

OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

A MAN OF TOO MANY PARTS

Al Sharpton says he has rediscovered the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.—and with a powerful performance in New York's U.S. Senate primary, he seemed to sure of his new direction. But will he stick to the high road?

BY JIM SLEEPER

LATE in the afternoon of January 12, 1991, the Reverend Alfred C. Sharpton, Jr., thirty-six years old, awoke in a recovery room at Coney Island Hospital. Earlier that day, he had been stabbed in the chest. As he opened his eyes, he saw hovering over him Mayor David Dinkins, Deputy Mayors Bill Lynch and Milton Mollen, and Police Commissioner Lee Brown, all in surgical masks.

"What—did I die and go to Hell?" Sharpton asked.

Dinkins reassured him. A kitchen knife with a five-inch blade, wielded by a distraught white man, had narrowly missed his heart and vital arteries; doctors had drained blood from his chest cavity and declared his condition stable. Sharpton remembers turning to Lynch, a veteran activist in Brooklyn's black community, and, "without knowing why," hearing himself say, "Tell Jesse to call me."

That spontaneous request, Sharpton now says, was a moment of clarity in a search for "new directions." He adds, "That's when I realized what house I came out of—Martin Luther King's house, Jesse Jackson's house."

Early that afternoon, Sharpton had gone to Bensonhurst, a predominantly Italian-American neighborhood in Brooklyn, to Public School 205. More than two hundred and fifty police officers ringed the school playground, where some two hundred of Sharpton's followers had assembled for the latest in a series of marches to protest a white mob's killing of a black sixteen-year-old, Yusuf Hawkins, who, on August 23, 1989, had come into the neighborhood with three friends to look at a used car advertised in a newspaper. Sharpton had calculated the marches to provoke ugliness from whites, and some had rewarded him by screaming obscenities and brandishing watermelons. Less than a month after the killing, the marches

had helped topple Mayor Edward Koch, as voters in the Democratic primary chose Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, who had offered himself as a healer of racial antagonisms. The marches had sustained an atmosphere of crisis, and by May of 1990, just before one of the defendants, Joseph Fama, was convicted of second-degree murder, Sharpton was warning that if the verdicts were "less than murder" they would be "lighting a match to the end of a powder keg and telling us to burn the town down." He said he was "not calling for mindless violence," but he added, "Don't blame me. As a social weatherman, I'm telling you that the clouds of violence are over New York City." In June, however, after meeting with Bensonhurst community leaders, he suspended his marches. On January 11th, two other defendants, who had been charged with murder but convicted only of riot and weapon-possession charges, were given light sentences. So Sharpton was back at P.S. 205.

"I am very sticky at marches," Sharpton says. "I stay in the car and give instructions—'Set this up, set that up'—and then I'm the last one to get out of the car. We were in the 'frozen zone'—the cordoned-off playground—"but I saw that the front line was not where it was supposed to be. I jumped out and said to Carl"—his aide Carl Redding—"I told you I want them five abreast." Suddenly some guy ran up, with his face all contorted, and hit me. "This guy punched me!" I yelled, and Carl and some others tackled him. Then I saw the knife sticking out of my chest. "He stabbed me!" I yelled, and on a reflex I grabbed the knife and pulled it out."

When, on another reflex, Sharpton asked to have Jesse Jackson call him in the hospital, the two hadn't spoken for months. "We'd had a falling-out after

Yusuf's funeral and after I had criticized him for getting too close to the Democratic Party," Sharpton says. "Early the next morning, Jesse walked in. It really, really touched me."

After talking with Jackson, Sharpton issued a statement. (His wife, Kathy Jordan, read it to the press.) It urged his associates—including Alton Maddox, Jr., an attorney, and Yusuf Hawkins' father, Moses Stewart—who were planning to march again in Bensonhurst that day to do so peacefully. Sharpton spoke to reporters gathered at his bedside: "I do not seek martyrdom or pain. I don't want revenge, either. My revenge will be seeing a black kid and a white kid get the same kind of justice in court. Maybe people don't understand that about me. I don't want the system destroyed. I'm not for that. I want the system to work." (Fourteen months later, he went to court to seek leniency for his assailant, Michael Riccardi, calling him "a victim of racial tensions created by media hype.")

Dinkins telephoned the hospital daily to monitor Sharpton's recovery. Then Jackson and his wife invited Sharpton and his wife to join them on a five-day vacation in Las Vegas, and the two couples discussed Sharpton's prospects. "I told Alfred to speak above his pain, to take the high road and stay there," Jackson says.

A few months later, at Jackson's prompting, Sharpton met Cornel West, a professor of religion at Princeton University. West, only a year older than Sharpton, is prominent in academic circles as an interpreter of American philosophical pragmatism. To socialists, black activists, and other progressives, he is known as an exhortatory speaker for social justice and a builder of bridges among races and among black church people, secular militants, Afrocentrists, and integrationists.

The two of them—the professor, lean

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rend Al Sharpton, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, January 6, 1993.

and intense, and the street preacher, plump and brassy—began talking at breakfast, at Sylvia's restaurant, in Harlem, and kept going for seven hours, as Sharpton made his rounds all over town. "Cornel felt I was taking cheap shots," Sharpton recalls. "He said, 'Farrakhan comes out of Elijah Muhammad's house, Sonny Carson comes out of the black-nationalist house, and you come out of Martin Luther King's house. But you get in a circle with them and compromise in ways they wouldn't, because they respect their traditions. What has happened to Martin's house? You've let people burn it down. You need to uphold it by bringing people together.'"

West said recently, "I talked with Brother Sharpton about the black Christian role in the struggle, and about how you can't be naïve about racism, but you can't foreclose alliances with whites, either. You can't get off the tightrope. He was for real—open, very serious. He was concerned about not losing his organic links to the black community. We talked about how Malcolm X got stuck for a while but was willing to grow, and about the tests you have to meet to be a progressive populist across lines of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Both of us think James Brown—the singer—is one of the greats, one of those leaders with enough security to be humble. It's an open question if Al has that. He has the courage and the talent. Does he have the perseverance, the humility? Or will he fall back into opportunistic practices?"

Sharpton claims that his encounter with West "really changed" him. "It made me go back and read some things Cornel had sent me": a book of West's, "Prophetic Fragments," which includes essays about religious and social leadership; the journalist William Greider's "Who Will Tell the People," a populist manifesto about the corruption of the political process; and the theologian Paul Tillich's book "Love, Power and Justice." Sharpton says, "It hit me—you can really die for this stuff, and if you're gonna die, at least be well defined in what you were doing and what made it worthwhile."

IF Sharpton was not well defined in his own mind, he was clearly defined in the minds of most New Yorkers. Since early 1987, when he first led pro-

tests in the Queens neighborhood of Howard Beach—where a group of white youths had attacked three black men and chased one of them, Michael Griffith, to his death on a busy parkway—Sharpton had been all over the metropolitan area, with reporters close behind. Wherever blacks had been victims of racial violence—or said that they had been—Sharpton and two attorneys, Maddox and C. Vernon Mason, would investigate the charges and sometimes emerge as "advisers," counselling noncooperation with local police, prosecutors, and judges, controlling access by the press, and imputing racist cover-ups. Because the aggrieved refused to tell precisely what had happened to them, the criminal-justice system was paralyzed, and that lent credence to the cover-up idea, drawing more demonstrators to hear Sharpton and company denounce the authorities, often in lurid, vicious language.

Sharpton claimed to be building a new civil-rights movement with this strategy. But often he was manipulating the emblems of the civil-rights movement—its church rallies, marches, and magnificent demonstrations of civil disobedience—to advance his own ad-hoc conspiracy theories, vilify innocent whites, and intimidate blacks who disagreed with him. Even critics of the criminal-justice system came to see Sharpton as a practitioner of the big lie.

For Sharpton the publicity-hound and demagogue, however, the strategy was a big success. As he led his supporters in their chant—"No justice, no peace!"—and blew kisses to hecklers, he was part street radical, part pop star, and part moral witness. (He made a specialty of crashing others' demonstrations, with a quotable "spin" on the controversy at hand.) Five feet ten, nearly three hundred pounds, wearing a nylon jogging suit and a Martin Luther King, Jr., medallion, he would swagger into a crowd or courtroom, his large face set in a pout of outraged determination. Quickly, deftly, he would focus whatever tension he had created or happened upon, hurling racially charged analogies like thunderbolts.

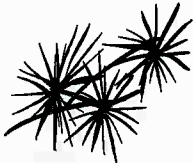
The "white press," for example, had printed the name of fifteen-year-old Tawana Brawley but protected the privacy of a white woman raped in Central Park—and never mind that Sharpton

and the lawyers had called press conferences to present Tawana Brawley's story of rape. To push his point, Sharpton brought her to the Central Park trial to shake hands with two of the defendants, who had been part of a group of black and Hispanic youths he called victims of a courtroom "lynching."

New York City has two million blacks, and polls taken during this period showed little support among them for Sharpton's style of leadership. But by dramatizing the indifference with which the courts often handled genuine racist violence against black victims, such as Hawkins and Griffith, Sharpton tapped into rage, and much of the city's black media was carried beyond the reach of rational debate—sometimes to the point of dismissing rational debate as a tool of smooth racists and their Toms. Sharpton himself never claimed that blacks' history of oppression in America exempted them from transracial legal standards of truth-telling. But his tactics, by equating dubious charges of racism with genuine cases of racial violence, strengthened notions about a separate black reality, unknowable to whites and subversive of the fragile bases for interracial dialogue.

All this was a lot of Al Sharpton for a few conversations with Jesse Jackson and Cornel West to redefine. Yet in September of 1992, less than two years after his epiphany in the hospital, Sharpton ran in the Democratic primary for the United States Senate, with a mere sixty thousand dollars, and carried sixty-seven per cent of the black vote and fourteen per cent of the total vote. He edged out one of his three white opponents, City Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman, and held a portion of power when the winner, State Attorney General Robert Abrams, went into the general election against Senator Alfonse D'Amato. Politicians and journalists proclaimed a "new" and more "statesmanlike" Sharpton; Governor Mario Cuomo called him the "classiest" candidate in the primary, "the real winner."

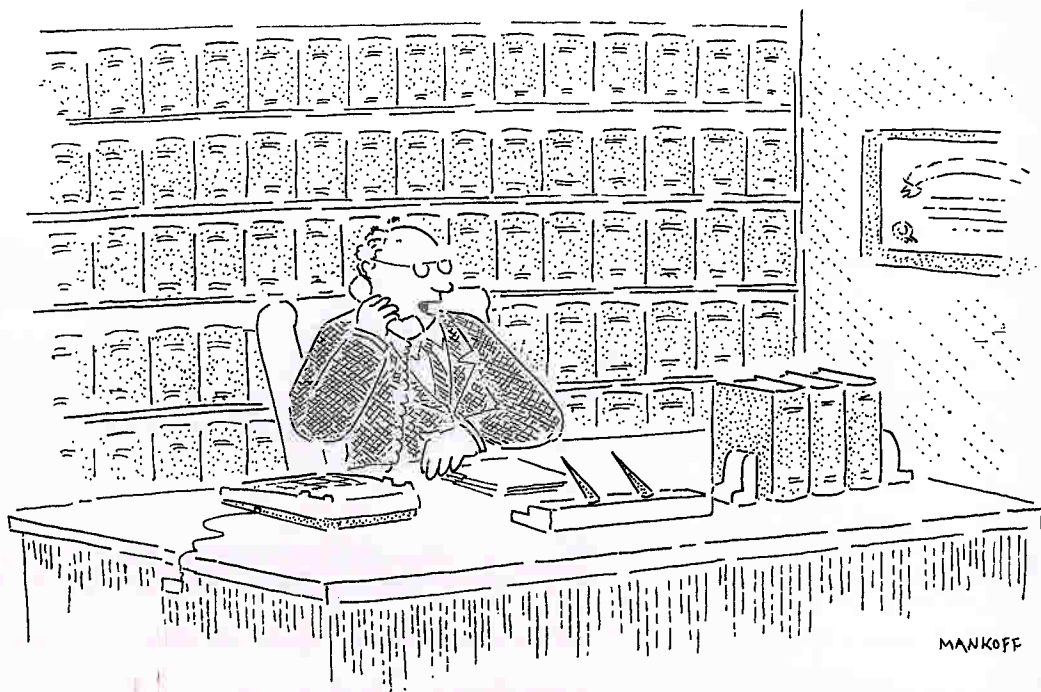
IN confessionals to newspaper editorial boards during his Senate campaign, Sharpton explained himself as a ghetto youth who had fought his way upward. His early childhood, though, was not particularly segregated or poor; and his growth was not so much a fight upward



as a series of precocious achievements and dreadful disillusionments under the influence of several remarkable mentors.

His father, Alfred C. Sharpton, Sr., from Wabasso, Florida, was the manager of a small silverware factory in Brooklyn when, in 1950, he married Ada Richards, a seamstress from Eufaula, Alabama. A year later, they had a daughter, Sheryl, and bought a two-family row house on Logan Street, in Brooklyn's East New York section, which was then racially mixed. Alfred, Jr., was born at Kings County Hospital on October 3, 1954. His father, remembered by neighbors as a sociable man uninterested in politics, soon owned a contracting company and fifteen rental properties in the borough, and in 1959 the family moved to a spacious, freestanding gray stucco house with two sun porches, at the corner of two broad, tree-lined streets in Hollis, Queens, a neighborhood that was opening up to middle-class blacks. Of East New York, Alfred, Jr., recalls eating linguine with the Italian-American family next door; of Hollis, "no racial hostility," and a Jewish teacher at P.S. 134 who talked with him about the emerging civil-rights movement.

The Sharptons still went to church in Brooklyn—to the Washington Temple Church of God in Christ, a Pentecostal congregation. The pastor was Bishop Frederick Douglass Washington, a national leader of the church and a Republican in the tradition of blacks who had never left the party of Lincoln. Young Alfred had been lining up his sister Sheryl's dolls and "preaching," wearing his mother's bathrobe for a vestment; at the age of four, he preached his first real sermon, to two thousand congregants at the Washington Temple. The Bishop, whose wife, Ernestine, was a gospel singer with record-industry connections, used to record some of his own sermons; in 1964, he produced a 45-r.p.m. record of one of Sharpton's. The record was sold to parishioners, distributed to other churches, and is occasionally still played on the gospel station WWRL. It preserves a nine-year-old's husky voice, tremulous with the Spirit and compel-



"Bad news, good news, sweetheart—the court rejected your appeal, but the networks are fighting to option it."

ling in reproach: "God said, 'Judge him not,' for He understands me, and I know He understands you. He understands us even if we don't understand ourselves."

When Sharpton was ten, Washington ordained him in the Pentecostal ministry. Washington later told the *News*, "I don't understand him, just as his family doesn't understand him. But we see a fantastic future for him." So did other prominent blacks, among them Percy Sutton, a lawyer and businessman who later became Manhattan borough president and the owner of cable-TV franchises and radio stations. "He could talk about things adults would talk about," Sutton recalls. According to Sharpton, Washington introduced him to Martin Luther King, Jr., and Governor Nelson Rockefeller during their visits to the church, took him to the island of Jamaica to meet the widow of the black nationalist Marcus Garvey, and arranged for him to preach at several of Mahalia Jackson's concerts, including one at the 1964 World's Fair.

Around that time, the boy heard Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., preach from his pulpit in Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church. "I thought I saw God," Sharpton says. Powell's

worldly panache did not escape him, either; by his account, he talked his way into the pastor's study and was occasionally taken along on Powell's rides around town. (A few years later, at fourteen, Sharpton headed a youth committee to defend Powell, who was denied his seat in the House for misappropriating government money and other misconduct, and in 1972 Sharpton celebrated the defeat of one of Powell's congressional tormentors, Emanuel Celler, of Brooklyn, by a young insurgent named Elizabeth Holtzman.)

Sharpton's father often took him to the Apollo Theatre to hear James Brown, who lived in Queens. "He was probably the first black entertainer who made us kids feel like he really cared about us," Sharpton recalls. "He'd come outside his house and talk with us." By the time Sharpton was ten, his firmament was the civil-rights movement. He says of his own fame as a boy preacher, "It felt like the most natural thing in the world—the thing I was born to do."

LATE in 1964, Sharpton's family was going through a series of emotional upheavals that he remembers as

"really traumatic." Finally, he says, "My father walked out, and that caused my mother to almost have a nervous breakdown." At child-support hearings, in 1965, Sharpton says, his father claimed he had no money because his business had failed, and then accused Ada of violating child-labor laws by making her son preach for a living—a charge that the boy strongly denied to the judge. "We lived in that house for six months without electricity or heat," Sharpton says, "and you resented him for taking everything away from you. My sister and I, because of all the violence, didn't want to see him again—it was almost a relief he was gone. I've never thought about reconciling. I think a lot of what motivates people on that depends on how the separation went down. When I was stabbed, he called me up for the first time in twenty-seven years. I didn't want to take the call, and we didn't say much."

A friend of Ada Sharpton's, Rosalie Wright, knew about the family's troubles, and found Ada and the children an apartment next to hers, in a five-story building on Lenox Road, in the East Flatbush section of Brooklyn. It was the kind of neighborhood that city planners delicately called "transitional." Its aging Jewish civil servants and shopkeepers were losing their liberalism to black crime and their homes to racist real-estate schemes. Two blocks north, you could look under the elevated tracks into the Brownsville ghetto. Rosalie Wright recalls that at the time Sharpton entered the local junior high school "they started busing in the Brownsville kids who were snatching these old Jews' pocketbooks," and that "one day, there was a race riot, and Alfred brought a white kid home to be safe—Ada called the boy's father to come care for him."

The family went on welfare; Ada found part-time work cleaning offices. Wright remembers that after Ada was mugged one night going to work, Alfred would walk her to the subway. "I always resented having to leave Hollis," Sharpton says. "But it also made me know there was another kind of life, so they couldn't tell me in Brooklyn that that was what you're supposed to live like, because I knew better."

He says he survived these times with Bishop Washington's help (at one point, Ada Sharpton tearfully declined the Bishop's offer to legally adopt the boy)

FOOLISHLY HALVED, I SEE YOU

The white-green wheel of a sliced lime
after a day: so naturally dry,

and so protective of all its remaining
juice. This is the quick thought so sly
of the classic survivor. But you have survived

the living! the only in doubt,
for now, the only in danger.

Now the foolish attempt to—wait—not think
about the cut fruit. No, don't cry,

not yet, over its unspilled half-green
milk. It dries hard overnight. I
am you. The dying hasn't died

yet. In fact, is perhaps not dying,
although (you do too love him) he is in danger.

—ELIZABETH MACKLIN

and by thinking about his idols Adam Clayton Powell and James Brown. At twelve, he gravitated to the Reverend William Augustus Jones, Jr., of Bedford-Stuyvesant's Bethany Baptist Church. A physically imposing man with a resonant voice, Jones is the son and grandson of prominent Kentucky ministers and was one of the first black students to graduate from the University of Kentucky; he earned a doctorate at the Colgate Rochester Divinity School and served as president of the National Black Pastors' Conference. When Sharpton met him, Jones was the New York leader of Operation Breadbasket. In the Christian belief that "the earth is the Lord's," Breadbasket demanded that corporations direct capital and jobs to their black customers. Jones introduced Sharpton to Breadbasket's national director, a twenty-seven-year-old minister named Jesse Jackson. In 1969, Sharpton became the New York youth chairman. A 1970 news photograph shows Jones and Sharpton, then a high-school sophomore, debating a vice-president of A. & P. during an "occupation" of its corporate headquarters, in Manhattan.

"Had I not been adopted by Bill Jones," Sharpton says, "I'd have been another kid floundering around in some 'holiness' storefront church." Instead, he

was learning the arts of community organizing and protest. His high school—Samuel J. Tilden, in Brooklyn—had been virtually all-white in 1960 and was now nearly fifty per cent black; in nearby Brownsville, an aggressive experiment in "community control" of the schools was prompting citywide strikes by the teachers' union. Tilden cracked with demonstrations. Sharpton was sometimes an instigator and sometimes the only black student whom teachers could count on to help forestall violence.

Elliot Salow, a teacher who often took Sharpton to a local diner to discuss politics, recalls, "Al was unusual in that he learned from those he opposed. He absorbed other people's positions. It accounts for his ability to respond so quickly in debate." Gertrude Cromwell, one of Tilden's few black teachers at the time, says, "What he is now is just a blown-up version of what he was then. He had the same swagger. He was all mouth, with that tooth chipped in front. You heard him before you saw him. He had a hearty laugh and a way of getting to people. He'd walk up and put his arms around the principal and say, 'Joseph Shapiro, how you doin' today?' He was provocative but not hostile."

Sharpton was fashioning a strategy for survival—"Say it loud, I'm black and

I'm proud" (as James Brown sang it) coupled with a need to reach whites. He was "a 'straight' in this age of super slicks," Marcia Ann Gillespie wrote in 1972, after interviewing him (at the suggestion of Jesse Jackson) for the black magazine *Essence*. The seventeen-year-old Sharpton told Gillespie, "I think it's very dangerous for us to replace white is right, with Black is right. It's time for us to start dealing with the basic fact that there are some Black people who are bad. . . . A cat who wants to know his heritage, where he came from and all that—that's good. But that's not the basis of liberation, because when you are really dealing with the principles of liberation, it's beyond race. . . . If I, for one minute, thought that Black people wanted to be free only to exploit somebody else, I would leave the struggle." Gillespie now remembers being "somewhat skeptical" of Sharpton. "But I loved his sense of urgency," she says. "He had an incredible, naïve intelligence, an intuitive sense about what people wanted and needed to hear."

IN 1971, when Sharpton was sixteen, he watched in horror as William Jones and Jesse Jackson were torn apart by a dispute over Jackson's handling of the annual Black Expo, an offshoot of Operation Breadbasket. Jackson left to found his own organization, People United to Save Humanity. "I wanted to go with Jesse to PUSH," Sharpton says, "but I didn't want to get Bill Jones mad."

Jones: "I really wanted him to go to a college, then to seminary, to become fully credentialled." Sharpton: "In Brooklyn then, everyone was an activist. You belonged to antiwar, S.D.S., Panthers—to something. After it all died, I was still running around looking for the march." Jones: "I see a young man with rare endowments who got pulled in many conflicting directions."

Late in 1971, a group of Harlem-based investors, including Clarence Jones, who had been publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, invited Sharpton to start his own youth organization, with their help. The National Youth Movement was incorporated (by the leader of Harlem's Carver Democratic Club, David Dinkins) for three thousand dollars, paid off through its first fund-raising dinner, honoring Representative Shirley Chisholm, of Brooklyn, the first

black woman elected to Congress. Percy Sutton commended Sharpton to Chisholm, who took him on as an unpaid aide and campaign orator.

The Tilden teacher Gertrude Cromwell recalls, "I always gave the seniors a graduation party, and the one in 1972 was the last time I saw Alfred, as an adolescent. When I saw him again, just a few months later, he was a man. It seemed as if he'd matured tremendously the minute he left school." He did attend Brooklyn College's School for Contemporary Learning for two years, but new opportunities were irresistible. Percy Sutton had become Manhattan borough president, and Sharpton's new mentors in the investment group began to make real money.

"They had me jumping on corporations like Macy's," Sharpton recalls, "and they got the contracts that resulted." Sutton denies that anyone in his circle got contracts through Sharpton. In any case, Sharpton was learning that, under the dispensation of white liberals, blackness was a card he could play for stakes that the Reverend William Jones did not approve of. He persuaded sports and concert promoters who profited from black audiences to give him contracts to publicize their events in black neighborhoods, and big batches of free tickets for ghetto youth. (In the early nineteen-eighties, the State Organized Crime Commission investigated allegations that he had passed the tickets to mob scalpers in return for kickbacks, but nothing was proved.)

In 1973, when Sharpton was nineteen, he went backstage at a James Brown concert in Newark and asked the Godfather of Soul to do two shows to benefit the National Youth Movement. Brown agreed, and Sharpton brought eight thousand youngsters to the shows. Soon afterward, he used bluster and guile to book Brown at Madison Square Garden, whose management was wary of the singer's boisterous crowds. "I trusted him more than the promoters I had to deal with," Brown says. "They want to take all your personal feeling and instinct away. Alfred had special resources in standing up to that." Brown had lost his nineteen-year-old son, Teddy, in an accident, and took Al as a surrogate son. "We'd talk all night on

the road about Moses and Job," Brown recalls. "I told him, 'Act like a man possessed.'"

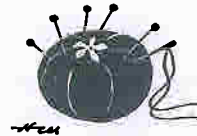
Sharpton met his future wife Kathy Jordan while she was a singer travelling with Brown. (Later, Brown and his wife, Adrienne, became godparents to the Sharptons' two daughters.) He copied Brown's hair style, and has vowed to keep it for as long as Brown lives. In

1981, Brown and Sharpton cut a record together, "God Has Smiled on Me," and Sharpton calls that "the highest tribute James could pay me." Backed by a rocking female choir, the quicksilver Brown and a bellowing Sharpton sound like men possessed, in a gospel rap with the chorus "God has smiled on me / He has set me free; / God has smiled on me / He's been good to me."

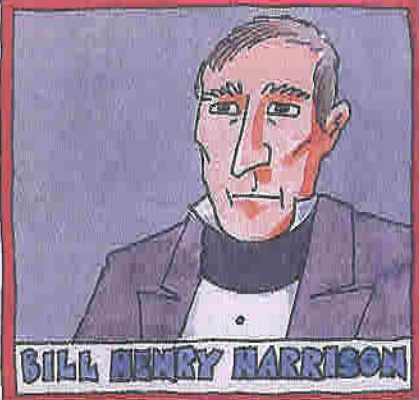
Whatever God was up to, Sharpton spent most of the late seventies and early eighties as a hustler. William Jones and Jesse Jackson no longer had much influence on him, but he adapted Breadbasket's methods to demand promotional contracts on behalf of his National Youth Movement, as a "two-percenter"—an artist's representative. A number of businessmen with ties to organized crime were involved in the black-music industry. Sharpton made a promotional deal with Danny Pagano, a reputed lieutenant in the Genovese crime family, and moved the National Youth Movement's headquarters to an office provided free by Spring Records, a company friendly to Pagano.

In 1974, James Brown introduced Sharpton to the boxing promoter Don King. Soon Sharpton was urging black fighters to leave white promoters for King. In 1983, an F.B.I. sting operation against mobsters in the boxing industry caught Sharpton on videotape promising to help arrange a boxing promotion with King that was meant to launder drug-sale profits. Sharpton had done nothing incriminating at the meeting, but when he was confronted by agents he quickly agreed to become an F.B.I. informer, and made secret recordings of King and of the former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes.

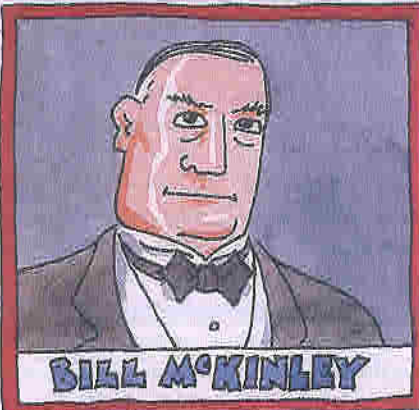
In 1984, he talked his way into a lucrative contract to do promotion in minority communities for the fifty-city Victory Tour by Michael Jackson and



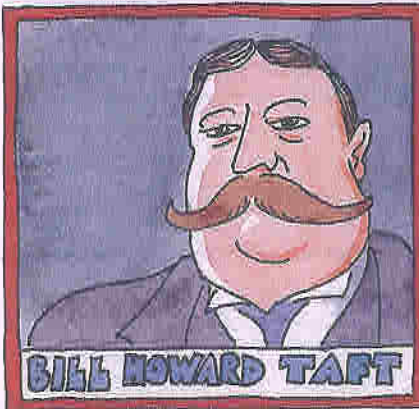
BILLS OUTSTANDING



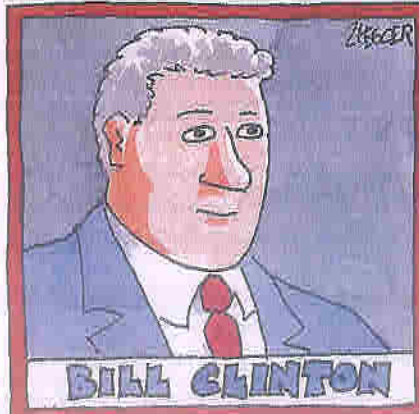
BILL HENRY HARRISON



BILL MCKINLEY



BILL HOWARD TAFT



BILL CLINTON

his brothers, and lavished the tour's funds on posters, radio ads, free tickets, and his own luxury accommodations in hotels, where he held forth to reporters on the music industry's exploitation of black artists and audiences.

Sharpton seems to have betrayed most of his associates during this period, leaving them nonplussed. "He was a guy from the street who knew how to play both sides against the middle, not a venal person you could grow to hate," an F.B.I. investigator says. "The F.B.I. 'flipped' him without having anything on him, but soon he was conning the Bureau. All they got from him was a tax case against King that unravelled in court. King doesn't trust him, but he still uses him—and vice versa." A journalist who exposed Sharpton's mob ties declares, "He's a stone con man. There's nothing else there." The F.B.I. man says, "Al never even got himself a lawyer when he was confronted after the sting. I think he got caught up in being on the team."

The Reverend William Jones: "I feel very sorry for Alfred. If I was angry with anyone, it was with those who massaged his young ego and caused him to believe that he was ready to step out and head some ill-defined national youth organization. You look at Alfred now in his separate parts, and there are too many. But if he's a con man, he has nothing to show for his conning. I have never sensed anything in Al Sharpton—and I'm very serious about this—that smacks of greed." Sharpton: "In many ways, society is totally a hustle from top to bottom. But there are those that aspire to rise above it, which is why I call that period in my life a weakness. My negatives are important, because I embody the scars and contradictions of my generation. Unlike King"—Martin Luther King—"I come from a major metropolis, with all the temptations, from the Broadway lights to the mob. Malcolm X and Powell came from the same type of environment, but at some point Adam gave up. Because of the double standards they ran on him, he became cynical. You can't let the bitterness become a poison to your system." Jesse Jackson: "With Alfred's gift of tongues, he could talk himself into and out of stuff too easily."

BY 1985, when he was thirty-one, Sharpton was turning his energies to protests against drug-related crime

and racial violence around the city. When he showed up in the streets and on TV in the controversy about the arrest and trial of the "subway gunman," Bernhard Goetz, Sharpton became a presence for New Yorkers who had never heard of him before. The following year, he hooked up with Maddox and Mason, who became his legal strategists, closest associates, and friends.

Working with them, a few aides, and support from shifting fringe groups, Sharpton spent sixteen-hour days guest-preaching at churches (he has never had his own congregation); addressing Saturday-morning rallies of his loyalists at the Slave Theatre, in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and then at P.S. 175, in Harlem (the latter broadcast on WWRL radio); attending many, often concurrent trials of whites he said were violent racists and blacks he said were wrongly accused; appearing on the Phil Donahue, Oprah Winfrey, and Morton Downey, Jr., shows; and leading demonstrations all over: the Statue of Liberty, the Helmsley Palace Hotel, the casinos of Atlantic City, the 1988 Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, the subway tracks of downtown Brooklyn, and white communities in the middle Hudson Valley and on Long Island.

Sharpton's income came from four sources. His wife, Kathy, worked as a secretary for the U.S. Army Reserves; he earned between twenty and thirty thousand dollars a year from promotional work, preaching, and lecturing; the New Alliance Party (a cultish, leftish group) gave him cheap office space and, for four years, about twelve thousand dollars a year from business profits (and he got them access to the news media in return); and James Brown sometimes provided financial assistance.

It was the Howard Beach incident in December of 1986 that gave Sharpton his first big arena for theatrical, exaggerated, and outright demagogic challenges to the criminal-justice system. Maddox announced that a court officer whose car had struck and killed Griffith was a racist accomplice of the white assailants. The police soon discovered that the driver had never met the assailants and that just before his car struck Griffith he had been with family and friends, one of whom was black, at a play at Brooklyn College. Sharpton and the attorneys seemed not to care. Their legal and pub-

lic strategy, carried out with cold anger, seemed calculated to convince blacks that the criminal-justice system was hostile to them—an argument reinforced by whites' outrage at the false charges.

The pattern was repeated in 1987, in the Tawana Brawley case, which called up historical black memories of the most intimate exploitation. A grand jury, convened by Attorney General Robert Abrams, declared her story of rape by white law-enforcement officers a hoax, but Sharpton worked even that finding into a venerable script about whites falsely accusing blacks of raping white women: when he charged, falsely, that a white assistant district attorney had raped Brawley, the tables were turned. Maddox charged, without contradiction by Sharpton, that Abrams had masturbated over photographs of Brawley.

Sharpton had about two hundred core followers, most of them middle-aged blacks who appeared to be pushed to their limits by external abuses and inner demons. Sharpton's ease with publicity and with the eloquence of the pulpit and the civil-rights movement gave his followers a footing in history. And whenever he rolled his large eyes heavenward in piety, humility, or evasiveness, whenever he inserted himself in a tableau like that of Hawkins' family on their porch just after the murder—his head bowed, his face a study in grief and rage—he seemed willing to take upon himself the ridicule and contempt that all black people feel daily in whites' averted eyes and condescensions. In this respect, he thought, he differed from such prominent black preachers as Calvin Butts, who commanded Powell's old pulpit at Abyssinian Baptist. "The problem with Calvin is that he never had hard times," Sharpton says. "He always had the deference. I had to earn mine. The people that you have to *earn* respect from, you endear yourself to. The difference between Calvin and me is that Calvin wants the Resurrection with no Crucifixion." Recently, as Butts approached him on the street, Sharpton spread his arms and proclaimed, "Ah feel dat Ah'm in de presence of de Law-aw-awd!"

SHARPTON'S associate Alton Maddox was by all accounts a brilliant courtroom attorney, but some saw him as driven to enact a trial that never took

place after policemen beat him, as a college student, in his home town of Newnan, Georgia. Sharpton, for all his militancy, enjoyed whites' company; Maddox, cordial enough in professional dealings with whites, expressed an almost bottomless hostility to them in his rhetoric and legal arguments. Yet the two men came to depend on each other greatly.

During the Brawley case, *Newsday* exposed Sharpton's past collaborations with the F.B.I., reporting that he had spied not only on mobsters but on black activists. Movement leaders abruptly ostracized him. Maddox, however, refused to believe the reports and insisted that Sharpton stay out front in the Brawley case, thus furthering Sharpton's career. Then Robert Abrams drove the two men even closer together.

Abrams had been a popular liberal politician since 1969, when he was elected Bronx borough president. As state attorney general since 1978, he had been an aggressive, if grandstanding, litigant for consumers, with an exemplary civil-rights record. By the time Governor Cuomo asked him to investigate the Brawley case, though, Abrams had grown accustomed to his political security in Albany. He was caught off guard when Maddox charged him with sexual depravity and Sharpton likened him to Hitler.

Abrams had begun looking into Sharpton's finances a decade earlier, but the investigation was dormant. In 1989, after the Brawley case ended, he indicted Sharpton on tax evasion and sixty-seven counts of grand larceny and fraud, alleging that over a period of seventeen years he had pocketed more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in funds raised for his National Youth Movement. Abrams also filed complaints against Maddox and Mason with lawyers' review panels (the charges including obstruction of justice for counselling Tawana Brawley and her mother to refuse to answer a grand jury's subpoena). While Sharpton was on trial for grand larceny and fraud, Maddox, his defense attorney, was suspended for noncooperation with the review panel, but was allowed to finish, with an angry summation that got Sharpton acquitted. (The tax-evasion

case was not resolved until this year, in a plea bargain.)

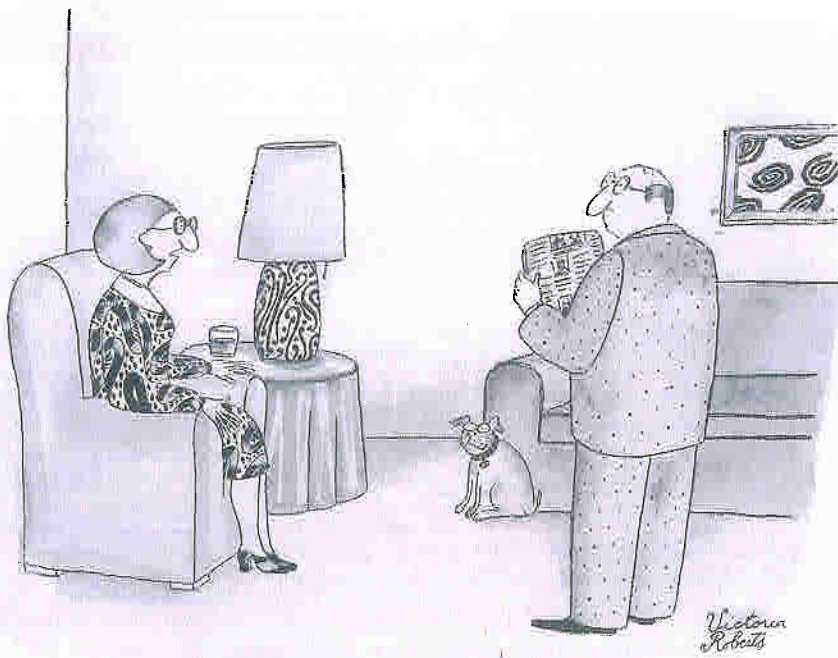
Sharpton was a free man. Maddox, it appeared, would never practice law again. Sharpton portrayed him as a martyr. At times, they would drift apart over differences of strategy, but Maddox served as a senior strategist for Sharpton's Senate campaign. When Sharpton is asked about him now, he just says, "Alton and I are different. I know Jews from Italians. . . ." He trails off.

For Abrams, Sharpton's acquittal would turn out to be a political loss as well as a legal one. "When Abrams indicted me, blacks got very defensive who didn't even agree with us on Brawley," Sharpton says. "Bill Jones had opinions pro and con on how we handled Brawley"; nonetheless, Jones opened his church to Brawley's mother as a "sanctuary" from the grand jury. Sharpton recalls, "When I was acquitted, he was sitting in the courtroom with Kathy and the kids, and he broke down and cried. That's what they didn't understand—the depth of our roots in the black community."

Actually, Sharpton had often escaped censure by his elders because they feared that whites would exploit their disagreements. Jesse Jackson kept a discreet public distance from the Howard Beach and Brawley protests. The Reverend Herbert Daughtry, an activist in Brooklyn, who has often worked with Sharpton and his associates, quietly called Maddox and Mason to his church to urge them to tone down their rhetoric against Abrams. A few black leaders—such as Brooklyn Assemblyman Roger Green, and Michael Meyers, the executive director of the New York Civil Rights Coalition—criticized Sharpton's tactics in public, but that was rare.



LATE in 1991, as Sharpton reflected upon his stabbing and his conversation with Cornel West, black politicians in New York were looking for a candidate for the United States Senate and seeing what William Jones calls "a terrible diminution in the quality of black political leadership in this city." Dinkins' and Sutton's generation of cosmopolitan black leaders moved easily among whites, especially among Jewish voters, but the next generation was more



"You wanted to miss the Matisse show."

militant and more provincial. Sharpton, however, had been taken up by his elders at such an impressionable age that, for all his histrionics, he was a far better communicator with whites than most of his peers were. He talked to Sutton, Jones, Jackson, and some of his other mentors about running for the Senate, and they encouraged him.

New York's arcane election laws made it almost impossible for Sharpton to get on the primary ballot without the help of the Democratic Party state chairman, John Marino, who answers to Governor Cuomo. When Sharpton announced, in January of 1992, "I intend to formally throw my hair into the ring," Marino told the *News*, "We'll deal with him in the same fashion Louisiana Republicans dealt with David Duke." Sharpton responded, "I'm not advocating black supremacy and I've never advocated violence." His claims were true, but they were not what changed Marino's mind. Noting Sharpton's on-again, off-again ties to the New Alliance Party, the Democrats reasoned that the last thing they needed in a tough race against D'Amato was a third-party candidate, with superb access to the media, ridiculing their nominee. And Cuomo, it was said, hoped that in the Demo-

cratic primary Sharpton would siphon more black votes from two of the likely contenders, Abrams and Holtzman, than from Geraldine Ferraro, whom the Governor preferred.

Sharpton, too, used his color—as "acceptable" blackmail," says former Mayor Edward Koch. "He said to them, 'Listen, if you give almost every other candidate a listing on the ballot without petition signatures, then I'm entitled to it, too.' If they'd kept him off, though, it wouldn't have had anything to do with racism—they'd kept Lyndon LaRouche off—it would've been because Sharpton was an exotic. Nevertheless, because he *is* black, and because white politicians can never be in a situation where somebody, rightly or wrongly, yells racism, they would buckle. And he knew that. I mean, he plays them like a piano board." Through maneuvers with Marino and at the state convention, Sharpton eluded some rules and became an official Democratic candidate without a single petition signature or the formal, public endorsement of any Party leader.

Sharpton's campaign was underfunded, but the black inner-city churches supported him as both prodigal and favorite son. And on the streets, black

politicians crossing his path noticed, he drew spontaneous crowds. "People just pushed past Towns to get to Sharpton," one of Representative Edolphus Towns's campaign aides recalls of an outdoor "family day" rally at a housing project in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Towns had endorsed Holtzman, but he immediately changed his itinerary to stay overnight in the project with Sharpton.

Sharpton also worked in boardrooms, suburban churches, and the parlors of brownstones to win the support of black professionals, who felt that none of the other candidates understood their special frustrations. As a group, first-generation black homeowners have heavier mortgages and fewer assets than whites, and even in good times segregation keeps their property values lower. Also, middle-class blacks told Sharpton, their careers felt tenuous. Patricia Irvin, a Wall Street lawyer and a trustee of Princeton University, who supported Sharpton, says, "It's not gut racism that keeps a white partner from taking a black associate under his wing. But black associates don't get equally promising assignments. There's no way to discuss it, because people become very defensive."

Sharpton may have seemed a dubious champion of the struggle against the "glass ceiling." But he, too, had a résumé—of racial encounters he had handled with ingratiation as well as confrontation. At campaign forums on Wall Street, his intimidating appearance and reputation made everybody tense; then he would break the tension with humor, to the relief of blacks who had expected to be embarrassed and whites who had expected to be damned. He understood the issues at least as well as his opponents; at a forum sponsored by Black Democrats of Westchester, Abrams, Holtzman, and a surrogate for Ferraro traded petty ethics charges, but Sharpton spoke convincingly to black-middle-class concerns.

Sharpton was closer to those concerns than many of his listeners knew. In 1990, his family, facing eviction from their apartment, in the Prospect Heights section of Brooklyn, for nonpayment of rent, and weary of dangers to him in New York, had managed, with the help of friends, to take a twelve-hundred-dollar-a-month garden apartment on a

quiet street in suburban Englewood, New Jersey. It is a pleasant, modest place, sunlit through large windows, full of the children's toys and Sharpton's memorabilia, tapes, and books. Shortly after the election, he was threatened with eviction there, too—for nonpayment of rent. Sharpton earned twenty-nine thousand dollars in 1991, according to his tax returns—most of it from lecture fees and church offerings, seven hundred dollars from a cameo as a street preacher in Spike Lee's film "Malcolm X." James Brown says, "He needs to do more for his family." (Brown pays the tuition for Sharpton's daughters, Dominique, eight, and Ashley, seven, at a small private school.)

"Whatever position you achieved," Sharpton told his radio audience during the campaign, "somebody paid a price to open the door for you. James Brown was always better than Michael Jackson. The difference is, James came before the movement, and he didn't have the options Michael had. Michael needs to know that CBS didn't cross him over; Martin Luther King crossed him over. But now you sit on a pedestal of wealth and cannot be involved in the community?" This challenge was reminiscent of Sharpton's pitches to black artists and boxers. "How do [blacks] get from Wall Street to [Brooklyn's] Bedford Avenue if they live in Scarsdale?" he asked, rhetorically, in an interview with David L. Lewis, of the *White Plains Reporter Dispatch*. "They connect with somebody who can interpret Bedford Avenue on Wall Street."

After Patricia Irvin watched Sharpton interpret Bedford Avenue to a mostly white audience at her law firm, Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, she organized another forum, at the New York Sheraton, where several hundred black bankers, lawyers, and executives came to hear Marcia Ann Gillespie, Cornel West, and Derrick Bell, a professor of law at New York University, question Sharpton. "The black professional community has an incredible grapevine," Irvin says.

Sharpton conducted himself professionally in televised debates. Like Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, he took advantage of the twin benefits of minority status:

because he wasn't going to win, his opponents didn't bother to attack him; because he was black, they didn't dare. He followed Jackson's precedent, permitting himself only a few indulgences: once, when Abrams and Holtzman challenged Ferraro to release her tax returns, Sharpton said, "If anybody wants to see mine, Bob Abrams has them."

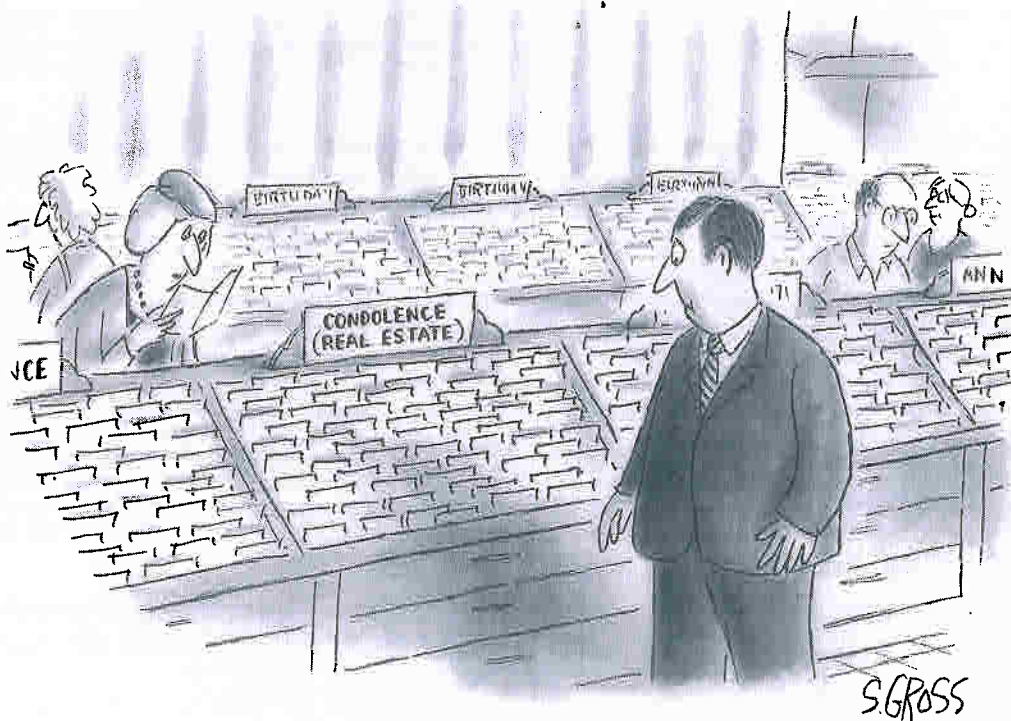
SHARPTON carried sixty-seven per cent of the black vote—an improvement on the surveys in the nineteen-eighties that had given him less than fifteen-per cent approval by blacks, and a figure not far behind Jesse Jackson's seventy-two per cent of the black vote in his first New York primary race, for President, in 1984. Sharpton got fourteen per cent of the total vote and twenty-one per cent in the city.

On primary night, there was no mistaking an elevation in his tone: "Our conditions are too grave, our pain is too intense, for us to get center stage and use it to act ugly and divisive. Everyone talks about how we've grown. Yes, and we've matured to the point where we want results. . . . Whoever, at the end of the night, is the Democratic nominee, they're gonna have to deal with that reality. Some say, 'Reverend, will you work with the nominee?' We will discuss with the nominee! . . . The way we're going, we can pick up allies. The days of shooting from the hip are over."

"Whatever anyone would have said about Al has now been purged," Herman D. Farrell, Jr., the Manhattan Democratic Party leader, observed. "From this point on, we'll judge him on what he does."

Eleven days after the primary, Sharpton went to Washington for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's annual dinner (a function he had picketed with a bullhorn two years before). Four thousand black political paladins did not part like the Red Sea, but Sharpton was widely recognized and pleasantly received. When Ron Dellums, the tall, elegant representative from California, extended his hand and said, "Good evening, Senator," Sharpton fell to one knee and bowed his head, like a squire about to be knighted. Governor Bill Clinton waved and said, "Hi, Al."

"I went to the Nee-gro Black Caucus," Sharpton told his Saturday-morning audience a week later. "All the big blacks in the country, who two years ago turned their noses down at us, was running up and shaking our hands. It's because of you that took your pennies and rented buses, that marched in cold weather, standing out there when the people called you names, that we won. They're runnin' around now, trying to analyze how we got our vote, as if it was some fluke. We planted that vote in the concrete of Howard Beach and Bensonhurst. We didn't get no vote in the TV



debates; they were the frosting on the cake. Cake been baking for six years. Deal with the cake!"

Sharpton's patrons in the Democratic Party said he had showed that New York's political culture is resilient enough to lift a potential leader out of a netherworld. Others said he had showed that New York's political culture allows any demagogue who cleans up his act just a little to rocket to political respectability. "I think I've redefined the middle," Sharpton told Martin Gottlieb, of the *Times*. "I think the middle and me both moved a little toward each other."

After the primary, Sharpton got an invitation from Temple Beth-El, in Great Neck, to address a conference of blacks and Jews. Dele Olojede, of *Newsday*, saw Dinkins' chief adviser, Bill Lynch, arriving to deliver the keynote speech, and reported, "A white woman walked up to him and, presumably noticing that he was black, asked if he was Sharpton's driver. 'How quickly things change,' Lynch remarked sarcastically."

ROBERT ABRAMS had been the first and most prominent Jewish elected official to support the candidacy of the city's first African-American mayor, David Dinkins. And by any other standard that blacks might have been expected to use in the general election between Abrams and D'Amato, Abrams should have come out ahead. But he still had Sharpton under indictment for tax evasion, and Sharpton never did "discuss with the nominee" to the point of endorsing or even speaking well of him. Still, if only to repay a debt to Democrats who had got him onto the primary ballot, Sharpton eventually decided that undoing his nemesis was not as important as undoing D'Amato.

Six years earlier, Sharpton had joined his mentor Bishop Washington in endorsing D'Amato, who had promised and delivered a large grant for an anti-drug program to be sponsored by the Washington Temple. Now some black ministers and politicians who appreciated just such service were drifting into D'Amato's camp, and at the last minute Sharpton tried to stop them. He told

friends that he didn't want his feud with Abrams to excuse anyone's toadying to D'Amato. He told the congregation at Mount Ollie Baptist Church, in Brownsville, the Sunday before the election, "They tell me how D'Amato is running around Brooklyn to the churches. I hope they got him on his knees. . . . We should not allow our churches to become shifted from a house of prayer into a den of thieves. . . . Everything Martin Luther King lived for, Al D'Amato voted against." Sharpton said similar things on black radio and to reporters.

His efforts were too little and too late—largely because he had long ago enshrined his own battles with Abrams in local black mythology as Good versus Evil. "I supported Abrams and tried to raise money for him in the community," Percy Sutton recalls, "but I found great difficulty. They feel Abrams 'did in' Sharpton, Maddox, and Mason." D'Amato won by just eighty thousand votes, out of more than six million. He ought to have been swamped by Bill Clinton's strong Democratic victory in the state. An analysis by Prime New York, an election-consulting firm, shows that in the most heavily black election districts in New York City alone, nearly fifty thousand blacks who voted for President abstained from the Senate race, and another twelve thousand voted for minor-party candidates; blacks statewide abstained at a rate fifty per cent higher than whites. D'Amato won not so much because blacks supported him outright (he carried less than twenty per cent of a small black vote) as because a great many of Sharpton's hundred and sixty-six thousand primary voters refused to make a choice between D'Amato and Abrams at all. Sharpton was more responsible than anyone for the politics of spite that drove so many blacks away from Abrams.

LESS than a week before the general election, a predominantly nonwhite jury acquitted a seventeen-year-old black, Lemrick Nelson, of murdering Yankel Rosenbaum, a twenty-nine-year-old Hasidic Jew, in Crown Heights. Nelson had been in a black mob that

was crying "Get the Jew!" when someone stabbed Rosenbaum, presumably to retaliate for the death, some hours earlier, of a seven-year-old black boy, Gavin Cato, who was struck by a car driven by a Hasidic man. At the time—in August, 1991—Sharpton had denounced what he claimed was the city's preferential treatment of Hasidic Jews, and had even flown to Israel to try serving a civil summons on the driver.

Nelson's acquittal seemed to turn Sharpton's scenarios of racist conspiracy inside out. Two years before, in Bensonhurst, the conviction of one white man of murder and others on lesser charges had not satisfied him as justice. In Crown Heights, only one of the black assailants, Nelson, went to trial; and not only did the jury distrust the testimony of police officers (who said that a bloody knife was found on Nelson and that Rosenbaum, before dying, had identified him as his attacker) but several jurors dined with Nelson and his lawyer to celebrate his acquittal.

When Jewish demonstrators adopted Sharpton's own chant of "No justice, no peace!" he surprised everybody by endorsing Hasidic leaders' calls for a federal investigation. He said, "Justice is not something we oppose. I *always* ask the federal government to come in. They refused to come for Michael Griffith and Yusuf Hawkins. That doesn't mean they shouldn't come now. Certainly they should, but not to create a double standard. . . . We are against murder. The question is: Is everyone else against murder except when it comes to us? Let's play by one set of rules."

He had never stopped reminding audiences that social pathology involved more than racism. "I've learned that if you're going to take a moral cutting edge," Sharpton said recently, "you can't choose who it's going to cut." When black youngsters stamped nine of their fellows to death outside a concert at City College, in 1991, Sharpton told Mike McAlary, of the *Post*, that they did "not have the right to behave like animals. . . . They did this to themselves." No longer the youth leader, now a parent, he told his followers at a Saturday-morning rally, "We need to challenge our children that we did not fight and die and bleed for them to bring knives and guns to school. . . . Even though I understand the underlying social



conditions, I also understand the conditions my grandmother went through, and she didn't have no blade in her pocket."

In Sharpton's native East New York, the Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood—another of the Reverend William Jones's protégés—leads an interracial, interfaith organization called East Brooklyn Congregations. It is working with the Board of Education to found two small high schools; building new homes; and shunning the racial conflicts that Sharpton dramatizes. Sharpton has professed admiration for Youngblood, but he has not given up his own ways.

When, a few weeks after the Crown Heights acquittal, a group of Hasidim assaulted a homeless black man—an oft-convicted burglar named Ralph Nimmons—in an alley behind their Crown Heights headquarters, Sharpton helped obscure the circumstances of the beating by counselling Nimmons to refuse cooperation with a grand jury and demanding yet another special state prosecutor. (Governor Cuomo finally refused.) Then, as it became clear that this mode of protest had worn thin, Sharpton let reporters know that he and Nimmons had sent a get-well card to a rabbi who had been assaulted on the Lower East Side. The *Times* ran Sharpton's photograph three times in ten days in connection with Nimmons. Sharpton had not had much news coverage since the primary. He "forgot that when the campaign is over and everybody goes home, the 'hero' stands alone," James Brown reflects.

As Sharpton approaches the end of his fourth decade, he still faces a jail sentence for blocking a subway train during a protest about the Howard Beach incident, in 1987. But he believes that with his strong showing in the Senate primary he has gone beyond such mentors as the Reverend William Jones, who once ran, unsuccessfully, for Brooklyn borough president, and Sutton, who left public life partly because the press cast him as "the black candidate" in the 1977 mayoral campaign. Nor does Sharpton find a model now in Jesse Jackson, though Jackson introduced him as "one of our young lions" at a rally during the Senate race. Sharpton says, "I have the benefit of seeing what happened to Jesse, who ended up"—after his own election campaigns—"like a plane with no air-

port to land in. Some of the disappointment with Jesse is that people think he should have made more firm steps. Maybe he should've run for mayor of D.C."

Sharpton could win a congressional seat, especially in Brooklyn, though he has vowed not to challenge a black incumbent. His loyalty to Tawana Brawley would not be apt to cost him an election in a predominantly black district, even though many blacks question whether she told the truth. "Don't forget that I haven't just gone forward from a Brawley case to where I am now," he said recently. "I'm also goin' back to what I grew up as." (That may be the closest he can come to admitting that his Brawley strategy was a mistake.)

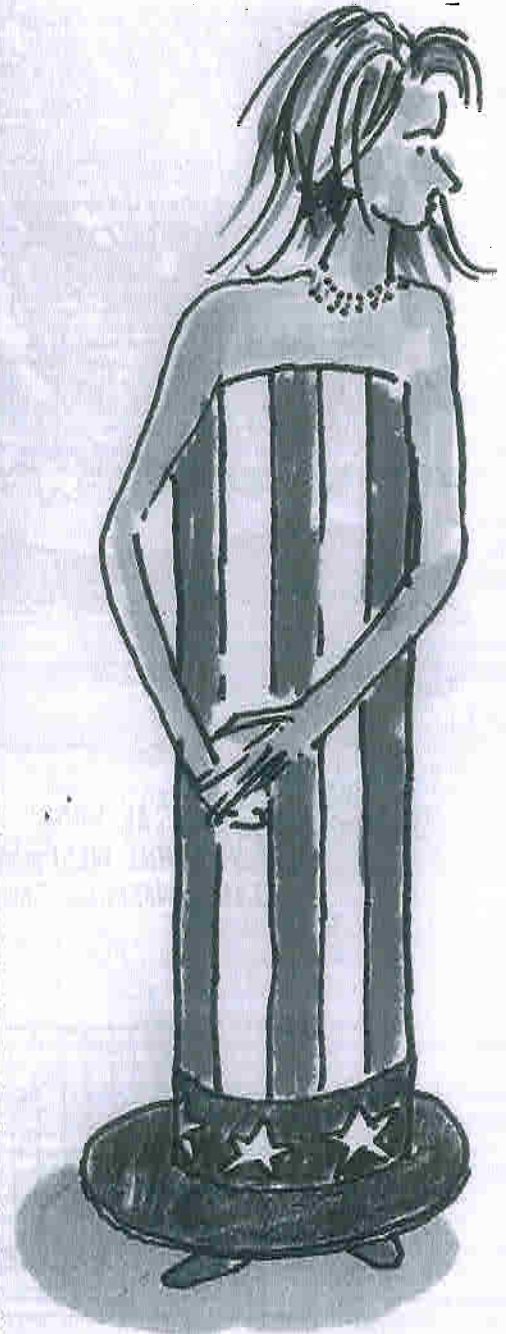
"I have always said nice things about him, even though I've called him a charlatan," Ed Koch says. "Charlatan' comes from the fact that truth doesn't mean anything to him. But he has a sense of humor, he's smart, he's a bona-fide leader and an exceedingly able strategist. I happen to like him. There are many black leaders—like Malcolm X, who recognized that if he was to be a true leader of his people he had to change his views. And I would not deny that opportunity to Al Sharpton, and I believe he has that potential. Absolutely, he has it."

Dinkins' adviser Bill Lynch says, "I see all the right signs, but I know his history."

Sharpton recently gave his version of history at a Brooklyn church: "He took the Cross. And somebody said, 'Jesus, you don't have to suffer like this. Why don't you drop that Cross?' But He looked two thousand years into the future, and He saw a little boy named Al Sharpton. And He said, 'If I don't go, he won't have a way.' . . . I know you read stuff in the newspapers, but they don't tell my story. Twenty-seven years I didn't hear from my father. I remember nights, when they wrote nasty things about me, I looked for somebody to talk to, but I didn't have a number to call my daddy. But if you hear from my father, tell him it's all right now, tell him I have another Daddy, who woke me up this morning, and started me on my way. And if anybody asks you about Brother Sharpton, don't tell them I'm a politician. Don't tell 'em I'm an activist. Don't even tell 'em I'm an evangelist. Just tell 'em I'm a pilgrim and a stranger." ♦

GOWNS FOR THE GALAS

BY MICHAEL CRAWFORD



MARY MATALIN'S
"I'M OUT OF A JOB—
I'LL HOLD MY NOSE
AND BOOGIE" GOWN