

Al Sharpton Is Not a Civil-Rights Hero

NR nationalreview.com/2019/07/al-sharpton-is-not-a-civil-rights-hero/

July 31,
2019



Al Sharpton in Baltimore, Md., July 29, 2019. (*Stephanie Keith/Reuters*)

Imagine David Duke being a regular, esteemed guest and former honored host on Fox News Channel. Imagine every Republican presidential candidate scrambling to praise him whenever he's in the news. Imagine David Duke being given a prime speaking slot at the Republican National Convention or President Trump welcoming him to the White House and openly soliciting his support. Imagine Duke appearing on White House visitor logs more than 70 times during Trump's administration.

Imagine all of this and you'll have some idea of how the right and even, I think, the center of American political thought reacts to seeing Al Sharpton continue to be cosseted by the Democratic party and its allies in the media. Sharpton should long ago have been ruled out of bounds.

Employing the morally disastrous logic that the enemy of your enemy is your friend, the Democrats have allowed President Trump to troll them into extolling Sharpton. Trump is incorrect about many things, but he fairly described Sharpton as a racist. Sharpton is a "con

man, a troublemaker, always looking for a score," Trump tweeted. "Hates Whites & Cops!" That's a lot closer to the truth than the framing of Democrats, who bent the knee to Sharpton as though he were some sort of civil-rights hero rather than a huckster.

.@TheRevAl has spent his life fighting for what's right and working to improve our nation, even in the face of hate. It's shameful, yet unsurprising that Trump would continue to attack those who have done so much for our country.

— Kamala Harris (@KamalaHarris) July 29, 2019

.@TheRevAl is a champion in the fight for civil rights. The fact that President Trump continues to use the power of the presidency to unleash racist attacks on the people he serves is despicable. This hate has no place in our country. It's beneath the dignity of the office.

— Joe Biden (@JoeBiden) July 29, 2019

.@TheRevAl has dedicated his life to the fight for justice for all. No amount of racist tweets from the man in the White House will erase that—and we must not let them divide us. I stand with my friend Al Sharpton in calling out these ongoing attacks on people of color.

— Elizabeth Warren (@ewarren) July 29, 2019

Sharpton holds the position of America's Senior Spokesman for Civil Rights only because it's been some time since he's done anything so egregiously contemptible that it made the front page; the Left simply assumes short memories have sanitized Sharpton's reputation. I almost wrote "inflammatory reputation," but that word might be too literal given the arson attack that followed one of his most notorious hate campaigns.

After a black boy, Gavin Cato, was accidentally killed by a motorcade of Jews in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in 1991, Sharpton delivered an incendiary eulogy at the funeral:

All we want to say is what Jesus said: If you offend one of these little ones, you got to pay for it. No compromise, no meetings, no coffee klatch, no skinnin' and grinnin'.

For extra incendiary effect, he urged the crowd to think of Jews as "diamond merchants" responsible for apartheid in South Africa, and he marched at the head of an angry group of demonstrators on the Jewish sabbath. Rioters subsequently murdered Yankel Rosenbaum, a Jewish youth, in retaliation. Twenty years later Sharpton issued a watery not-quite apology in the form of a *Daily News* op-ed.

Four years later, in 1995, Sharpton inflamed tensions on Harlem's 125th Street that culminated in the murders of seven people in an arson attack. The owner of the building in dispute was actually a black Pentecostal church, whose leaders had asked a Jewish tenant to

evict a black subtenant, who enlisted the aid of Sharpton and other race-baiters to whip up street protests. At one such demonstration, Sharpton shouted,

There is a systemic and methodical strategy to eliminate our people from doing business off 125th Street. I want to make it clear . . . that we will not stand by and allow them to move this brother so that some white interloper can expand his business.

A fellow protest leader said, "We're going to see that this cracker suffers. Reverend Sharpton is on it." One protester, wielding a gun, entered the store in December, crying, "It's on now, all blacks out!" He set fire to the store and killed seven before shooting himself dead. Sharpton didn't apologize.

It can hardly be stated often enough that the reason Sharpton first came to prominence was for promoting a vicious lie. In 1987, Tawana Brawley, a black upstate New York teen who wished to conceal from her father the fact that she had run away from home, concocted a story about being raped for four days by six white men, smeared with feces that spelled out racial slurs, and left in a dumpster. At the time, hate-crime hoaxes were all but unknown, and New York was still reeling over a genuine hate-crime attack, of a black youth in Howard Beach, Queens. After a jury ruled that the Brawley case was a hoax, state supreme-court justice S. Barrett Hickman wrote, "It is probable that in the history of this state, never has a teenager turned the prosecutorial and judicial systems literally upside-down with such false claims." A local district attorney accused by Sharpton of being one of Brawley's attackers, Steven Pagones, lost his job. It took him ten years to carry out and win a defamation action against Brawley, Sharpton, and another civil-rights activist. Sharpton never apologized for any of this.

A few years ago, progressive reporter Wayne Barrett dug up a detail worthy of *Bonfire of the Vanities*. He found that Comcast had paid Sharpton's outfit, the National Action Network, some \$140,000 as it was preparing to buy NBC/Universal. By remarkable coincidence, Sharpton gave his blessing to the merger, which was being opposed by black leaders such as Jesse Jackson on diversity grounds. By a still-more amazing coincidence Sharpton was, after the merger, given his own hour-long talk show on MSNBC, though today he is merely a frequent guest on the news network. Stuart Stevens at *The Daily Beast* wrote, "Sharpton is hardly alone in having spent decades vomiting hate, leaving innocent victims in his wake. What distinguishes Sharpton is the willingness of powerful people and organizations to look past the hate when they believe it may benefit them."

Al Sharpton is a not a leading voice of anything except anti-Semitism. He seeks only to leverage racial resentment to advance the interests of Sharpton, to go "as far as his bullhorn audacity will carry him," in the words of the *New York Post* columnist Bob McManus, who took Sharpton out to dinner once but drew the line at paying for the \$350 glass of cognac Sharpton indicated he wanted. Making a career out of lies and hate has worked nicely for Sharpton, but only because the media and the Democratic party have served as his public-

relations team.