

# Here's who Democrats are praising when they praise Al Sharpton

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In the past few days, Democrats have lined up to praise the legacy of Al Sharpton.

Democratic presidential front-runner Joe Biden called him a "champion in the fight for civil rights." Sen. Elizabeth Warren declared he "has dedicated his life to the fight for justice for all." Sen. Kamala Harris said Sharpton "has spent his life fighting for what's right and working to improve our nation, even in the face of hate."

For those who were too young or who grew up outside of the New York area, Sharpton may be just a standard issue liberal activist or goofy television personality. But in reality, Sharpton is much more sinister than that: he is a vile Jew hater with blood on his hands.

Because the media and other politicians have spent decades rehabilitating his image and sanitizing his record, it becomes important, every so often, to remind everybody who he really is.

What follows below is something that I was compelled to write back in 2011, criticizing Newt Gingrich's embrace of Sharpton.

Sharpton first became a major public figure during the 1987 Tawana Brawley case, in which he claimed the black teenage girl had been abducted and raped by a white gang that included an assistant district attorney in Dutchess County, Steven Pagones. In numerous media appearances Sharpton pointed the finger at Pagones and declared a racist cover-up by law enforcement — with zero evidence to support his claims. In 1988, a grand jury cleared Pagones of any wrongdoing, finding that the alleged incident never even happened. But the damage was already done. Pagones's career as a prosecutor was over, he and his family were under constant death threats and his marriage eventually broke up under the resulting stresses. In 1998, Pagones won a defamation suit against Sharpton, but Sharpton refused to pay the \$65,000 in damages owed, claiming he didn't have the money. After nearly three years of foot dragging, Sharpton supporters paid the debt on his behalf, but he has never apologized to Pagones.

In July 1991, a controversy erupted when Leonard Jeffries, a professor at New York's City College gave a speech blasting "rich Jews" for financing the slave trade and for controlling Hollywood so they could "put together a system of destruction for black people."

Sharpton rushed to defend Jeffries, and in the middle of the swirling controversy, declared, "If the Jews want to get it on, tell them to pin their yarmulkes back and come over to my house."

A day after Sharpton made that comment, in August 1991, a Jewish driver accidentally ran over a 7-year-old black boy named Gavin Cato in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and an anti-Semitic riot broke out in which Jewish rabbinical scholar Yankel Rosenbaum was stabbed to death. Instead of calling for calm, Sharpton incited the rioters, leading marches in the streets that included chants of "No Justice, No Peace!" and "Kill the Jews!" At a funeral for the boy who had been run over, Sharpton said, "The world will tell us he was killed by accident. Yes, it was a social accident. ... It's an accident to allow an apartheid ambulance service in the middle of Crown Heights. ... Talk about how Oppenheimer in South Africa sends diamonds straight to Tel Aviv and deals with the diamond merchants right here in Crown Heights." For those unfamiliar, "diamond merchants" was a thinly-veiled reference to Jewish jewelers.

After an investigation, no indictment was made of the driver who had accidentally run over Cato, and he left for Israel. Sharpton flew there in an attempt to "hunt down" the driver and hand him a civil law suit. According to the Daily News, at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport, a woman spotted Sharpton and shouted, "Go to hell!" Sharpton yelled back: "I am in hell already. I am in Israel."

About four years after the Crown Heights affair, in 1995, Al Sharpton through his National Action Network, injected himself in a landlord-tenant dispute in Harlem, which soon turned deadly. As recounted in Fred Siegel's book *Prince of the City*, a black Pentecostal church raised the rent of its Jewish tenant, who owned the store Freddy's Fashion Mart, so the Jewish owner in turn raised the rent on his black sub-tenant, who ran a record store.

Sharpton immediately saw an opening for racial demagoguery, and went on radio, declaring, "We will not stand by and allow them to move this brother so that some white interloper can expand his business on 125th Street." His underling, Morris Powell, vowed, "This street will burn. We are going to see to it that this cracker suffers."

Protesters led by Sharpton's National Action Network picketed outside the store day after day, referring to Jews as "bloodsuckers" and threatening, "We're going to burn and loot the Jews." The demonstrators also struck matches and threw them into the store's doorway. Two months into the protest, one of the demonstrators stormed into the store armed with a gun, and burned the place to the ground, killing seven people, and shooting himself.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted, "I've known @TheRevAl for decades and Trump's characterization is not only disrespectful, it's untrue. While @TheRevAl was pushing for justice in the teachings of Dr. King, Trump was calling for the execution of five innocent black boys."

The Central Park jogger case that de Blasio was referring to took place in 1989, so the "decades" long period that he's referring to included Crown Heights and Freddy's Fashion Mart.

Just last week, de Blasio tweeted, "Anti-semitism is a cancer and we can't let it invade our cities, states or country anymore than it already has. We cannot protect our fellow Jewish Americans unless we continue to denounce white supremacy."

This even though he has presided over an explosion of anti-Semitic attacks in New York City, where people who are identifiable as Jewish are routinely being attacked on the streets. Not only has he ignored the problem, he's now praising Sharpton's anti-Semitic legacy.

For more on the Democratic Party's embrace of Sharpton, read my colleague Seth Mandel's recent magazine piece.