suggest that while Crist might have committed suicide anyway in lieu of Brawley's accusations, fear of bad publicity pushed him over the edge.

<sup>84</sup> Nordlinger, "Power Dem."

<sup>85</sup> "Duke Case: Where Is Tawana Brawley?" *Johnsville News*, September 19, 2006. See <http://johnsville.blogspot.com>. In point of fact, Sharpton and his brain trust aided in the flight, arranging to hide Glenda Brawley in Ebenezer Baptist Church in Queens, N.Y., rather than have her testify. The church deacons, to their credit, told Sharpton to take his fugitive somewhere else. Soon enough, Sharpton transported her to Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn, evading police detection all the while. Then they called TV talk-show host Phil Donahue, who conducted a live broadcast from the church.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in John Perazzo, "The Nine Lives of Al Sharpton," *Front Page Magazine*, ([www.frontpagemag.com](http://www.frontpagemag.com)). See also E. R. Shipp, "Abrams Backs a New Witness in Brawley Case," *New York Times*, June 18, 1988. Prompting the federal probe was U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani's concern that Sharpton and his allies were collecting funds for Brawley's defense under false pretenses.

<sup>87</sup> The original suit had claimed the trio knowingly had made 22 false statements. The jury wound up being deadlocked on four of the statements, while finding eight others non-defamatory. "Winner in Brawley Suit Says Victory is Bittersweet," CNN.com, July 14, 1998.

<sup>88</sup> Pagones originally had sought \$395 million from the defendants. Granted, he stood no real chance of collecting anything resembling this outsized sum.

Yet the suit can be justified as a symbolic rebuke of Sharpton.

<sup>89</sup> Maddox and Mason were in the process of paying their share. Tawana Brawley, on the other hand, was not cooperating. “She has been difficult to locate and her assets have been impossible to locate,” said Pagones’ lawyer, Garry Bolnick. See Alan Feuer, “Sharpton’s Debt in Brawley Defamation Is Paid by Supporters,” *New York Times*, June 15, 2001.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in “Tawana Brawley Ordered to Pay \$185,000 for False Rape Claim,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1998.

<sup>91</sup> “Duke Case: Where Is Tawana Brawley?”

<sup>92</sup> Maddox was disbarred by the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court in Brooklyn after failing to appear for a disciplinary hearing to answer allegations regarding his conduct in the Brawley case. He remains today every bit as filled with the politics of racial grievance. In the pages of the *Amsterdam News* (June 21, 2007), he reacted to the not-guilty verdict of three Duke University lacrosse players accused of the “rape” of a local black woman and the disbarment of disgraced lead prosecutor Michael Nifong this way: “North Carolina’s disbarment of Durham District Attorney Michael Nifong on June 16, 2007 is akin to the December 2, 1858 hanging of John Brown, a white freedom fighter, for conducting a raid on the United States Arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia (sic) on October 16, 1858.” Maddox’s old habits die hard, including his penchant for misstating facts—Harper’s Ferry is in West Virginia.

<sup>93</sup> The New York State Appellate Court, which disbarred him, cited 66 instances of professional misconduct with 20 clients over a six-year period, including “repeated neglect of client matters, many of which concerned criminal cases where a client’s liberty was at stake; mis-

representations to clients [and] refusal to refund the unearned portion of fees.” Unlike the case of Maddox’s disbarment, the court did not specifically cite the Tawana Brawley case.

<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, the organization has the same West Side Manhattan street address as the National Council of Churches and its prominent offshoot, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR): 475 Riverside Drive. National Legal and Policy Center recently published a lengthy paper on the ICCR’s ongoing campaign to impose price controls on the pharmaceutical industry in the name of social justice. See Carl F. Horowitz, *The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility: The Religious Left vs. Health Care Markets*, Falls Church, Va.: National Legal and Policy Center, 2008.

<sup>95</sup> David E. Pitt, “Gang Attack: Unusual for Its Viciousness,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1989. A “wilding” should not be confused with another charming practice known as “whirling,” where a gang chooses a female at random at a public swimming pool and sexually assaults her.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Salaam initially lied to police by claiming to be 16. He and his attorneys used that claim to argue that the case against him be thrown out, since in New York anyone 16 and older no longer has a right to have a parent or guardian present during police questioning. Salaam did not have either present. But by lying to police, an appellate court later ruled, he effectively had forfeited that right at the time. Police later allowed his mother to be present after his attorney informed them of his true age.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in J. D. Podolsky, “As the Central Park Jogger Struggles to Heal, Three Attackers Hear the Bell Toll for Them,” *People*, September 3, 1990.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Nordlinger, “Power Dem.”

<sup>100</sup> Lorrin Anderson, “Crime, Race, and the Fourth Estate,” *National Review*, October 15, 1990.

<sup>101</sup> Prosecutors were highly reluctant to work out a plea bargain with Lopez, acknowledged to be the most brutal of the six attackers. They worked out a deal only because they thought the case could have resulted in an acquittal.

<sup>102</sup> Trisha Meili, *I am the Central Park Jogger*, New York: Scribner, 2003.

<sup>103</sup> *Al on America*, p. 226.

<sup>104</sup> Clough, “The Saga of Al Sharpton.”

<sup>105</sup> Taylor, *Paved with Good Intentions*, p. 86.

<sup>106</sup> This raises the question: Why did New York City officials allow the marches to happen anyway? Why did they not arrest all demonstrators on sight? The only plausible answer is that they were terrified that Sharpton and his people would turn on them. By their inaction, local officials helped light the fuse.

<sup>107</sup> Taylor, *Paved with Good Intentions*, pp. 86–87. Plummer, now in her early 70s, is a piece of work in her own right. Back in 1985, she stood trial with seven co-defendants for plotting a prison break to free two members of the radical gang who pulled off the 1981 Brink’s armored car robbery in Rockland County, N.Y. She was acquitted of the most serious charges, but was convicted on falsely identifying herself to gain admission to a prison so she could visit Nathaniel Burns (aka Sekou Odinga), a Brink’s job principal, later arrested after a shootout with cops in Queens. Her son, Robert Taylor, was among those convicted of possession of dynamite and machine guns. In this decade, she served as chief of staff to New York City Council Member Charles Barron, a former Black Panther and close ally of Al Sharpton. As a council aide, she openly called for the assassination of a black City Council member, Leroy Comrie, whose “offense” had been to

abstain from voting on a proposal to rename a stretch of Gates Avenue in Brooklyn after the late black activist Sonny Carson, a convicted kidnapper and murderer with a long history of mayhem-making in the streets of New York (he was the person who led the effort to boycott Korean-owned grocery stores in black Brooklyn neighborhoods in 1990). Carson actually made Sharpton look like a moderate. In response, New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn in July 2007 fired her. Plummer promptly filed a \$1 million lawsuit against Quinn, claiming in part anti-black discrimination. In January 2008, Manhattan Federal Judge William Pauley, in a partial blow for common sense, dismissed Plummer's claim of discrimination, but refused to toss out the suit altogether. If one is known by the company he keeps, Al Sharpton's close association with Viola Plummer alone is alarming.

<sup>108</sup> The parent company of WLIB is Inner City Broadcasting, headed by Percy Sutton, one of the people mentioned earlier as retiring Sharpton's civil damages in the Tawana Brawley case.

<sup>109</sup> Clough, "The Story of Al Sharpton."

<sup>110</sup> Arnold H. Lubasch, "Juries Acquit 2 in Murder Case in Bensonhurst," *New York Times*, February 8, 1991. Sharpton also vowed to press the Justice Department to file federal civil-rights charges against all the defendants, whether guilty or not. Nothing, thankfully, came of this.

<sup>111</sup> In an odd turn of events, Sharpton appealed to the judge for leniency at sentencing. He even visited Riccardi in prison. Riccardi served nearly nine years of his sentence before being released in January 2001. Sharpton's charitable instincts were less on display in a lawsuit he'd filed against the City of New York for failing to protect him. He settled, belatedly, in December 2003 for \$200,000, plus exemption from a \$7,447.76 unpaid hospital bill. Thomas

J. Lueck, "City Settles Sharpton Suit Over Stabbing," *New York Times*, December 9, 2003.

<sup>112</sup> This discussion draws heavily upon Clough, "The Saga of Al Sharpton"; Edward S. Shapiro, *Crown Heights: Blacks, Jews, and the 1991 Brooklyn Riot*, Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2006; William McGowan, "Race and Reporting," *City Journal*, Summer 1993.

<sup>113</sup> *Go and Tell Pharaoh*, p. 195.

<sup>114</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 217–218.

<sup>115</sup> Banners bearing genocidal hatred against Jews also were in abundance at the Cato funeral, including one that read, "Hitler did not do the job." See McGowan, "Race and Reporting."

<sup>116</sup> *Go and Tell Pharaoh*, p. 199.

<sup>117</sup> Even Judge Trager issued a ruling forbidding Nelson from ever possessing a weapon, as he was a "danger to the community" and had shown no remorse.

<sup>118</sup> At his police station confession in August 1991, neither the police nor any bystanders saw any indication that Nelson was intoxicated.

<sup>119</sup> A Harlem-based black nationalist, Jesse Gray, had organized a major rent strike among black tenants. On July 19, 1964, the day after the six-day riot began, Gray called for "100 skilled black revolutionaries who are ready to die" to solve "the police brutality situation in Harlem." While the trigger for the riot was the shooting by a white cop of an unarmed black teenager, the rent strike had sufficiently inflamed passions by that time. And Gray had more than established his credentials as a community leader.

<sup>120</sup> Powell himself had a past. Early in 1996, forensic experts at the City of New York's Office of Mental Health put together a list of patients who had walked away from local mental institutions and found that in July 1974 Powell had escaped from Bellevue Hos-

pital. What actions had he committed to be sent to the facility? On October 16, 1973, court records show, Powell had been hiding behind some garbage cans at 1683 Madison Avenue when he observed Police Officer William Hidemberger walking by. Powell, carrying a lead pipe and a pair of scissors, attacked the officer for no apparent reason. A struggle ensued, and Powell managed to seize the cop's gun and yell, "I am going to kill you, pig." Fortunately, he didn't, and Officer Hidemberger arrested him. Then-State Supreme Court Justice Martin Strecher on March 26, 1974 ruled that Powell was insane and sent him to Bellevue. Since his escape, he was arrested on a half-dozen occasions. That Powell roamed the streets all that time says much about the shortcomings of the City's mental health system and even more about the character of Al Sharpton. See Mike McAlary, "Harlem Hate Vendor Fled Psych Ward," *New York Daily News*, February 7, 1996.

<sup>121</sup> There was a reason for using the medium, too. In *Go and Tell Pharaoh* (p. 146), Sharpton calls WLIB and WWRL, and their respective DJs, "the drums of the contemporary black community."

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Clough, "The Saga of Al Sharpton."

<sup>123</sup> Quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>124</sup> Mr. Smith/Mulocko was a part-time street vendor selling African artifacts. Like many such peddlers selling their wares along 125th Street, he operated without a City license. These peddlers might look charming from a distance, but they were anything but charming to store owners who saw their revenues bleed. One of those owners was Sikhulu Shange, who complained that peddlers of counterfeit records and tapes were severely cutting into his business. Sharpton's right-hand man, Morris Powell, happened to be tight with the vendors, heading an entity called the 125th Street Vendors Association. Many of the pro-

testors at the site were there in support of Shange. See Dan Barry, "Death on 125th Street: The Neighborhood," *New York Times*, December 11, 1995.

<sup>125</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 216–17.

<sup>126</sup> *Al on America*, p. 21.

<sup>127</sup> *Al on America*, p. 269.

<sup>128</sup> *Al on America*, p. 242.

<sup>129</sup> This section relies heavily upon accounts contained in Heather Mac Donald, "Diallo Truth, Diallo Falsehood," *City Journal*, Summer 1999; Clough, "The Saga of Al Sharpton."

<sup>130</sup> Mac Donald, "Diallo Truth, Diallo Falsehood."

<sup>131</sup> See data in *ibid*.

<sup>132</sup> Steven K. Smith, Greg W. Steadman, Todd D. Minton and Meg Townsend, *Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 Cities, 1998*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, Special Report NCJ 173940, May 1999. See report online at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cvpcs98.htm>. The proportion of residents of all races reporting either being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" ranged from 78 percent in Washington, D.C. to 97 percent in Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>133</sup> Patrick Dorismond, a man in his mid 20s, was a security guard and a father of two who was shot and killed during a scuffle outside a Manhattan nightclub by an undercover cop during the wee hours of March 16, 2000. Accounts differed as to what happened. Dorismond, say police, threw a punch at an officer after loudly declaring he was not a drug dealer. But his friend, Kevin Kaiser, stated that the police never identified themselves. Efforts to revive Dorismond at St. Clare's Hospital failed. The funeral was highly charged, resulting in clashes between police and thousands of protestors organized by Sharpton. That July,

a grand jury declined to indict Officer Anthony Vasquez for murder, concluding that the shooting was incidental. In March 2003, the City of New York settled a wrongful-death civil suit with the Dorismond family for \$2.25 million.

<sup>134</sup> On August 9, 1997 Abner Louima, 30, married with one child, visited a Brooklyn nightclub. Late in the night, he and several other men attempted to break up a fight between two women. Police were called. A fight broke out between police and several patrons and bystanders. One of the officers, Justin Volpe, claimed he was sucker-punched and identified the Haitian-born Louima as the assailant. Police then arrested Louima. En route to the police station, the arresting officers severely beat him. Worse yet, while in a holding cell, Officer Volpe sodomized Louima with a broomstick while the latter's hands were cuffed behind his back. Louima spent two months in the hospital recuperating. In December 1999, Volpe received a 30-year prison sentence plus an order to make restitution of more than \$275,000. Several other officers either were found not guilty or had their conviction overturned. Louima later filed a civil suit against the City of New York, settling out of court for \$8.75 million.

<sup>135</sup> By the start of the decade, Hawkins owned eight Detroit-area Burger King establishments and more than a dozen others elsewhere. He also owned restaurants affiliated with other chains, such as Pizza-Hut. See Terry Kosdroosky, "Hawkins Nixes Burger King Offer; Boycott a Possibility as \$1.9B Lawsuit Continues," *Crain's Detroit Business*, September 2000.

<sup>136</sup> Peter Noel, "Is Jesse for Sale?" *Village Voice*, December 27, 2000–January 2, 2001. Jackson's decision proved to be a sharp one, at least from his own standpoint. Burger King continues to be a prominent donor to Jackson's main nonprofit organization, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

<sup>137</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 198–99.

<sup>138</sup> Here's how Alvin Malnik, a former financial adviser explained it in 2006: "I think that Michael (Jackson) never had any concept of fiscal responsibility, or logical fiscal responsibility. He was an individual that had been overindulged by those that represented him or worked for him for all of his life. There was no planning in terms of allocations of how much he should spend. As a businessman, you can forecast your spending for the next six months to a year. For Michael, it was whatever he wanted at the time he wanted." Quoted in Timothy O'Brien, "What Happened to the Fortune Michael Jackson Made?" *New York Times*, May 14, 2006.

<sup>139</sup> In January 1994 Jackson settled a civil suit for \$22 million by Evan Chandler whose boy, Jordan Chandler, allegedly had been molested by Jackson the previous year. It had been common practice for Jackson to have children as sleepover guests at his Neverland Ranch, where the sexual activity ostensibly occurred. Jackson denied having sex and was never charged with a crime. Opinion remains divided as to whether Jackson was covering up real crimes or avoiding further lawsuits over imaginary ones. The high settlement suggests the first view is at least plausible.

<sup>140</sup> Quoted in Jennifer Vineyard, "Michael Jackson Shocks Al Sharpton by Calling Tommy Mottola a Racist," *MTV News*, July 8, 2002, <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles>.

<sup>141</sup> In large measure, the prosecution bungled the case. During the trial, Santa Barbara County District Attorney Tom Sneddon made derogatory public statements about Jackson, leading the defense and a sympathetic public to believe Jackson was a victim of a personal vendetta. Sneddon, in fact, had tried to prosecute Jackson back in 1993, but Jackson and the Chandler family reached a settlement before the wheels could be set in motion.

<sup>142</sup> O'Brien, "What Happened to the Fortune Michael Jackson Made?"

<sup>143</sup> "Michael Jackson 'Becomes a Muslim and Changes Name to Mikael," *Daily Mail Online*, November 21, 2008, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article>. Jackson and his siblings were raised as Jehovah's Witnesses. One of his older brothers, Jermaine, became a Muslim in 1989.

<sup>144</sup> Testimony of Reverend Al Sharpton, House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security, Hearing, "Jena 6 and the Role of Federal Intervention in Hate Crimes and Racial Violence in Public Schools," October 16, 2007. The mere title of the proceedings was a dead giveaway that the committee had little sympathy with anyone who demurred from Sharpton. Reps. Sheila Jackson-Lee, D-Texas, and Keith Ellison, D-Minn., for example, bitterly castigated Donald Washington, the black U.S. Attorney who had not secured the release of the six blacks accused of attempted murder of a white student.

<sup>145</sup> Epstein, "Media Manufactured Noose Mania."

<sup>146</sup> Justin Barker and his parents felt strongly enough to file suit on November 29, 2007 against the parents of the accused, the adult members of the Jena Six (i.e., adults at the time of the attack), an additional student named Malcolm Shaw and the La Salle Parish School Board, in the latter case charging the board with inadequately supervising students and failing to maintain discipline. The case as of this writing is on hold pending the appointment of a judge to hear a recusal motion by the defense.

<sup>147</sup> "The Jena Six," Editorial, *New York Times*, September 23, 2007.

<sup>148</sup> Quoted in Carl F. Horowitz, "The Jena Defendants: Is Thuggery a New Right?" *Townhall.com*, October 30, 2007.

<sup>149</sup> See especially "Some 'Jena Six' Defendants Have Recent Legal Problems," [www.thetowntalk.com](http://www.thetowntalk.com), May 30, 2008; "The Jena 6 and Barker: Where Are They Now?" [www.thetowntalk.com](http://www.thetowntalk.com), September 21, 2008.

<sup>150</sup> According to police, Bell tried to steal several shirts and a pair of jeans from a Monroe, La. department store and fled when a security guard and an off-duty police officer tried to detain him. After they found him hiding under a car, Bell "swung his arms wildly"; one of his arms struck the security guard with a glancing blow. See "'Jena Six' Teen Shoots Self," Associated Press, December 30, 2008.

<sup>151</sup> Sharpton, it should be noted, has spoken out often about rap lyrics that he finds degrading to black women. But he doesn't call for steps that amount to either government or industry censorship in the way that he has against Imus.

<sup>152</sup> Quoted in David Carr, "Networks Condemn Remarks by Imus," *New York Times*, April 7, 2007.

<sup>153</sup> Quoted in "Rutgers Players Describe How Imus' Remarks Hurt," *CNN.com*, April, 10, 2007. Coach Stringer, pouring on the high-octane sanctimony, described her players this way: "Before you are valedictorians of their class, future doctors, musical prodigies, and yes, even Girl Scouts. They are young ladies of class, distinction, they are articulate, they are brilliant, they are gifted. They are God's representatives in every sense of the word." Stringer's words recall a classic Valley Girl expression: "Gag me with a spoon."

<sup>154</sup> "Don Imus on Al Sharpton's Radio Show," Transcript, *New York Times*, April 9, 2007.

<sup>155</sup> David Bauder, "Racist Remarks Cost Imus CBS Radio Job," Associated Press, April 12, 2007.

<sup>156</sup> Bill Carter and Jacques Steinberg, "Off the Air: The Light Goes Out for

Don Imus," *New York Times*, April 13, 2007.

<sup>157</sup> Jacques Steinberg, "Source: Imus Back on Air in Early December," *New York Times*, November 14, 2007.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Al Sharpton, David Shankbone, *Wikinews*, December 3, 2007.

<sup>159</sup> See especially Heather Mac Donald, "Time for the Truth about Black Crime Rates: The Lessons of the Sean Bell Case," *City Journal*, April 2, 2007, <http://www.city-journal.org>.

<sup>160</sup> Quoted in Sewell Chan and Daryl Khan, "Sharpton and Jesse Jackson Lead Angry Group to Site of Deadly Police Shooting," *New York Times*, November 30, 2006.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Diane Cardwell and Sewell Chan, "Mayor Calls 50 Shots by the Police 'Unacceptable,'" *New York Times*, November 28, 2006.

<sup>163</sup> Chan and Khan, "Sharpton and Jesse Jackson Lead Angry Group."

<sup>164</sup> See "New York Mayor Promises 'Fair and Thorough' Investigation of Groom's Death," Fox News Channel, November 27, 2006; Emily Vasquez and Daryl Khan, "Pastor Remembers a Confident Family Man Looking Forward to His Marriage," *New York Times*, November 27, 2006.

<sup>165</sup> Ernie Naspretto and Alison Gendar, "Dealer: I Was Shot by Bell," *New York Daily News*, March 27, 2007.

<sup>166</sup> Murray Weiss, Ikimulisa Livingston and Andy Geller, "50-Shot Victim Held as 'Beater—Says Sharpton Pays Him to Loaf," *New York Post*, September 27, 2007. Prosecutors stated Benefield was busted after undercover cops working on a separate case by chance had witnessed him punching his girlfriend, Nyla Page Walthrus, 19, in the face, and after that, slamming a car door against her and grabbing her by the throat outside her South Jamaica (Queens)

home. Waltrus was the mother of Benefield's son, at the time nine months old. Benefield was released on his own recognizance at his Queens Criminal Court arraignment where he had been charged with attempted assault and harassment. He pleaded guilty the following month to disorderly conduct and agreed to undergo therapy. For her part, Ms. Waltrus's had refused to cooperate. Indeed, after Benefield's guilty plea the beaming pair held hands—psychiatrists would call this “traumatic bonding.” See Nicole Bode, “Sean Bell Friend Pleads Disorderly Conduct in Assault Trial,” *New York Daily News*, October 12, 2007.

<sup>167</sup> Weiss, Livingston and Geller, *ibid*.

<sup>168</sup> See Michael Wilson, “Dramatic Testimony from Bell Shooting Survivor,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2008; “Commentary: Testimony of Sean Bell's Friends Sank Case,” CNN.com., April 25, 2008.

<sup>169</sup> Denis Hamill, “For a Star Witness in Sean Bell Case, Benefield Has Tough Time with his Lines,” *New York Daily News*, April 1, 2008.

<sup>170</sup> *The Buying of the President 2004*, “Al Sharpton,” Washington, D.C.: Center for Public Integrity, 2004. The report, in the center's own words, is a “quadrennial investigation of how money shapes presidential campaigns.”

<sup>171</sup> See John T. McQuiston, “After 6 Hours, Jury Acquits Sharpton of All Charges,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1990.

<sup>172</sup> For a discussion of this affair, see “FBI Investigating Sharpton,” *Ethics Watch*, Vol. XI, Number 2, Summer 2005, pp. 1, 7; “Sharpton Indictment Looming?” *Ethics Watch*, Vol. XIV, Number 1, Spring 2008, pp. 1, 7. *Ethics Watch* is a publication of the National Legal and Policy Center.

<sup>173</sup> Kevin Chappell, “How La-Van Hawkins Rose from the Projects to a Private Jet and a Multimillion-Dollar Empire,” *Ebony*, April 2003.

<sup>174</sup> “FBI Investigating Sharpton,” p. 7.

<sup>175</sup> Quoted in Greg B. Smith and Larry McShane, “Subpoenas for Sharpton's Aides,” *New York Daily News*, December 13, 2007.

<sup>176</sup> In the indictment, the federal government claimed Hawkins helped White bribe Corey Kemp, former treasurer for the City of Philadelphia, lavishing cash and gifts upon him, including a trip to the 2003 Super Bowl and a party at an upscale restaurant in Detroit that Hawkins controlled. In exchange, Kemp did favors for White, Hawkins and their associates, in some cases using his position to get them business with the City. Hawkins was acquitted at least of conspiracy charges, if not others. See Keith Reed, “Hawkins Found Guilty of Perjury: B.E. 100s CEO Awaits Sentencing in Connection with Philadelphia Corruption Scheme,” *Black Enterprise*, July 2005.

<sup>177</sup> “Sharpton Owes IRS \$1.5 Mil in Back Taxes,” Associated Press, May 9, 2008.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>179</sup> Bennett & Weiss, “Rev. Al's Half-Price Deal on \$1.8M Taxes.”

<sup>180</sup> *Go and Tell Pharaoh*, p. 5.

<sup>181</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Introduction by Robert K. Merton, New York: Penguin Books, 1977 (originally published in 1895), p. 118.

<sup>182</sup> *Al on America*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>183</sup> *Go and Tell Pharaoh*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in Nordlinger, “Power Dem.”

