

Why Al Sharpton Promotes Immigration Amnesty

CARL F. HOROWITZ

Once upon a time, during a period known as the Eighties and the Nineties, Al Sharpton — preacher, political activist, media personality — routinely answered to words such as “loud,” “flamboyant,” and “crazy.” Since then, the man known as Reverend Al has been going by words such as “pragmatic,” “sensible,” and “powerful.” On the surface, he’s evolved from his bad old days of leading street marches and inciting riots. But underneath, he remains a demagogue, always on call to distort the context of an issue or an incident in order to dramatize black racial grievance. On the issue of amnesty for illegal immigrants, that’s especially true.

Al Sharpton is a man who has perfected the art of extracting money and other things of value from guilt-ridden pillars of American society in the name of social justice. But in contrast to bygone years, he no longer has to kick down doors to get what he wants. Those doors are now wide open. And the people now holding them open typically once avoided him as radioactive.¹ The turning point for his public image enhancement was his audacious campaign for U.S. president a decade and a half ago. Since then, Sharpton, who has taken to calling himself a “refined agitator,” has morphed into a respected gray eminence of the American Left. Of course, he didn’t win the 2004 Democratic Party nomination, much less the general election. But that wasn’t the point in running. The point was to gain widespread credibility for his brand of “civil rights” advocacy. And on that level, his gambit has been an unqualified success.

Reverend Sharpton remains adept at rousing black audiences into a state of mass protest over fatal incidents which in his own imagination (and that of his audience)

qualify as police murders of innocent black suspects. In recent years, he has demonstrated this skill in Baltimore, Tulsa, North Charleston (South Carolina), Ferguson (Missouri), and elsewhere. Yet he also realizes that to gain and maintain power, he must work with the powerful. His early endorsement of candidate Barack Obama was a shrewd stroke of strategizing, paving the way for easy access to President Barack Obama. During Obama’s eight years in office, Sharpton attended dozens of White House meetings with Obama and/or top aides; served as the administration’s unofficial liaison to the black community; opened a Washington office of his New York City-based nonprofit National Action Network (NAN); and initiated annual two-day NAN legislation and policy conferences on Capitol Hill featuring a parade of civil rights activists and members of Congress. Al Sharpton has become a power broker of the top rank.

Reverend Sharpton’s political views, far from being out of the mainstream, are almost indistinguishable from those of the AFL-CIO, the NAACP, Google, or the Democratic Party. Whether this is because Sharpton has moved rightward (very unlikely) or because these organizations have moved even further leftward from where they already had been (very likely) is a separate issue. What matters is that because he has evolved into a “pragmatic” problem solver, his natural allies in the upper reaches of American life no longer have to cringe at the thought of associating with him. Many, in fact, gladly subsidize National Action Network. Sharpton travels easily between the street and the suite, rendering himself a leader to fellow blacks *and* to political, business, labor, philanthropic, and religious leaders of all races.

The coming of the Trump era, far from throwing cold water on Sharpton’s resolve to be a force in the nation’s capital, strengthened it. In fact, he made sure to get an early start. On January 14, 2017, during a NAN-sponsored Washington rally timed for Martin Luther King Day and the Trump inauguration, the Reverend Al declared that the time for resistance had begun. “We come not to appeal to Donald Trump because he’s made

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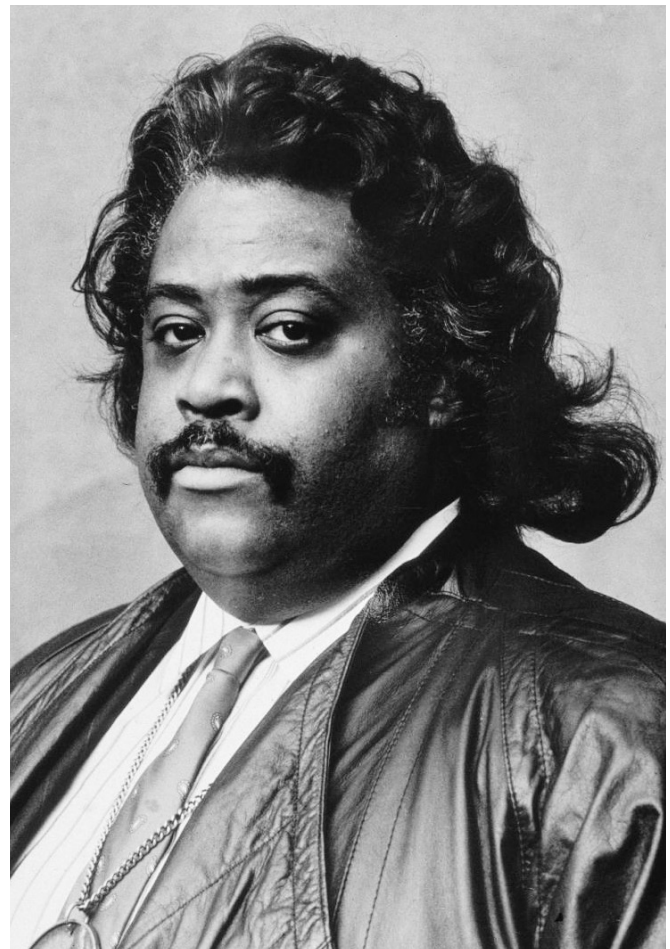
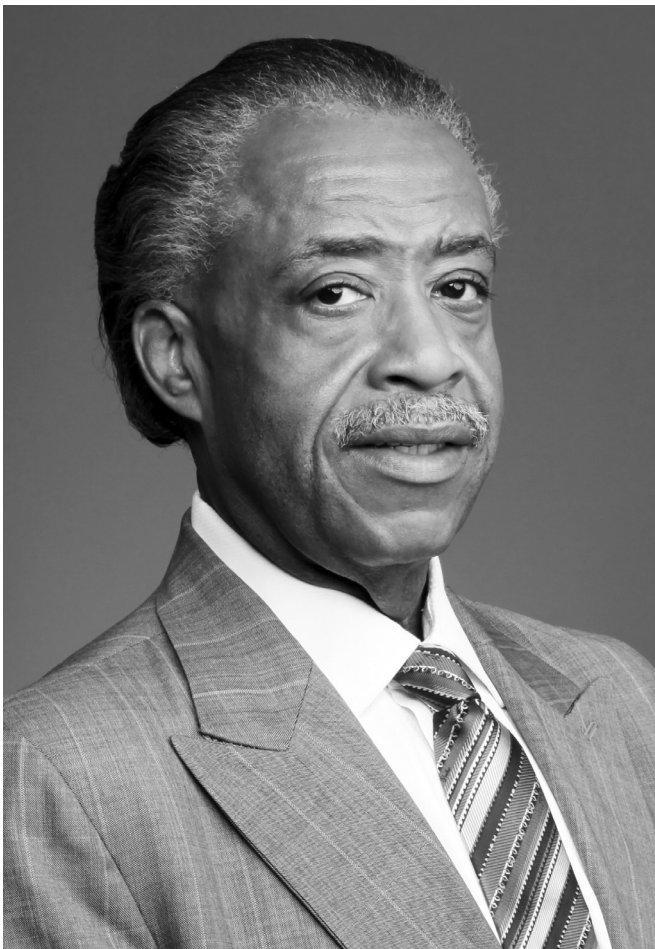
it clear what his policies are and what his nominations are,” he exhorted. “We come to say to Democrats in the Senate and in the House and to the moderate Republicans: ‘Get some backbone. Get some guts. We didn’t send you down here to be weak-kneed.’”²

One of the uppermost issues in Sharpton’s mind is immigration. That has a lot do with race. For decades, most immigrants to the United States have consisted of Hispanics, Asians, blacks, and other nonwhites, an amalgam known in Leftspeak as “people of color.” Blacks don’t account for a large portion of this, but they are definitely an increasing factor. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau data, there were about 3.8 million foreign-born blacks, many of them naturalized citizens, living in America in 2013, a figure up from 816,000 in 1980. The 2013 figure represented 8.7 percent of the total U.S. immigrant population, an increase from 3.1 percent in 1980.³ Sharpton applauds such trends as a blow for “diversity.” That’s why he views virtually any attempt to restrict immigration as a subterfuge for racism. In a February 7, 2018, tweet from the address @TheRevAl, he appealed to supporters to flood the congressional switchboard with calls

to block deportations of people living here illegally. The message, which highlighted his “National Day of Action for a Dream Act Now,” read: “NAN & I stand w/the immigrant community today & everyday. Immigrant rights = Civil Rights, Call Congress today! #clean-dreamactnow #ExtendTPS.”⁴

Triggering this burst of indignation, more than anything else, was the decision in September 2017 by President Donald Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions to terminate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama-era initiative that granted executive amnesty to hundreds of thousands of foreign-born individuals (“Dreamers”) who had entered the U.S. illegally as minors and subsequently lived here continuously since June 15, 2007. Under the program, as long as an approved beneficiary holds a job, attends college, or serves in the military, that person can remain in the U.S. indefinitely. DACA owes its existence to the misguided assumption that coming to America is a moral and a civil right, and that residing here without authorization should not be a basis for deportation.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals grew out of proposed legislation in the works since 2001 known



Al Sharpton over the years ... a slimmer Sharpton recently as MSNBC commentator and, circa 1987, as a spokesman for 15-year-old Tawana Brawley, who falsely accused a white police officer and former prosecutor of rape.

as the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act. Led by Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Dick Durbin, D-Ill., the measure passed the House in 2010 but died that December in the face of a Senate filibuster. A year and a half later, a frustrated President Obama, concluding that circumventing congressional authority was necessary to break the impasse, announced the creation of DACA on June 15, 2012. This executive fiat of highly dubious constitutionality⁵ would be funded almost entirely by a \$495 per person application fee. That August, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (part of the Department of Homeland Security) began accepting applications. About 800,000 persons eventually were approved for benefits, though by the fall of 2017 attrition had reduced that number to about 690,000. President Obama, apparently of the belief that anything worth doing is worth overdoing, sought in 2014 to dramatically expand the program, an intent thwarted by the courts. DACA is less justifiable than ever when judged by its initial motive of helping children. Though most of its mainly Mexican and Central American beneficiaries had entered the U.S. at age 10 or younger, the average age of DACA participants as of last year was 24. The age range breakdown was as follows: ages 16 and under (less than 0.5 percent); ages 16-20 (29 percent); ages 21-25 (37 percent); ages 26-30 (24 percent); and ages 31 to 36 (11 percent).⁶

President Trump thankfully is not possessed of his predecessor's illusions, something that was well in evidence before his election. In an August 31, 2016, campaign speech in Phoenix, he noted, "It's our right, as a sovereign nation, to choose immigrants that we think are the likeliest to thrive and flourish and love us... We will be fair, just, and compassionate to all, but our greatest compassion must be for our American citizens." He added: "Anyone who has entered the United States illegally is subject to deportation. That is what it means to have laws and to have a country. Otherwise we don't have a country."⁷ This was a wholly sensible expression of the patriotic imperative to defend one's people. Predictably, he has been rewarded for his insight with such epithets as "racist," "supremacist," and "bully."

Once in office, Trump made good on his word. On September 5, 2017, he announced a plan to phase out DACA over six months, during which time Congress would retain the authority to pass permanent DREAM Act legislation to ease the way to citizenship for existing beneficiaries. Trump noted that he had advised the Department of Homeland Security that "DACA recipients are not enforcement priorities unless they are criminals, are involved in a criminal gang, or are members of a gang."⁸ It was a generous compromise, arguably too much so. Yet the gesture went over poorly with amnesty-boasting interest groups. The ACLU, the Anti-Defama-

tion League, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce each denounced the proposal, as did religious organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the United Methodist Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Janet Murguia, president of the Hispanic pressure group UnidosUS (until recently, known as National Council of La Raza), fumed that the Trump plan was "unspeakably cruel and gratuitous" and an appeal to "anti-immigrant extremists."⁹ For such groups, "compromise" was not a word found in any dictionary.

Al Sharpton has not been missing in action on this front. Indeed, he long has viewed any attempt to draw distinctions between legality and illegality of one's presence here as immoral. In his 2002 autobiographical campaign tract, *Al on America*, published only months before he declared his candidacy for president, Sharpton wrote, barely coherently, with respect to immigrants from Mexico:¹⁰

Clearly, Mexicans are treated in a discriminatory manner by this country. We close the borders but allow a few to come here illegally, and turn our heads as long as they agree to be slaves or the closest thing to a slave that you can be. But don't let them come here with any self-respect or ambition. If they agree to wash the dishes in our restaurants or clean our homes or watch our children for the lowest wages imaginable, off the books, then welcome to America.

"We close the borders" — what planet was this man living on?

Sharpton has not gained any wisdom in the years since. Opposition to illegal immigration from south of our border, he believes, is little more than camouflaged racism. On June 19, 2018, Reverend Al, standing outside the U.S. Capitol Building with several other civil rights leaders and Rep. Darren Soto, D-Fla., issued a broadside against the practice of protective detention of children of illegal immigrants by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). "I do not believe that President Trump would implement this (zero tolerance policy toward illegal border crossings) at the Canadian border," he said. "There is the inference here that because these are children of color that there's a different policy for them."¹¹ Sharpton seemed oblivious to the fact that illegal crossings into the U.S. from Canada, though on the rise, are minuscule compared to those from Mexico¹² and that far more people who cross over from Mexico represent a security risk than those who cross over from Canada.

Al Sharpton brings this attitude to the Trump administration's DACA termination order, since then effectively nullified by a series of egregious federal court rulings.¹³ Reverend Al had denounced the order

when it was issued. “The Trump administration and Attorney General Sessions’ decision today to ‘rescind’ DACA,” he declared, “is but another example of an anti-equal opportunity, anti-civil rights agenda that has no basis in fact. There is evidence that 91 percent of Dreamers are employed and contribute to the American economy.”¹⁴ This was a gross distortion of context. Even if, hypothetically, 100 percent of all adult “Dreamers” were employed full-time, that would not alter the fact that Americans are perfectly capable of taking “immigrant” entry-level jobs and making valuable contributions to our economy — and with far less usage of public welfare.¹⁵

Sharpton views the phaseout of DACA as particularly harmful to blacks. In an interview with Black-AmericaWeb.com in September 2017, he stated: “This is somehow just for Mexicans. But there are many from the Caribbean and Africa who are affected by this. Let’s not act like this does not affect us.”¹⁶ For him, President Trump is the bogeyman. “Donald Trump has so far done everything against people of color,” said Sharpton. “He pardoned a man who was convicted for racial profiling in the middle of Hurricane Harvey.”¹⁷

Al Sharpton is not the only black activist eager to defend the continuation of DACA. Opal Tometi, executive director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration and co-founder of the social network of demagogues known as Black Lives Matter, issued a denunciation. “By canceling the (DACA) program,” she snarled, “President Trump is yet again pandering to white supremacists over immigrant, black, and poor communities, as well as millions of organizations, businesses, and allies that support DACA recipients.”¹⁸ The alliance and New York University School of Law jointly estimate that there are 565,000 “undocumented” black immigrants living in the U.S., a figure that presumably should be immune to any reduction save via amnesty. Rep. Cedric Richmond, D-La., current chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, aimed his own poisoned arrow at the Trump administration. “Once again,” he bellowed, “President Trump has shown his ignorance of what makes America great in the first place and the very people who contribute to that greatness. His morally bankrupt policy will tear young people, folks who were brought to this country as children through no fault of their own, away from their families and the only home they’ve ever known.”¹⁹ The congressman seems to be forgetting that it was the decision by the children’s parents to come here illegally and exploit our system of public benefits, using their kids as human shields from deportation, that triggered this crisis. Or perhaps Americans don’t really contribute all that much to America.

Not surprisingly, Sharpton’s friend, Barack Obama, has taken the opportunity to scold his succes-

or’s DACA cancellation. “To target these young people is wrong — because they have done nothing wrong,” said Obama of Trump last September. “Ultimately, this is about basic decency. This is about whether we are a people who kick hopeful young strivers out of America, or whether we treat them the way we’d want our own kids to be treated. It’s about who we are as a people — and who we want to be.”²⁰ The former president missed a few realities. First, not to belabor the point, but a clear majority of these “kids” are now adults. Second, again not to seem repetitive, the parents’ illegal arrival here created this problem. And third, America’s “own kids” and immigrant “young strivers” are not of the same priority. The rights and interests of Americans come first. This is the essence of sovereignty, a concept with which Barack Obama seems at best intermittently familiar.

Reverend Al Sharpton and his partners in immigration amnesty are thoroughly reprehensible. Yet they also are a symptom of a widespread contempt in our society toward America’s right to retain its historical identity. To the extent we do have an identity, immigration enthusiasts insist, it is either not worth retaining or is a minor aside. The first type — the ethno-racial radical — sees mass immigration as the fulfillment of an egalitarian mission supposedly envisioned by our Founders. The second type — the economic opportunist — sees a profitable business deal. It makes perfect sense that Sharpton’s National Action Network, which now takes in about \$5 million to \$7 million in revenues annually, is heavily funded by corporations and unions. Corporate and union leaders, though out of opposite interests, support virtually unrestricted immigration to this country. Corporations see lower labor costs; unions see more organizing capacity.²¹ Indeed, on the issue of immigration, a NAN press release is almost indistinguishable from one issued by Airbnb, Comcast, Facebook, Verizon, the American Federation of Teachers, or the Service Employees International Union, all of which, one might add, have enriched NAN’s coffers in the name of a “diversity” that has nothing to do with a diversity of opinion and everything to do with a diversity of demography of identical opinion.

The debate over DACA and other amnesty programs transcends partisan politics. The ulterior goal of mass immigration enthusiasts is the reconfiguration of our nation as a permanent global sanctuary — in other words, not a nation at all. Al Sharpton fits in well here. He remains a black grievance politician. Yet he also is a leader of a coalition of ideologues, ethnic capos, misguided humanitarians, and economic opportunists who view American identity, sovereignty, and rule of law as expendable. Yes, Reverend Al has “mellowed.” But that doesn’t make him any less dangerous than during his wilder days. ■

Endnotes

1. The transformation of Al Sharpton in the public mind from rabble rouser to distinguished civil rights leader is a triumph of public relations, not of wisdom on the part of Sharpton. See Carl F. Horowitz, *Sharpton: A Demagogue's Rise*, Falls Church, Va.: National Legal and Policy Center, 2nd ed., 2018, especially pp. 309-57.
2. "Sharpton Washington March Offers Preview of Political Intimidation," Falls Church, Va.: National Legal and Policy Center, January 18, 2017.
3. Monica Anderson, *A Rising Share of the U.S. Black Population Is Foreign Born*, Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, April 9, 2015.
- 4 <https://twitter.com/TheRevAlstatus/961306132982784001>.
5. Hans von Spakovsky, "DACA Is Unconstitutional, as Obama Admitted," The Heritage Foundation, Commentary, September 8, 2017; Hans von Spakovsky and David Inserra, "Thank Trump if He Finally Ends the Unconstitutional DACA Program," *The Hill*, September 1, 2017.
6. Gustavo Lopez and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *Key Facts About Unauthorized Immigrants Enrolled in DACA*, Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, September 25, 2017. Numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
7. A complete transcript of Trump's speech can be found in "Transcript: Donald Trump's Full Immigration Speech, Annotated," www.latimes.com, August 31, 2016.
8. Statement from President Donald J. Trump, Immigration, September 5, 2017.
9. "Trump's Decision to End DACA Is Morally Bankrupt," Press Statement, Washington, D.C.: UnidosUS, September 5, 2017.
10. Reverend Al Sharpton with Karen Hunter, *Al on America*, New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2002, p. 72.
11. Quoted in Laura Barron-Lopez, "Al Sharpton: Trump Wouldn't Implement Zero Tolerance Immigration Policy at Canadian Border," www.washingtonexaminer.com, June 19, 2018.
12. In 2017, U.S. Border Patrol agents along the northern border apprehended 3,027 persons who had entered our country illegally. This contrasts with the more than 300,000 illegal entrants apprehended along our southern border. "Illegal U.S. Northern Border Crossings Up 142 Percent from Last Year," CBS News, August 6, 2018.
13. For summaries of these rulings, see Josh Gerstein, "Third Judge Rules against Trump Move to End DACA," *Politico*, April 24, 2018; Vanessa Romo, "Judge Orders Trump Administration to Fully Restore DACA," www.npr.org, August 3 2018; Andrew R. Arthur, "D.C. District Judge Orders DACA Restoration," Center for Immigration Studies, August 15, 2018.
14. Quoted in Barrington M. Salmon, "Black Immigrant Communities Reeling from DACA Reversal," NBC News, September 6, 2017.
15. On the issue of welfare usage, see Steven A. Camarota, "Welfare Use by Immigrant and Native Households: An Analysis of Medicaid, Cash, Food, and Housing Programs," Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, September 10, 2015; Jason Richwine, "The Cost of Welfare Use by Immigrant and Native Households," Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, May 9, 2016.
16. "Reverend Al Sharpton: How Does DACA Affect Black People?" www.blackamericaweb.com, September 6, 2017.
17. *Ibid.* Sharpton was referring to the former sheriff of Maricopa County, Arizona, Joe Arpaio, who had instituted a controversial policy of requiring criminal suspects to furnish evidence of being a U.S. citizen or a lawful resident/visitor. Despite howls across the country that this constituted "racial profiling," this policy was a sensible approach to promoting public safety, one moreover in full accordance with federal law. Indeed, the Section 287(g) program, enacted by Congress in 1996 as part of a larger immigration reform bill, encourages state and local law enforcement to work with federal law enforcement to report illegal alien crime. Notwithstanding, a federal judge in December 2011 ruled in a class action suit that Sheriff Arpaio had to stop detaining persons not suspected of committing a state or federal crime, regardless of their immigration status. Since being in the U.S. is a civil rather than a criminal violation, the court reasoned, the County lacked the authority to detain suspects here illegally. Arpaio defied the order, triggering a long battle that culminated in his July 2017 conviction for contempt of court. Knowing that pardoning Arpaio, by now in his mid-80s, would trigger cries of "racism," President Trump chose to announce a pardon when it was likely to be superseded by a more newsworthy event, in this case the arrival of Hurricane Harvey along the Gulf Coast. Al Sharpton seems apoplectic over Trump's timing, but truth to tell, the president was guilty of nothing more than playing smart political defense. For good discussions of the historical context leading up to the pardon, see Jessica M. Vaughn and James R. Edwards, Jr., "Feds Target Arpaio, Jeopardize Us," Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration

Studies, October 29, 2009; Andrew R. Arthur, “When Metro Phoenix Was Out of Control: Immigration Enforcement in Maricopa County and Arizona,” Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, August 29, 2017.

18. Quoted in Salmon, “Black Immigrant Communities Reeling from DACA Reversal.”

19. *Ibid.*

20. Quoted in Jessica Estepa, “Obama on Trump’s DACA Decision: ‘To Target These Young People Is

Wrong,’” www.usatoday.com, September 5, 2017.

21. See Carl F. Horowitz, *Why Unions Promote Mass Immigration: Behind Organized Labor’s Interest-Group Alliances*, Special Report, Falls Church, Virginia: National Legal and Policy Center, 2006. The monograph showed how leaders of the three main sources of mass immigration advocacy — corporations, unions, and nonwhite ethnic pressure groups — often form alliances with each other to protect their interests. The elements of this coalition differ by function, but they share a common goal.

Carl Horowitz’s Definitive Political Biography of Al Sharpton

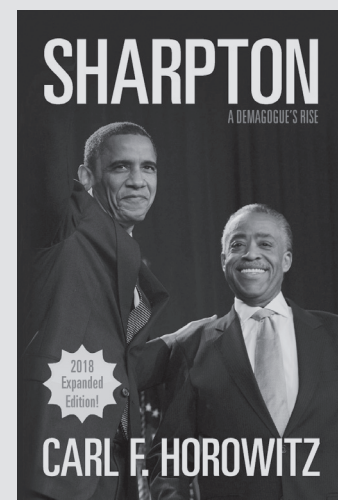
Newly revised 2018 edition

First published in 2015 and updated this year (2018), *Sharpton: A Demagogue’s Rise* is the definitive political biography of America’s most successful race hustler. Getting his start at age four as the “wonder boy preacher,” Sharpton became part of Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell’s entourage by age eleven. At thirteen he was working for Martin Luther King’s Operation Breadbasket and meeting with Jesse Jackson. In early adulthood he served as manager and sidekick to the “Godfather of Soul” James Brown while still managing to build up his personal organization, the National Youth Movement. By the 1980s he was fomenting riots.

All it takes to get him to swing into action [writes Horowitz] is a report of a white-on-black crime (which he assumes happened) or a black-on-white crime (which he assumes did not happen) that can serve as a pretext to intimidate whites. The facts of a given case don’t matter — or at any rate, don’t matter nearly as much as the possibility of affirming an overarching narrative of black suffering (at the hands of whites). All of Sharpton’s “projects” these past three-plus decades have followed this pattern.

He has made himself part of nearly every racial crime story in America since the mid-1980s, whether attempting to railroad innocent non-blacks — Bernie Goetz, George Zimmerman, Officer Darren Wilson — or defending indefensible blacks — Tawana Brawley, the Jena Six, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown. His accusations usually collapse as the facts of each case become known, but by that time he is already off on his next crusade, his air of invincibility intact.

His National Action Network (motto: *No Justice, No Peace*) takes in between \$5 and \$7 million annually, much of it coughed up by corporate “sponsors” hoping to avoid charges of discrimination. A Presidential candidate in 2003-4, he made it to the White House as a frequent advisor to Barack Obama on racial issues. Since 2011, he has hosted his own national television show. He is one of the most powerful men in America, and he has accomplished it all by a combination of character assassination, intimidation, mob justice, and contempt for the rule of law. Horowitz details every step in his career, leaving no scandal unturned, and capturing the essence of this demagogue-turned media celebrity. A must-read for any concerned political observer. ■



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