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Local

Rev. Al Sharpton addresses recent racial profiling by high-end stores

Reverend Al Sharpton gives his opinion on the profiling of the young black shoppers of who were unfairly treated as criminals by high-end Manhattan stores and the NYPD.

Comments (225)

BY REV. AL SHARPTON / SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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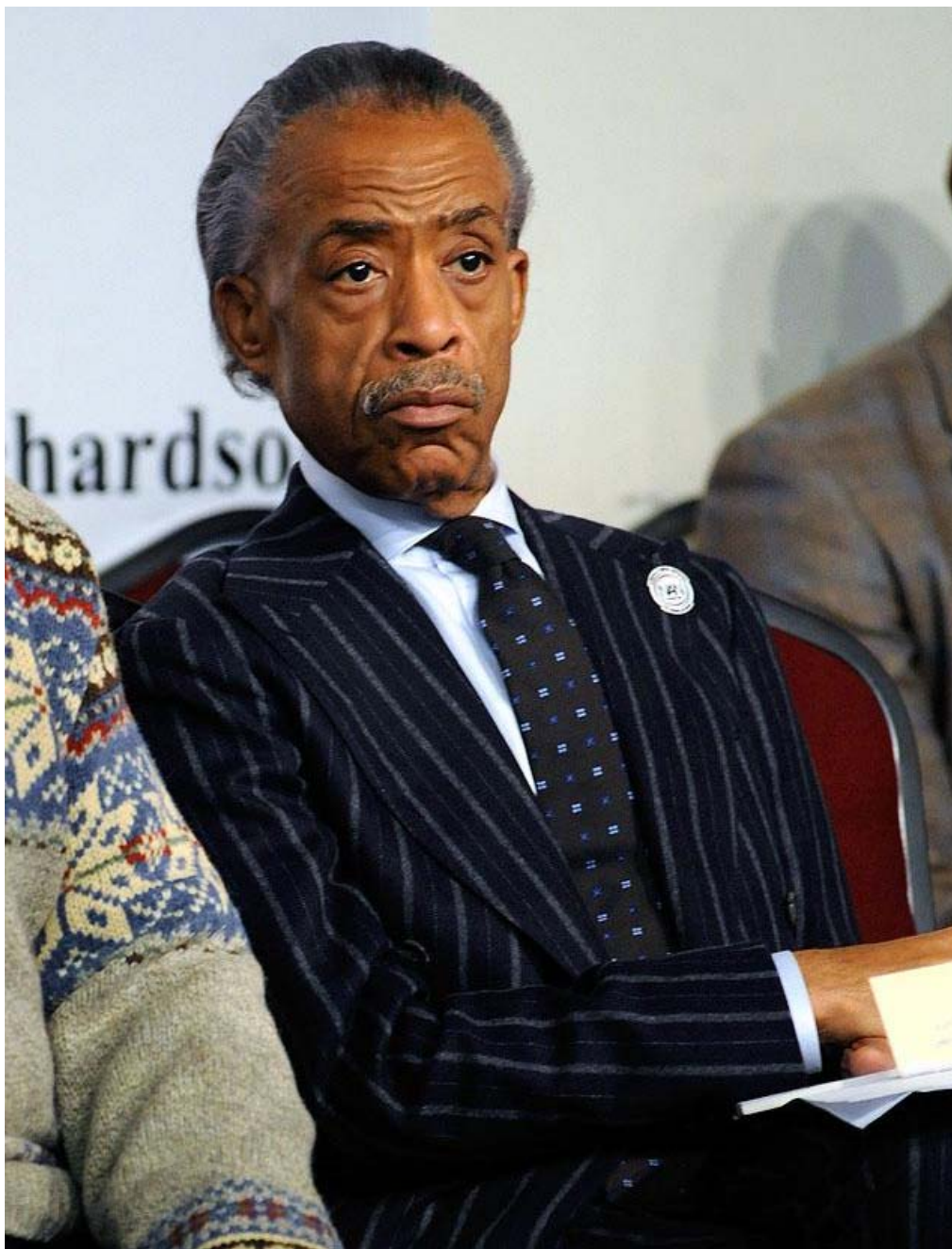
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CHRISTIE M FARRIELLA FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

The incidents at Barneys, Macy's and elsewhere are nothing more than an upscale version of stop-and-frisk.

It has been years since I worked with the late Johnnie Cochran on a case involving four black and Latino men who were traveling to a basketball tournament when police on the New Jersey Turnpike pulled them over and opened fire, wounding three of them.

Because of our pursuit of justice for the young men, the term 'racial-profiling' emerged in the American lexicon as the masses began to see the plight of those who were routinely singled out merely because of the color of their skin.

More than 15 years since that tragic incident, we are witnessing what I refer to as upscale racial-profiling in a new, outrageous fashion.

In major cities like New York, blacks and Latinos not only worry about being "stopped-and-frisked" by police, but they also fear the embarrassment of being "shopped-and-frisked" in retail stores. In other words, minorities are sent a shameful message that no matter what they are doing, they are guilty until proven innocent.



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Imagine walking into a store, finding something you like and making the purchase only to be stopped, interrogated, searched, handcuffed and locked in a cell simply because someone didn't believe you could afford the item.

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That's exactly what 19-year-old Trayon Christian said happened to him when he bought a \$349 Ferragamo belt from Barneys on Madison Ave.

Christian, of Queens, says he was accosted by undercover NYPD officers who questioned how he could pay for such an expensive belt. According to the young man, he showed his debit card, identification and receipt to police who proceeded to hold him in a cell for more than two hours before releasing him without charge.



PEARL GABEL FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Imagine walking into a store, finding something you like and making the purchase only to be stopped, interrogated, searched, handcuffed and locked in a cell simply because someone didn't believe you could afford the item. That's exactly what 19-year-old Trayon Christian said happened to him when he bought a \$349 Ferragamo belt from Barneys on Madison Ave.

What a travesty.

Unfortunately, Christian's experience isn't unique. Kayla Phillips, a 21-year-old from Brooklyn also recently stated that she underwent a similar trauma while at Barneys.

After purchasing a \$2,500 handbag, she says that she, too, was surrounded and interrogated by police who questioned the validity of her purchase.

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I don't need to tell you the race of either Christian or Phillips. Barneys, a high-end retailer with stores in major cities, must answer for this pattern of biased behavior, as must the NYPD.

Our National Action Network (NAN) Brooklyn chapter President Kirsten John Foy said it best when he called Barneys' behavior schizophrenic. On the one hand, they want to expand their brand to the urban market, but then they turn around and see us as suspects rather than prospects.

Barneys and other retailers that openly discriminate against us must be held accountable. Simply apologizing isn't enough; we need to see a plan of action as to how they are going to rectify their

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ways.

It is unconscionable that in New York City — a city that serves as a beacon for diversity and inclusion — that so many of its inhabitants are treated as second-class citizens.



SHAWN BALDWIN/AP

Attorney Johnnie Cochran, left, addresses the media as the Rev. Al Sharpton, center, Danny Reyes, rear, and Rayshawn Brown look on during a news conference in 2001.

Walking down the street isn't a crime. Shopping in a high-end department store isn't a crime. And being black or brown should never be a crime.

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We demand an immediate meeting with the CEO of Barneys, and we are currently mobilizing activists for peaceful direct-action against the store and the NYPD.

When there was a pattern of inequitable behavior by New Jersey state troopers, we organized, protested and called for change. Subsequent investigations revealed that troubling practices indeed existed and broad reforms were instituted. When we noticed a severe lack of fairness in advertising, we created the Madison Avenue Initiative.

When we observed a culture of discrimination within the Police Department, we organized massive rallies against stop-and-frisk. We were thrilled to see the City Council pass legislation that will bring in an independent inspector and expand the definition of racial profiling, but it is not enough. We must do more. And now, when we are watching people of color being shopped-and-frisked, we will not hesitate to push for reform.

On Friday, we learned of another case, this time at Macy's. Rob Brown, star of the HBO hit show 'Treme,' stated that in June he was paraded through Macy's Herald Square in handcuffs and placed in a holding cell because an employee suspected that his credit card didn't belong to him. He has since filed a lawsuit.



campaign, Nandita Das, has called out India's

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British comedienne slammed for joking that Prince Harry snorts cocaine

Being a prince is no laughing matter, says a British official livid over a



OFF THE MARKET: Christina Ricci weds

Christina Ricci married her fiancé James Heerdegen on Saturday in Manhattan. The "Sleepy Hollow" star



Comic in legal battle with adult

Earlier this year, Oscar-winning actor Forest Whitaker was leaving a store in Morningside Heights when he says he was accused of stealing and was subsequently patted down.

When international celebrities can be disrespected and mistreated in such a humiliating manner, how can we ever naively believe that our work is done?

I often say that we as a society have achieved much progress, but great tasks remain before us. The incidents at Barneys, Macy's and elsewhere are nothing more than an upscale version of stop-and-frisk.

Interestingly, the holiday season is upon us, and perhaps all retailers need a friendly reminder of the immense buying power of blacks and minorities. We will definitely remember those who welcome us and those who would rather profile us, and we will speak loudly with our dollars — bottom line.

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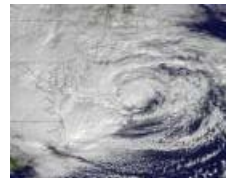
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One month after Hurricane Sandy devastated New York City's coastal communities, residents



EDITORIAL: Very small of you, Jay Z

When he joined a partnership with upscale retailer Barneys, Shawn "Jay Z" Carter applied his celebrity, fashion sense



Lou Reed, founder of The Velvet Underground, dead at 71

Lou Reed, famed singer, songwriter and guitarist of popular 1960s New York



PHOTOS Lou Reed through the years

Lou Reed, one of the most influential rock and roll pioneers of our lifetime has died at the age of 71. Take a look back at the decades-



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COCO THEBEAN 2 hours ago

+1

So tell me Al will you be standing on the front lines when the race war you want to start begins or hiding in your luxury home hiding???

Reply

HABFAN33 5 hours ago

+2

When you have a minority committing a majority of the crimes people get suspicious

Reply

SIR 13 hours ago

+3

Al Sharpton lost the "right" to be called Reverend, when he became unfaithful to his wife with a 22 year old girl. From that point on he should just be ignored.

Reply

DENNIS SMITH 21 hours ago

+6

Typical Al--not a negative word about Jay Z. When is Al going to pay his back taxes and his court judgment for ruining a man's life? A first class sleaze no matter how many laudatory columns Crouch writes on his behalf.

Reply

BUNNYMUSIC1 21 hours ago

+5

You know what Rev.? This is a shame but it's not just a black case. There are others who have gone through similar things. Stop and frisk might someday prevent an illegal gun from killing you. I wouldn't be so fast to complain about something that might just save your life.

Reply [▼ 1 reply](#)

SAM DEMAN 21 hours ago

+2

Giuliani had Stop & Frisk right (tens of thousands of quality Stops while the rest of NYC went on with their business and never even heard the term).But when 5 and a half million New Yorkers have gotten frisked under Bloomberg,its a joke.If the plan is to frisk every single New Yorker for guns,atleast make the experience of getting frisked less painful!



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DJPATH 21 hours ago

+5

Posted earlier, how do you take seriously a guy who cries racist when he publicly says stuff like this - "White folks was in the caves while we [blacks] was building empires ... We built pyramids before Donald Trump ever knew what architecture was ... we taught philosophy and astrology and mathematics before Socrates and them Greek homos ever got around to it." Shame on White people who support this lying, hypocritical RACIST. There are plenty of black leaders with dignity to support instead.

Reply



MANOLO RAMIREZ 21 hours ago

+5

Not a peep from sharpston when the white people where attacked by the savages near kings plaza. Never a word from this race baiter unless it benefits his personal prejudice view. He's the black version of a fox opinionist.

Reply



JOEBED11 21 hours ago

+2

Get over it !!!! Stop crying Big Mouth !!

Reply



RFTN10 22 hours ago

+5

He's like a shyster lawyer, lining his pockets and getting rich on behalf off his community. Loan shark AL at it again.

Reply



RFTN10 22 hours ago

+3

Lol, who can take this man seriously, he picks and chooses which incident has camera exposure, yet he doesn't comment on the senseless killing his community inflicts on his own people. It's so laughable that his own community can't see what he is doing.

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