

Kissing up to the Rev. Al

☒ Politicians say all sorts of things to ingratiate themselves with one interest group or another. Most of the time we shrug and forget about it. Pandering is part of the job description, we correctly figure. But when the panderer is also the attorney general of the United States, we should pay attention. Especially when he's kissing up to Al Sharpton.

The other day Eric Holder spoke at the opening of Sharpton's National Action Network annual convention in Washington. And Mr. Holder used the occasion to heap praise on the Rev. Sharpton. Holder thanked him "for your partnership, your friendship, and your tireless efforts to speak out for the voiceless, to stand up for the powerless, and to shine a light on the problems we must solve, and the promises we must fulfill."

This kind of nonsense gives cynicism a bad name. Whatever good Sharpton may do from time to time, he has done more than almost anyone else to stir up racial tensions in this country. Let's review just a few of the Rev. Sharpton's lowlights.

As my friend Harry Stein writes in his new book *No Matter What ... They'll Call This Book Racist*, "As far back as 1987, Sharpton was covering himself with disgrace as one of the chief perpetrators of the notorious Tawana Brawley hoax, wherein a 15-year old upstate New York girl falsely claimed to have been abducted and raped by six white men. Acting as one of her three advisors, Sharpton inflamed passions by naming an assistant district attorney as one of the supposed attackers, and claiming authorities were protecting him and the others because they were white."

It was all a lie, as we have long known, but to this day,

Sharpton has never apologized, adamantly refusing whenever the subject has come up. In fact, when Tim Russert on *Meet the Press* asked Sharpton, "No apology for Tawana Brawley?" Sharpton replied: "No apology for standing up for civil rights."

Four years later a 7-year old black child was accidentally killed when he was run over by a car driven by an Orthodox Jewish man in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Enter Al Sharpton, who staged a rally at which he called Jews "diamond merchants" and told the crowd, "If the Jews want to get it on, tell them to pin their yarmulkes back and come over to my house."

Four days of riots followed. Jews were beaten in the streets and one was stabbed to death by rioters shouting, "Kill the Jew."

Four years after that, in 1995, Sharpton helped lead a boycott against Freddy's Fashion Mart, a Jewish-owned discount clothing store in Harlem, denouncing its owner as "a white interloper." Demonstrators, many from Sharpton's National Action Network, protested outside the store for months. Customers going into the store were spat upon and called names like "traitor" and "Uncle Tom," One man reportedly shouted, "Burn down the Jew store." Then, one day, one of the protestors did just that. He burst into Freddy's and announced: "It's on now. All blacks out." He then shot four employees, poured paint thinner on several bins of clothing and set the store on fire. Seven innocent people, and the gunman, died in the blaze. Sharpton denied he egged anybody on, telling reporters, "I am a preacher, not a prophet. I could not know in advance what this was going to come to."

Despite all this, as Harry Stein points out, Sharpton "is not only treated with seriousness and respect, by the mainstream media, but is routinely accorded the status of 'civil rights leader.' He is always among the first called upon for his views on all racial matter and is even allowed without

challenge to pass judgment on the racial *bona fides* of others.”

It’s one thing for a left-wing television network desperate for ratings to ignore history and give a race baiter like Al Sharpton a job. It’s quite another for the nation’s chief law enforcement officer to sing Sharpton’s praises in order to rev up the base and help President Obama get re-elected. Pandering is never pretty. Sometimes it’s downright ugly.